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The Rebirth of Geopolitics in Post-Communist Romania Ideas, Role and Collective Imaginary*

ȘERBAN FILIP CIOCULESCU

Since the end of the Communist regime and the development of a democratic and pluralist political regime in Romania, a lot of politicians, policy-makers, experts and academics tried to give the best possible explanations for the actual evolution of our country in the new security environment (unipolar in the military field and economically globalized) and the behavior that Romanians should had in order to get a better life in a stronger and wealthier country, being protected from the new risks and threats.

Within this study, which is a pioneering one, we will try to show the importance of the Geopolitics as an academic discipline, a political discourse and a security-related tool, thus answering to the general question why this paradigm has been resuscitated or revitalized in post-Cold War Romania. If one reads political discourses in the Parliament, or the Government, the Presidency circles, if he is studying the curricula of the main universities which have international relations or history, journalism chairs he will find out that formally, the references to geopolitics and geopolitical topics are very frequent. Also, the Romanian mass media dealing with political issues, not only international affairs, do not hesitate to resort to this kind of geopolitical images which tend to become a common place, a set of taken-for-granted assumptions, good for catching the attention of the public.

We think that Romania has a tradition of "materialistic" thinking in international relations and the most influential school of thought is the Realism, in its purest and harsh form that means struggle for power and the triumph of the stronger in a purely anarchical environment. Therefore, Geopolitics tends to be seen as a product of the great powers' image on the world and their place within it. The medium-sized states and the little ones are not the focus of the International Relations realist mainstream, because they are conceived as caught in the strongest actors' network of competition, rivalry and, occasionally, cooperation.

There are a lot of meanings associated with Geopolitics: geographically-influenced behavior of a state, competition for power and security, obsession for controlling geographically valuable areas but also collective identity and vision on the territory, an instrument to be used by the "prince" (meaning a state's executive leader), or an academic discipline¹.

*My special thanks and gratitude go to Professor Stefano Guzzini for his very useful advices and suggestions concerning the evolutions of Geopolitics in contemporary Europe.

¹ See Gearoid Ö. TUATHAIL, "Geopolitical Structures and Cultures: Towards Conceptual Clarity in the Critical Study of Geopolitics", in Lasha TCHANTOURIDZE (ed.), "Geopolitics. Global Problems and Regional Concerns", *Bison Paper*, no. 4, the Center for Defense and Security Studies, University of Manitoba, 2004, p. 75.

Generally speaking, there is a striking lack of original studies analyzing the evolution of the geopolitical normative framework in the last eighteen years in Romania. Thus, the general appetite for using geopolitics as word and image is strong, but the need to question the rise of Geopolitics as a discipline and as a legitimated discourse generally lacks in our scientific landscape. To put it bluntly, people use geopolitical words and imaginary but do not raise questions about the origins and legitimacy of this discourse. They take it as a "common knowledge", as an *acquis*.

If the interwar tradition of Romanian geopolitics (as part of the wider social sciences) is generally well popularized in universities and research institutions, the contemporary autochthonous geopolitical discourse is largely ignored by our scientific reviews of sociology and social sciences¹.

The reasons are multiple and, before fixing the research hypothesis, they can be only guessed: the fragmented scientific landscape, the fact that most of the authors simply imitate the famous foreign models, the lack of the contemplation space (only 18 years of history) and the confusion/competition between geopolitics and strategic/security studies, plus international relations theory. There are plenty of geopolitical approaches on regional and international issues but one can easily see that reflections on geopolitics itself are missing.

Therefore, the aim of our contribution is exactly to clarify the status and role of the geopolitics as a sub-discipline of social sciences, the main schools of thought, authors, and topics.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE REVIVAL

Taking into account the facts that we have already mentioned, our opinion is that it was a clear revival of the geopolitics as a so-called "scientific" discipline, but also as a foreign policy discourse and journalistic predilection "topos".

Now, we are able to set up a system of working hypothesis. The revival of geopolitics in Romania may be globally explained by some important elements:

- a. a foreign politics (identity) crisis.
- b. a collective (domestic) identity crisis.
- c. a sensitive (vulnerable) domestic situation.
- d. a historical intellectual tradition.
- e. the fact that the previous (communist) regime had forbidden social sciences, and especially the discipline of geopolitics.

The backbone which allowed the spectacular development of geopolitics in the academic arena, the political field and the journalistic one has been the proliferation of think-tanks and various NGOs dealing with security and strategic studies, more rarely with IR and foreign policy. Their obvious lack in the first post-communist years has been compensated by a significant development in the

¹ Significantly, the revue *GeoPolitica*, published since 2004 by the Ion Conea Association (Department of Geography, Bucharest University), in the first two issues had only two articles on Romania's geopolitical situation: Mircea DOGARU, "Spațiul românesc și Europa", *GeoPolitica*, an I, no. 1, 2004, pp. 30-47 and Gheorghe NICOLAESCU, "România și noile realități geopolitice", *GeoPolitica*, an I, no. 2-3, 2004, pp. 3-12 These were analysis regarding the political, strategic, cultural and economic context of Romania's existence after 1989, but not analysis on the reemergence of geopolitics as a discipline!

second half of the 90s and the beginning of the new century. Numerous think-tanks became autonomous in the financial realm, functioning through the grants offered by the European Union, the World Bank, private business and foundations encouraging the research.

At the same time, the most prestigious universities and research centers gradually introduced geopolitics as an academic discipline, while military and diplomatic colleges allowed it to become a pragmatic instrument for future military and civilian decision-makers.

Romania also lacked a tradition of peace research, together with the new approaches in the study of foreign affairs and critical geopolitics. The books written by military authors on peace-keeping missions have confidential distribution and reduced number of copies, while the study in the field of Foreign Policy Analysis is still absent from the IR landscape. Peace-research is non-existent in Romanian universities; there are no academic foundations and specialized research institutes like in the Northern European states. But on the contrary, strategic studies and security studies are frequent in all the IR and political sciences-specialized academic and research institutions. Thus, (Neo)Realism and classical geopolitics remain largely dominant not only in the military and foreign policy structures but also in the popular journals and reviews.

The end of the communist regime and the disintegration of the Soviet empire and its sphere of influence was a historic opportunity for the Central and Eastern European states to develop their own foreign and security policies and take vigorous measures to find support in the Western world. The proximity of the successful western organizations – EU and NATO, the perceptions on the Russian perceived “aggressive” diplomacy towards its neighborhood and its imperial dreams, the incontestable hegemony of the USA in the world affairs were the elements which pushed the newly independent countries to find their own way on the international stage, in accordance with their national interests, values, and security priorities.

In post-communist Romania, the international relations, security experts and the journalists began to use frequently the word “geopolitics” when describing the state and evolutions of the world affairs, the regional politics and the situation of Romania¹. Even when they did not do it explicitly, they tended to use a vocabulary and an imaginary pointing towards it.

Of course, the experts who eventually, in the middle of the '90s, formed the epistemic community of security and strategic studies came from different fields of activity: university professors, college teachers, military analysts, officers, intelligence services staff, sociologists, geographers, political scientists, historians and also many journalists. Almost all of them began to publish articles and books with the intention to develop international relations and security studies, to give a fair understanding of Romania's position in the world. Most of them were fascinated by the great “western” powers (the EU and NATO members, with an emphasis on the USA), by the “big” maps and the temptation of predictions based on physical and human geography. Geopolitics has been “lucky” enough to be reinvented or rediscovered (linking with the inter-war tradition) and to unofficially be considered

¹ See Constantin HLIHOR, *Istorie și geopolitică în Europa secolului XX (Considerații teoretice și metodologice)*, Academia de Înalte Studii Militare, București, 1999, p. 16.

by some authors as the disciplinary matrix for other social sciences: international relations and security studies.

Therefore, geopolitics has initially been introduced into the research agenda of the security and strategic studies, not as a simple division of the IR field of study but frequently as the main discipline and it certainly embraced an almost "Realist" perspective, especially in the first post-Cold War years¹. This revival was not spontaneous and did not occur immediately after the end of the communist era. Indeed, it took at least 2-3 years to gather a community of experts and propose some research areas.

Geopolitics progressively emerged in post-communist Romania and has been considered by some academic and strategic circles as a "scientific" discipline, in spite of the harsh debates concerning its scientific or pseudoscientific status². Anyway, many authors who study history, security, ethnic conflict, regional economy etc. use the word "geopolitics" even when they do not resort to the instruments of this so-called "science"³. They want to emphasize the emergence of some distinct regions and the interests of the foreign power poles in shaping the behavior of the local states and leadership. In Romania, the congruence of efforts and visions of some military sociologists, historians, geographers and, later, political scientists, eventually produced the re-emergence of this discipline.

The first attempts to legitimize this new field of interest were made by those people who knew about the inter-war geopolitical tradition in Romania and the remarkable achievements that the Communist regime tried to obliterate on behalf of the working class' need for a new perspective on world affairs⁴. Geopolitics had been considered a "bourgeois sociologic school of thought"⁵ for near half a century and only within the military high-school some geopolitical theories were

¹ See Constantin HLIHOR, "The Role of Geopolitics in the Analysis of the Contemporary Political Phenomenon", *Euro-Atlantic Studies*, no. 2, 1999, pp. 15-23. The author stated that: "A geopolitical situation can be defined as a more or less important rivalry for power among actors inserting or disputing their interests in a certain geographical area". Then, he specified that "some analysts of the contemporary geopolitical phenomenon admit that a geopolitical situation can also arise within a state without any direct implication of other states; they also say that the ethnical, political, or religious communities can be considered actors".

² Relevant for the ambiguity of this so-called discipline is Paul Dobrescu's hesitation to call it a science. He stated that "Geopolitics is a theory, a research direction which expresses the material connection between the geographical position of a state and its politics". Paul DOBRESCU, *Geopolitica*, Editura Comunicare Ro, București, 2003, p. 25.

³ *Ibidem*. C. Hlihor considers geopolitics as "a branch of the socio-humanistic sciences" dealing with "power rivalries" among states. Thus, he is taking over Romanian inter-war geopolitician Ion Conea assertion that geopolitics reflects "the political game between states", but he rejects the geographical determinism of the German imperial school of "Geopolitik". See Ion CONEA, "Geopolitica, o știință nouă", in E.I. EMANDI, Gh. BUZATU, V.S. CUCU (coord.), *Geopolitica*, vol. I, Editura "Glasul Bucovinei", Iași, 1994, pp. 67-79. Another well-known author, Ilie Bădescu, stated that "Geopolitics is the science of the spatial dimension of the political, economic, cultural and religious life of the peoples". See Ilie BĂDESCU, *Tratat de Geopolitică*, Editura Mica Valahie, București, 2004, p. 15.

⁴ The sociologist Ionel Nicu Sava has popularized the German founding fathers of Geopolitics, filling a gap of knowledge, keeping in mind that F. Ratzel, K. Haushoffer etc. were not and are still not translated in Romanian. Ionel NICU SAVA, *Școala geopolitică germană*, Editura Info-Team, București, 1997.

⁵ Darie CRISTEA, "Geopolitică și societate – Avaturile geopoliticii", II, http://www.studiidesecuritate.ro/arhiva/nr1/articol/cristea/dc_rp_003.pdf (accessed on 14.06.2005).

studied within the discipline of strategy. Thus, reinventing geopolitics could have been seen as a "moral duty" towards a discipline which has been harshly persecuted and forbidden by the communist rulers. Of course, some of the young authors came back from western universities and brought with them the geopolitical ideas but it is not them who decisively brought Geopolitics back in the city. We will try to find out who, when, in which way and how favored its spectacular development in Romania, after 1989.

GEOPOLITICS AS A TOOL AGAINST ONTOLOGICAL INSECURITY AND DOMESTIC FRAGILITY

When Communism eventually lost its "struggle" with western democracy and disappeared as the dominant political ideology, most of the Romanians perceived this new situation as a threat but also as a chance for them. Romania was eventually a free country, without a foreign "master", but it was also out of the reach of any protector, in case of necessity and threat to its existence and interests.

We think that a foreign policy "identity crisis" and a security vacuum were obvious facts after the 1989 Revolution which put an end to communism. Indeed, the political and economic situation of Romania was really critical at the beginning of the '90. But why a foreign policy crisis?

First, because the dissolution of the Soviet Union removed the threat of a Soviet military intervention in our domestic affairs, which had been a constant fear of Ceaușescu's regime after the Prague military intervention of 1968.

Then there was no more ideological solidarity with the so-called "brethren" socialist countries and no more hegemonic regional power to shape the Central-Eastern European security complex. So, there was no country to count on in case of an aggression, no standing ally or permanent friend, but on the other side, no country emerged as a direct threat in a classical way.

Third, the old political elite was ceding its place to new elites, be they somewhat related to the old ones or totally new. What is striking is the absence, in the first years of freedom, of independent think-tanks and foundations dealing with foreign and security policy. Only some politicians and journalists had the "monopoly" on foreign affairs expertise, and also later some academics.

Certainly, also after 1919 (the Versailles lucky event) someone could assert the existence of a foreign policy crisis, as "Greater" Romania found itself surrounded by some hostile (revisionist) states, including the future Soviet empire, and allied of a remote and hesitant France. Seventy years later, for most of the Romanians it was not obvious, in the first years of post-communist freedom, what kind of foreign policy the country should have. The communist-era pattern of foreign policy was rejected, the inter-war model was impossible to implement in such a new context, while the EU and NATO integration process was not still available for the emerging democracies of the Eastern Europe.

The collective (national) identity crisis refers to the fundamental question: "Who are we?". If the Romanians were no more communists and their country belonged not to the "Soviet" space, neither to the Western one, then who was the kin-partner (friend) and who was the enemy? What kind of identity should they assume in the eyes of the foreigners? To what political and cultural space did Romanians belong?

Therefore, it was a crisis of identity – political, cultural and geopolitical identity. When faced with the fundamental question “Who are we?” most of Romanians instinctively felt they could not rely on some stable and permanent definition of the collective identity. Many of them considered themselves as belonging to the West, through their history and culture, others were still attached to the Soviet and Communist era, and some were undecided. Even worse, during the whole 90’s decade, the country had a poor economy; it quickly lost many of the external markets, while the foreign material and even political support was under the expectations¹. Being a politically unstable country, with a dramatic cleavage between the power and the opposition forces (1990-1996), the foreign investments were very few and limited as amount.

Domestically, Romania also had some significant troubles especially with its ethnic and religious minorities: one could mention the Romanian-Hungarian ethnic clash in Târgu Mureș (1990) and anti-Gypsy violent actions in Hădăreni (1993), not to forget the latent conflict between Orthodox and Greco-Catholic Christians from Transylvania, concerning the sharing of the patrimony confiscated by the communist regime and gave to the Orthodox Church. This raised the old inter-wars collective psychosis concerning the possible fragmentation of the country by the rebellion of the ethnic minorities supported by their keen-states in the neighborhood. So, there was a double trauma: the conscience of being at the “periphery” of the western world (with the possibility that one day Russia would again emerge as a regional power having expansionist dreams) and to live in an unstable country, very heterogeneous and fragile².

Therefore, this was a syndrome of frustration and fear which could perhaps explain the reemergence of popular geopolitics. During the inter-war years, the political domestic situation has been from time to time critical, due to the activities of separatist minorities, the existence of extreme-right movements and the general economic crisis (depression) which hit also Romania. But the collective identity was assumed in its narrative and mythology by the majority of the people – we-Romanians, Orthodox Christians, Europeans etc.

Some of the Romanian prominent policy-makers from the beginning of the 90s described the same unstable and precarious security situation for Romania: difficult domestic situation, no friends and allies to rely on, no security guarantee, few good and friendly neighbors, regional crisis and conflicts near our Eastern and Western borders³. They confessed that they perceived Romania as being in a security void and with a lack of clear-cut foreign policy identity.

¹ The leftist government of the FSN-FDSN (National Salvation Front which became Democratic National Salvation Front) had postponed between 1990 and 1996 the necessary political and economic reforms, therefore the country was laying behind Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia on its way of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, while the threat of the Russian new “imperial” tendencies was also present in many Romanian minds. Therefore, the Romanian public opinion of Western orientation (i.e. – committed to democratization, modernization) felt abandoned by its political class but also by the external powers. They had the impression that Romania will be forever a periphery of the Euro-Atlantic political, economic and cultural space – perhaps “exploited”, never integrated.

² Silviu Neaguț talks about Romania’s feeling of belonging to the “grey zone” between the political, economic and security structures of the West and of Russia, aware of the reshaping of the spheres of influence. Silviu NEGUȚ, *Introducere în geopolitică*, Editura Meteor Press, București, 2005, p. 247.

³ See especially Ioan Mircea PAȘCU, *Bătălia pentru NATO*, Eura Proiect, București, 2007, pp. 14-16, Ion ILIESCU, *Toamna diplomatică*, Editura Redacției Publicațiilor pentru Străinătate,

Therefore, popular geopolitics and official geopolitics (that of the government's representatives) initially converged on showing the security vacuum, the risks and threats coming from the neighboring countries, the destabilizing role of minorities etc.

Other factor explaining the proliferation of geopolitical imaginary is the historic inheritance. The Romanian inter-war period saw the emergence of a "nation's geopolitics", in a certain sense one which was opposed to the German "geopolitics as a myth". The geopoliticians who activated during this period tried to show the strong and weak sides of the state, the challenges and threats it faced after its national unification. Following the sociologist Anton Golopenția, geopolitics was designed to be the "gathering of all the sciences that regard the particular features of the state in a single supreme school"¹. It was the "'queen' of the state" and nation's sciences, the key-social science designed to guide the foreign policy decision-making. After 1989, Geopolitics has never again pretended to be the queen of social sciences and the people who used it did not try to make it the supreme science of politics. But they managed to use words and imaginary borrowed from the classical geopolitics of the nation, its "sacred" territory and the "natural" borders.

But Golopenția dreamed to a comprehensive and permanent geopolitics. Together with his fellows academics and researchers, he had an intuition that Geopolitics is a cross-road discipline dealing with geography, economics, demography, sociology, culture, politics and "its results are national", that means that the main target of the discipline are the policy-makers and the ruling-class². In his opinion, the geopolitical research should be made on a daily basis, like meteorology, because the evolutions within the states and the international affairs are in a continuous course. More than that, he thought that the state's leaders needed an integrative social science, including all the sciences (also geopolitics), in order to be effective rulers and ensure the survival of the state and nation³. This way of thinking open the gate for a kind of materialist and deterministic foreign policy-making process, suggesting that reality exists in an objective environment and the observer (geopolitician) should interpret it in the benefit of the nation's aspirations. This belief has been probably inherited by the Romanian post-communist intellectuals who thought that the political elites need a "science" for a good management of the relations with great powers and dangerous/unstable neighbors in a volatile (globalized) world. So, Geopolitics as public discourse and common knowledge in Romania deals with "power politics" and the sensitive situation of a middle-rank power when confronted with the rapacious big powers but sometimes also with the definition of the nation (who are we?). In some extreme cases, analysts spoke about "the geopolitical course" that Romania suffered from, during many centuries, suggesting a determinist and repetitive cycle of domination-victimization and temporary escapes⁴!

București, 1994, p. 17 and Vasile PUȘCAȘ, "Ce fel de politică externă", *Foreign Policy (Romania)*, no. 1, December 2007/January 2008, pp. 56-58.

¹ Anton GOLOPENȚIA, "Însemnare cu privire la definirea preocupărilor geopolitice", *Anuarul festiv al societății studenților în geografie Soveja*, 1938, pp. 5, 9.

² "Însemnare cu privire la definirea preocupării ce poartă numele de geopolitică" in Anton GOLOPENȚIA, *Opere complete*, vol. II, *Statistică, demografie, geopolitică*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, București, 2001, pp. 533-538.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 538-539.

⁴ Gheorghe BUZATU, "Schimbări geopolitice post-belice", in *România-NATO*, vol. I, Preaderarea, Editura UMC, București, 2003, p. 47.

If the foreign policy debates within the government and the presidential administration, let alone the intelligence services, are generally not available to the public opinion, the Parliament could be seen as a luck exception! The parliamentary debates in the first years of freedom (1990-1993) show the anxiety of a country which is still not accepted in the western "family" of nations (EU and NATO states), has some problems with the revisionist neighbors Hungary, Bulgaria, fears Russia's resurgence and the trouble domestic situation. The national interest was difficult to define because volatile and without a collective foreign policy identity to be used as a basis! More than that, there was a widely-held opinion that Romania is unjustly marginalized by the western powers and those powers operate an artificial separation between "Central European" states and "Eastern European" ones¹. The main concern was that Romania and other Eastern states could become a "buffer-zone" between the West and Russia, and the politicians (ministers, presidents, MPs) used this typical geopolitical image to impress the public opinion²!

In almost all these analysis, a more materialist vision on geopolitics is present: general N. Spiroiu (former minister of defense) complains about the fact that the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe imposed maximal limits for weapons that disadvantaged Romania more than its neighbors, while some political circles within those states were revisionist and dangerous! Ion Iliescu, one of the former presidents, saw Romania as a country of 23 million people, situated at the crossroads among different geopolitical spaces, "a border state" limiting "the Russian space", "the western space" and "the oriental area", and the "key of the Balkan equation" of the Southern flank³. The former minister of foreign affairs, Teodor Meleșcanu, defined the "geopolitical identity" of Romania as being Romanian people's feeling of belonging to Central Europe, a "bridge" (connection point) between North and South Europe⁴. Ioan Mircea Pașcu, former minister of defense and presidential adviser on foreign policy, complained at the beginning of the 90s that

"we were alone, without any security guarantee, in a radically transforming environment, with dangers emerging near our borders....while our country's capacity to generate power (economic and military one) was logically diminished, as a result of the transition process under way..."⁵.

The beginning of the 90s is seen as a triumph of "power politics" in Eastern-Central Europe, where the stronger could do everything while the weak should be very careful at the dangers⁶.

Therefore, the main elements in this discourses are – geography, demography, position, borders, power, and threats. Almost all Romanian politicians and journalists use geopolitics as phrase and imaginary with the meaning of an objective reality: Romania should live with geopolitics because it is a medium-sized player and the world system is shaped by the great powers. We know from the

¹ See the opinion of former Minister of National Defense Nicolae SPIROIU, "Romanian Perceptions on Security in Eastern Europe", *Revista Română de Studii Internaționale*, anul XXV, no. 5-6 (115-116), September-December 1991, p. 324.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Ion ILIESCU, *Toamna...cit.*, p. 20.

⁴ Teodor MELEȘCANU, *Renașterea diplomației românești 1994-1996*, Ed. Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, pp. 87-90.

⁵ Ioan Mircea PAȘCU, *Bătălia...cit.*, pp. 15-16 (our transl.).

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

critical school of thought that "Geopolitics is an interpretative cultural practice", not a science giving access to objective reality!¹

Generally speaking, the Romanian politicians show a consistent unity of view when using the geopolitical imaginary: geopolitics is about geographic position, demography, energy resources, communication ways etc². There are no references to the so-called "critical geopolitics" which is a reflection of postmodernism and deconstructive and which denied the existence of an objective reality to be observed by the IR analysts. Gearoid Ó Tuathail taught us that Geopolitics also means a "strategic survey and gaze", a discourse and "a form of panopticonism", therefore not objective material factors ready to be scientifically discovered but a strategic discourse and survey³. Geopolitics seen as an "advice to the prince", a heritage of Machiavelli and other Medieval and Renaissance thinkers seems obsolete because the new philosophy on human beings depict this discipline as discourse (narrative) and subjectivity⁴. States have "spatial practices" which are defined by geographical "mythologies" and imaginary, therefore critical geopolitics is a discourse about a discourse: the analyst knows that what he states is not the reality of facts but an image, a personal point of view on reality⁵.

The statistical analysis of the politicians speeches – MPs, ministers, opposition leaders – show a consistent presence of the word "geopolitics" and its lexical family, plus geopolitical imaginary, in at least 15% of the discourses concerning foreign and security policy of Romania and global politics⁶. In 250 parliamentary speeches between 1994 and 1998, we found in 5% references to geopolitics and geostrategy as a tool for preserving the national interest and more frequently as labels for the security imaginary⁷.

Most of these speeches depict geopolitics as a material "reality" – Romania being geographically and "objectively" situated between Western Europe, Central-Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the Black-Sea Caucasus spaces and suffering the political and cultural influences of the great power poles.

The main idea is that it is impossible to be a marginal and neglected country when one has such a position, and that risks and threats are more associated with the border-country syndrome! Romania is often depicted as a typical border-state: on the margins of Central Europe (touching Eastern Europe and the Balkans), at the territorial end of EU and NATO etc. Words like "buffer-area", "border-country", revisionist neighbors, flank stability are very frequent⁸. The authors do not usually mention that IR observers do not have a direct and easy access to the external reality, but only to a subjective "process of interpretation", they do not

¹ Gearoid Ó TUATHAIL, "Geopolitical Structures and Cultures...cit.", p. 75.

² Ion ILIESCU, *Toamna...cit.*, p. 20, and Teodor MELEȘCANU, *Renașterea diplomației românești...cit.*, pp. 135-136.

³ Gearoid Ó TUATHAIL, "Problematising Geopolitics: Survey, Statesmanship and Strategy", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, vol. 19, no. 3, 1994, pp. 259-272.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 269.

⁵ Gearoid Ó TUATHAIL, Simon DALBY, "Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics", in IDEM (eds), *Rethinking Geopolitics*, Routledge, London, 1998, pp. 1-15.

⁶ www.cdep.ro – parliamentary debates, 1994-2008 (accessed between May 2005 and September 2008).

⁷ The statistics was made for a period between 1996 and 2000, for the available discourses on the site of the Chamber of Deputies of Romania: <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.home> (accessed between May 2005 and November 2008).

⁸ Ion ILIESCU, *Toamna...cit.*, p. 35.

acknowledge that they offer a "narrative construction" and that the social world is an intersubjective construction¹. All the elements used by Romanian politicians for building the geopolitical narrative – balance of power, geographical position, geostrategic importance – are in fact social constructions and they reflect cultural images and practices. The meanings that they want to give to the supposed "objective" facts are in fact subjective and constructed a posteriori, only they do not realize that²!

Concerning the "scientific" geopolitics, the situation is apparently satisfactory because there are about 30-40 books by year dealing with geopolitics and geostrategy in Romania. In reality, there are few Romanian original books on geopolitics, other than handbooks, but the practical geopolitics (used by policy-makers) and popular geopolitics (by the journalists) exists at the level of the vocabulary and does not seem to need books to rely on! When the word "geopolitics" or other words of the same family (geopolitical) are used, this is a common understanding that a policy or a strategy involves the interests and interference of the great powers, meaning power, anarchy, danger, risk of war, competition.

Resorting to geopolitics as phraseology and imaginary is similar to the securitization act first described by the Copenhagen security studies school. Foreign and security policies are often surrounded by a "veil" of mystery, they are conceived in relation with levels of secrecy which are conferred by decision-makers, in a typical act of "securitization".

Securitization consists in a speech-act followed by concrete measures through which an authorised individual states that the reference-object of a security policy is threatened ("existential threat") and asks for exceptional rights in order to protect it properly³. Thus, the object is taken out of the area of normal politics and put in the zone of the exceptional and urgent measures, where the democratic rules and control mechanisms, which are typical to an open society, are not ensured. Security is also a speech act and the decision-makers may declare that a certain field of activity is vital for the survival of the state and the citizens, or the national values ("speech act" – Waever), thus preventing the opposite views to express their point of view! But Geopolitics has the tendency to replace Security and even International Relations, playing the role of an universal key! Thus, securitization on behalf of geopolitical arguments is always possible if one does not realise that Geopolitics is not an objective fact but a discourse, a subjective creation. Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, once famously stated that "security should not always be seen as a good thing", because the political elites could use it to block critical views from the civil society! Through "desecuritization", the sensitive issues are again moved in the space of the democratical debates⁴! The geopolitical imaginary in

¹ See Jutta WELDES, Diana SACO, "Making State Action Possible: the USA and the Discursive Construction of the Cuban Problem, 1960-1994", *Millenium. Journal of International Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1996, pp. 361-395 (especially pp. 368-369).

² For a good explanation of the constructivist discourse in IR see Ted HOPF, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory", *International Security*, vol. 23, no. 1, Summer 1998, pp. 171-200.

³ Barry BUZAN, Ole WAEVER, Jaap DE WILDE, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London and Boulder-Colorado, 1998, pp. 23-24.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 4. See also Claudia ARADAU, "Security and the Democratic Scene: Desecuritization and Emancipation", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2004, pp. 388-413. For a critic of the discourse based on the lack of ethical/moral goals within the

Romania sometimes tended to be used as a hindrance for the democratic control on foreign policy!

One of the foreign policy common axioms is that Romania is culturally and geographically part of the West, thus it does not have a real choice between possible opposite loyalties like the East-West one! Using determinist and materialist version of geopolitics, some political analysts and journalists interpreted Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations in the light of a fateful "game" in which civilizations are bound to fight and Romania is obliged to rally with the West and fight against Islam. They suggested that because the civilizations will inherently fight and Islam is a "bad" (violent) religion¹, while the West is democratic and "good", the geopolitical logic should determine the behavior of the statesman and avoid useless popular debates and lost of time. The same situation was present when analyzing Romania's prospective politics towards Russia: because Russia is often depicted as a strong and predatory power, its position and interest would "fatally" lead to a conflict with EU and USA, so Romania has to prepare for resistance... Geopolitical common knowledge (becoming stereotypes) sometimes helped securitize a foreign policy option, blocking alternative ways of thinking!

TYPOLOGY OF GEOPOLITICAL APPROACHES. BRANCHES AND TENDENCIES

As we mentioned at the beginning of this study, there was different people with diverse professional background who worked together or separately to revive geopolitics after the Cold War. This explains why we find not only geography, but also history, sociology, security, strategy, economy and cultural studies. We think it is important to find a certain typology of the geopolitical studies and the main characteristics of the different branches.

The Sociological School

The first books and articles edited in the post-communist Romania were, most of them, attempts to find a link with the inter-war geopolitics. The geographers were focusing on identifying the main geographic and political features of the Romanian national territory, especially the strong points and the vulnerabilities. They were interested, together with historians in the repartition of ethnic minorities and the relations with the neighboring countries. This was the case for the 1994 collective work of historians Emil Emandi, Gheorghe Buzatu and Vasile Cucu, under the aegis of the Romanian Academy (Centre for History and European Civilization) and the University of Bucharest (Faculty of Geography – Research Centre on 'Population – Ecology of human settlements and political geography). For

securitization theory, see Rita TAURECK, "Securitization theory and securitization studies", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2006, pp. 53-61.

¹ George RONCEA, "Kosovo – reduta mafiei islamice din Europa", *Ziua*, February 16, 2008.

enhancing the academic legitimacy of this new discourse, prestigious inter-war names had been introduced in the book: Ion Conea, Simion Mehedinți, Rădulescu-Motru, Mircea Vulcănescu, A.D. Xenopol, together with contemporary historians (Gh. Buzatu, Petre Otu, Ioan Saizu), but also with the western scientific agenda through some foreign academics (Christian Daudel, Franck Debié, Ira Glassner, W.R. Mead, Kurt Treptow)¹.

On the other side, the geopolitical journalism has a long tradition in Romania, being inspired by the foreign examples from the Western states. The most famous specialized review of geopolitics, in the inter-wars period, was *Geopolitică și Geistorie* which was edited in the years '40 of the previous century and benefited from the presence of the well-known authors: Ion Conea, Simion Mehedinți, Gh. Brătianu, Anton Golopenția etc. Also the prestigious reviews *Sociologie românească* and *Mișcarea* contained numerous articles on geopolitics.

After the end of Communist regime, only in 1997 a review of this type appeared in Romania, whose name was *EUXIN* (Review of Sociology, Geopolitics and Geohistory), edited by the Institute of Socio-behavioral and geopolitics studies (Institutul de Studii Socio-comportamentale și Geopolitice – ISOGEP). A long pause between 1944 and 1997 explained the dramatical fate of geopolitics as a discipline caught in the turbulence of state politics.

EUXIN was defined as an open group, an inter-disciplinary task group made up of sociologists, economists, historians and theologians. The name has been inspired by the fact that Christianity in Romania started on the sea coasts (the Euxin Pont meaning the Black Sea area), by the holly apostle Andrew. The Christian spiritual life is coupled with the Latin origin of the Romanians and the Greek-Roman synthesis in culture. The existence of Romanian people is linked with the struggle for access to the sea and the control of the mountains, the Black Sea being the essential pillar of the Romanian "security space" (Gh. Brătianu)².

In the Preface (the program of the *EUXIN* group), the founding members explain that the review will be a forum of open dialogue and debates and argue that the usefulness of geopolitics and sociology should not be demonstrated, being axiomatic. The continuity with the inter-war period is openly claimed and an homage is given to the great names – Gheorghe Brătianu, Sabin Manuilă, Mircea Vulcănescu, Ion Conea, Simion Mehedinți. Anton Golopenția, C. Daicoviciu, Sextil Pușcariu etc. The starting point from the developments of geopolitics is assumed

¹ E.I. EMANDI, Gh. BUZATU, V.S. CUCU (coord.), *Geopolitica*, vol. I, Editura "Glasul Bucovinei", Iași, 1994, p. 7. The first book is made up of debates about the features of this science and the connection with the national interests, the "Topo-politics" (Topopolitica – the analyze of the position, physiognomy and configuration of state), the "Domo-politics" (Demopolitica – the state seen as population living on the territory), the "Krato-politics" (Kratopolitica – the state as form of government). The second one deals with the concepts and working tools used by Geopolitics, the regional and the "integralist" geopolitics. In their preface to the book, the three editors refer to the methodological difficulties faced by geopolitics – its scientific character is often denied even by the well-known Penguin Concise Columbia Encyclopedia (1987) and is called only a "political analyze method" focusing on the relevance of geographic elements in the international affairs.

² *EUXIN*, *Revista de sociologie, politică și geistorie*, no. 1-2, 1997, pp. 7-12. One should precise that Gh. Brătianu developed this geopolitical theory on the occasion of the academic courses he taught: at the Bucharest University the course called "Chestiunea Mării Negre" and at the Superior School of War Studies the one labeled "Originile și formarea unității românești". See Aurel PENTELESCU, "Gh. I. Brătianu și Marea Neagră", *Lumea Militară*, nr.3, 2005, <http://www.lumea-militara.ro> (accessed on 01.10. 2005).

to be the inter-war period because it was a glorious time and a "golden" generation of scientists in Romania.

Thus, geopolitics is put in the same basket as sociology, on the ground that those experts who published the review *Geopolitică și Geoistorie* in the '40 were mostly sociologists and they had argued that the geopolitics should become "a social science" (Golopenția)¹. The same people who formed the *EUXIN* group gathered in 2000 and set up the Centre for Geopolitics and Visual Anthropology, within the Department of Sociology, University of Bucharest². Currently, the most well-known revue of geopolitics in Romania is called *GeoPolitica (Revue of Political Geography, GeoPolitics and GeoStrategy)* and it is edited by the "Ion Conea Association of Geopolitics"³. People who publish articles in this revue are coming from different disciplines and traditions (geography, history, sociology, strategy, economy), therefore there is no common denominator for it, and instead one can see a multi-disciplinary approach for the topics. Even if there is no clear "realist" dominance in these studies, the authors often face difficulties in abandoning the old state-and nation-centre paradigms. Fortunately, there is a younger generation who is more interested in the cultural phenomena – Islam, civilizations, circulation of ideas, international organizations, minorities, diasporas and the issue of the societal security and non-military risks – using the instruments of sociology and philosophy, and not the military history and strategy⁴.

A parallel direction of study is developed by the sociological school, especially the Centre for Geopolitics and Visual Anthropology (CGVA) of the University of Bucharest. In a revue, called *Geopolitica*, issued by this centre, some young authors are very enthusiastic in analyzing civilizations through the intellectual paradigms, the so-called "noology" – the cultural spirituality, basic values and symbols of the peoples ("noological spaces" – "geopolitics could be seen as a noological discipline dealing with space"⁵). Some of them reject Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations, on the ground that the civilizations "cannot even meet", and only the "political projects starting from these civilizations" can interact⁶. Professor

¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 11-12.

² This centre of research was set up in 2000, with a grant offered by the World Bank and its activities are connected with the "Security Studies" master cycle at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance.

³ *GeoPolitica* has a scientific council made up of some appreciated professors, governmental experts, military officers and independent analysts (Dan Berindei, Lucian Culda, Ioan Ianoș, Gheorge Marin, Silviu Neaguț, Cristian Troncotă, Ștefan Vergati etc., the director being Vasile Simileanu, a competent geographer who also studied the strategy during his military education. This is an academic revue, recognized as such by the National Council of Scientific Research within the University Education level – CNCSIS, therefore scientifics who publish articles in it can use them for attaining academic degrees. Most of the senior editors are geographers.

⁴ See Darie CRISTEA, *Balkanii. Memorie și geopolitică*, Editura Economică, București, 2005. In his analyses on the geopolitics in the Balkans he insists especially on the imagology associated to this area by the Western countries, stating that the Balkans are synonymous with "war, inter-ethnic and religious tensions, poverty", that is "the evil in Europe", pp. 17-21. This explains why all the East-European states reject the "Balkan identity" and the "Balkanism" as a label of behavior. The instruments he uses are more adequate for a constructivist and cultural approach than for a realist analysis.

⁵ Adela ȘERBAN, "Tradiție și post-modernitate în noo-spațiul românesc", *Geopolitica*, an IV, nr. 1(5), 2005, pp. 32-38, http://www.geopolitica.ro/revista/5/rev_03_005.pdf (accessed on 24.05.2006).

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

Ilie Bădescu started the academic campaign to legitimize the sub-field "noopolitics" within sociology and he was soon followed by his students from the Faculty of Sociology¹. But the CGVA also focused on "tendencies of regionalism and enclavization" as it was the case in April 2004, when it organized a round-table on this issue. The most debated problem was the situation of the Romanian population in the Transylvanian districts situated in central-Romania where the Hungarians are the majority and as some of them aspire to complete independence, there is the question of "societal insecurity" felt by the ethnic Romanians.

Often, geopolitics is seen as a key-discipline for understanding the fate of Romania as a state and nation, during the passed centuries, the suggestion being that only the decision-makers who are fully aware of the geopolitical lessons could ensure their state's survival in a dangerous world. This is a purely realist state of mind and it has behind a strong literature on war and competition in international relations².

The sociological direction is characterized by its focus on the states as actors on the international arena and by the interaction among identity groups within the country. After the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks, there is a special focus put by the sociological geopoliticians on the terrorist actors, networks and activities. Many of these experts are working within the Romanian Intelligence Service or the Ministry of Defense, therefore, their knowledge has a practical finality – guaranteeing the national security through the science.

The Geographical Approach

The main focus is on Romania's territory, population and borders. There is a constant interest for defining the life-space of the Romanians as a people, the characteristics of the borders and the domestic situation of the ethnic groups in the context of the EU integration. There is a historical overview, starting from the past empires, through the modern nation-states and the future post-modern entities EU like³. Usually, geographers who tend to specialize in geopolitics are obsessed with the positivist approach (meaning that they try to find numerous facts and data on Romania: population, economy, roads and railroads networks, cell phones density etc.) and the materialist vision of the world. The main features of Romania as a state and as a nation – a 22 million customers market, well qualified and cheap labor, natural resources, tourism potential, a trading transit corridor offered by the Danube, the exit to the Black Sea as a gate between Northern Europe and Caucasus, the pipelines – are considered good determinants of the country's future. Authors sometimes listed the achievements of the Romanian foreign policy (the association agreement with EU, the membership within the Council of Europe, the future NATO and EU membership etc.), explaining them as the result of the national efforts and sacrifices but also as a consequence of the valuable geographic

¹ Ilie BĂDESCU, *Noopolitică – Sociologie noologică. Teoria fenomenelor asincrone*, Editura Ziua, București, 2006.

² Henry Kissinger, John J. Mearsheimer, Z. Brzezinsky, K. Waltz are the most-quoted names and considered perfect gurus by most of the Romanian political analysts.

³ Ilie BĂDESCU, Dan DUNGACIU (coord.), *Sociologia și geopolitica frontierei*, vol. I-II, Editura Floare Albastră, București, 1995.

relief, the Romanian Armed Forces' endowment with all kinds of weapons, the high level of military training, participation in peace-keeping operations, multilateral diplomacy etc¹.

This is a combined and very heterogeneous paradigm but it does not depart from the suggestion that Romania's value on the international stage is given by the views and interests of the great powers and institutions, which is embodied in the theory of the "pivotal state". Starting from an article written in 1996 by Robert Chase, Emily B. Hill and Paul Kennedy (the last of them being a notorious "realist" historian of international relations) on world powers and their competition for strategic points on the world maps, Romania has been described as an "pivotal" state, which is located at the crossroads of geopolitical regions – Europe, Eurasia, Central-Asia, Middle East².

Even some more scientific authors, who want to identify material and objective factors from geography, economy, demography and accepts the increased role of information technology, economic globalization and transnational actors to explain their theories usually cannot help resorting to traditional concepts formulated by Mackinder (heartland, geographical pivot), Spykman (rimland) a.s.o. As an example, the Black Sea is often described as a "buffer zone which waits for being taken into account" by the great powers with conflicting interests³ or a "strategic synapses". These concepts suggest that the value of the region is attributed by the external great powers which are present in this "security complex"⁴.

The already mentioned "foreign policy identity crisis" of Romania remarkably materialized in the obsessive game with the geographical and geopolitical space of belonging. While the years '90 of the last century allowed the Romanian decision-making, strategic analysts and public opinion to focus especially on issues such as "Eastern Europe", "South-Eastern Europe", "Central Europe", "former Soviet space", in connection with the national goal of EU and NATO integration, the beginning of the new century shifted the Romanian public's attention to two geopolitical decoupages which were invented and spilled-over by some US strategic circles, but sometimes also with the intervention of significant European thinkers. Romanians tried to escape the "label" of a Balkan people and country, instead opting for Central European or Central-Eastern European state⁵. This was similar with the efforts of Croatian and Slovenian new elites to take out their new countries from the negative mythology of the Balkans by rejecting the Yugoslavian past.

The "Greater Middle East", and the "Wider Black Sea Area"⁶ are western-inspired geopolitical regions which strongly hit the Romanian spatial (geopolitical)

¹ Vasile SIMILEANU, *România. Tensiuni geopolitice*, Editura Top Form, București, 2003, pp. 67-70.

² See Adrian POP, *At the Crossroads of Interlocking Subregional Arrangements. Romania's Pivotal Role in East Central Europe*, ed. by NATO Defense College, Fall 1999, pp. 84-89.

³ Gheorghe VĂDUVA, "Pivot sau margine?", *GeoPolitica*, anul III, nr. 14-15, 2005, pp. 49-58.

⁴ The "security complex" concept was proposed by Barry Buzan in the late 80' and then by him and Ole Waever, in order to depict the security and strategic interdependences which exist between neighboring states, ranging from friendship and cooperation to absolute hostility, so that these states cannot think their security without taking the other ones into account. See Barry BUZAN, Ole WAEVER, *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 40-92.

⁵ Teodor MELEȘCANU, *Renașterea diplomației românești 1994-1996*, Editura Dacia, Cluj Napoca, 2002, p. 136.

⁶ Ronald ASMUS, "Developing a New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region", *Istanbul Papers*, no. 2, Turkey, June 25-27, 2004. Also Ronald ASMUS, Bruce P. JACKSON, "The

imaginary, during the last four years. They were quickly embraced by the Romanian political leadership and strategic thinkers¹.

The Wider Black Sea Area includes NATO members Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, newly independent CIS states Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, and three South Caucasus states Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia². Most frequently, the presence of oil and gas in the Black Sea-Caucasus region is analyzed through a geostrategic perspective focusing on the great powers and regional powers' rivalry. The region is seen as an "energetic cake" able to satisfy the hungriens for hydrocarbures of the main consumers and also as an "ellipse of strategic conflicts" which have to be dealt with if the power poles want to stabilize the area³.

Most of the analysts put a strong emphasis on the natural energetic resources – oil and gas – which are to be found in the GME and Caucasus-Central Asia and are said to be of prime importance for all the international power poles⁴. Therefore, they foresaw a mix of competition and cooperation between US, EU, China, Russia and India for dealing with the scarce and valuable resources and the building up of pipelines. Concerning the GME region, most of the authors which use geopolitical and security studies perspectives remark the strategic importance of this area, produced by the existence of foreign interests, but also the domestic structural weakness of the Muslim states (demographic explosion, social unrest, gender discrimination, unemployment, corrupted and illegitimate leadership, lack of national identity etc.)⁵. They prefer to find geometrical models for explaining the

Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom", <http://www.policyreview.org/jun04/asmus.html>, (accessed on 12.09.2005). The Greater Black Sea Area is a geopolitical concept and it comprises the riparian states and also those who are connected within the same security complex: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova.

¹ The Greater Middle East (GME) Initiative is a well-known political project, launched by the Bush Administration in the USA, at the beginning of 2004. The paternity of the GME initiative belongs to a group of American analysts from the Pentagon, under the aegis of the Council on Foreign Affairs, RAND Corporation and the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) of Washington who tried to bring on the security agenda of the US policy-makers this strategic belt, source of exceptional benefits but also of great challenges and risks for the medium and long run. They suggested that, after the end of the Cold War, the danger of communist ideology and of Soviet military block was replaced by a mixture made of radical Islam, terrorist networks, WMD proliferation, giving birth to a new enemy who poses non-conventional threats and which produce asymmetric conflicts, one which gained legitimacy by contesting Western liberal values and interests. The core of this initiative consist in the need of America to protect itself and its key allies against the new asymmetric threats which dominate the global security agenda after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. Furthermore, the US government identified a huge belt of strategic instability and of the most important source of threats and risks to the national security and to trans-Atlantic security too, lying between Morocco and Bangladesh, touching Sub-Saharan Africa, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, from the North Atlantic shore to the Western borders of the People Republic of China. The GME is made up of numerous states, from Morocco, Egypt to Iran, Pakistan and even Bangladesh, the common denominators being Islam and the fundamentalism, weak states, terrorism and migratory fluxes caused by the demographic boom.

² Vladimir SOCOR, "Security Priorities in the Black Sea – Caspian Region", Papers of the Conflict Prevention Studies Centre no. 7, 2003, Black Sea University Foundation.

³ Stan PETRESCU, "Elipsa strategică a Mării Negre", *GeoPolitica*, anul III, nr. 14-15, 2005, pp. 115-128.

⁴ Doru COJOCARU, *Géopolitique de la mer Noire*, l'Harmattan, Paris, 2007, pp. 163-165.

⁵ Doru COSTEA, "Coordonate geopolitice ale Orientului Mijlociu Extins", *Monitor Strategic*, anul VI, nr. 3-4, 2005, pp. 29-61.

states' realignment and strategic choices, for example using the "axis" theory. Professor Dan Dungaciu explains the formation of two geopolitical axis – "the North-South axis" (Russia, Armenia, Iran) and "the East-West axis" (the Washington-London one which is interested in the Caucasus and Black Sea region)¹. He insists on the need for a Euro-Atlantic strategy for the Black Sea area, because "the Black Sea is today the only European 'natural' periphery which has been ignored by Brussels"².

The geopolitics of the GME and GBSA is built on two coordinates – the access to oil and gas for the foreign powers and the need for democratization and peaceful regime change.

Thus, the more "constructivist" interpretations are generally speaking absent from the Romanian geopolitical thinking, may be excepting the "negative" side – the propagation of Islamic fundamentalist norms towards different states – Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Central Asia, Caucasus etc. Even when analyzing the cooperation mechanisms' formation, Romanian authors usually emphasize the strategic and rational interests the states have in building international regimes but not the force of the norms and ideas in shaping new interests, new identities and behaviors. If the western powers want to export the democratic regimes and human rights norms in Europe's neighborhood, this is not only a "natural" tendency of the power poles to promote their ideologies ("soft power") but also the result of the norms' socialization by international actors (individuals, states, trans-national "epistemic communities", international organizations etc.) which interact. So, they tend to assume that there is a tangible reality, a "realist" (geopolitical) one, based on anarchy, competition and fear, ignoring the fact that the ideas, beliefs and interests of the states' elites are intersubjective constructs, elements created by the perception and the cultural lens of the decision-makers. As Jutta Weldes among others emphasized "national interests are social constructions created by meaningful objects out of the intersubjective and culturally established meanings", thus they "emerge out of the representations through which state officials and others make sense of the world around them"³.

The Military-strategic and IR Direction

This line of study is interested in the study of international politics, dealing with great powers, regional powers and the security policies. Most of the analyses consider geopolitics as a branch of IR, even a sub-field of security studies, to whom it is certainly related, as geography is put under the service of states' survival and

¹ A close explanatory pattern is used by the historian Maria Georgescu in order to throw light on Romania's decision to enter World War I. In her opinion, the Romanian decision-makers were confronted with "a geostrategic dilemma when choosing between the West and the East, the rival options". The foreign reader must know that for the Romanian history, East and West mean "tradition", "despotism", "backwardness" versus "modernization", "liberalism". MARIA GEORGESCU, "Eșichierul politic românesc în fața unei dileme geopolitice", *Revista de Istorie Militară*, nr. 5-6 (96-98), 2006, pp. 9-17.

² Dan DUNGACIU, *Moldova Ante Portas*, Editura Tritonic, București, 2005, pp. 272-306 (the chapter "Geopolitics and Security at the Black Sea").

³ Jutta WELDES, "Constructing National Interests", *European Journal of International Relations*, no. 2, 1996, p. 280.

development, while localizing on map the risks, threats and opportunities which may arise. Both are "sciences of the state" or policy-oriented disciplines, exactly as the founding fathers – Kjellen, Ratzel – conceived it. Geopolitics is a science "which accomplished a new synthesis of history, of the territorial space, of the moral and physical resources of a community, which can thus find its place in the hierarchy of powers"¹, it is a middle way discipline combining social science (International Relations, psycho-sociology, anthropology) with physical and human geography. The German inter-war Geopolitics has been discovered in the years 90' by some Romanian authors which also published good synthesis regarding this topic².

Some "geopoliticians" are heavily influenced by the classical security studies paradigm (that is a pre-Copenhagen school one) and seem to see geopolitics only as a set of tools that the decision-makers have to use in order to avoid serious imbalances of power, regional insecurity and persistent conflicts, and to keep an easy access to natural resources, therefore a very state-centered paradigm³. Other authors, who are more open to the Copenhagen security paradigm, mixed geopolitics with pluralist security analysis, but their focus is usually put on the material factors which constitute the main assets and vulnerabilities for Romania as a nation-state: geographical location, population, economic potential, industry. If security is an "act of speech", then "securitization" of the security landscape means also a "securitization" of the geopolitical discourse. The "securitizing actors" who try to extract geopolitics as a security element, from the public debate are to be found within the political class and the governmental experts.

Embodying the classical historian-military tradition of geopolitics, some academics working within the Academy for Advanced Military Studies or the Centre for Security and Defense Studies offered a good synthesis of theories and practices in world affairs, analyzed through the lens of this discipline. The spectacular development of Geopolitics under the aegis of the military top-colleges came after the rector of the National Defense University had agreed to include the courses *Geopolitics and History in the 20th Century* and *Geopolitics and Geostrategy in the 20th Century* in the curriculum of undergraduates and graduates alike⁴. Worth to mention that a new "scientific geopolitics" eventually emerged, which is situated within the international relations discipline, as opposed to classical geopolitics based on geographical determinism and social Darwinism and being used by the expansionist states to legitimize their imperial strategies⁵. Authors who are adept of this school often tried to set up scientific and quantitative bases for this discipline, and made a net distinction between the theory and the practice of geopolitics, suggesting that the theory should not embrace the state propaganda's aim, but keep a permanent contact with the social sciences as a whole. They acknowledged that classical geopolitics is more and more obsolete, because the clash of interests between the great powers usually avoids the military force and instead, there is a preference for diplomatic tools, economic strategies, political and imagological instruments.

¹ Pierre GALOIS, *Géopolitique: les voies de la puissance*, Plon-FEDN, Paris, 1990, pp. 25-38.

² See especially Ionel Nicu SAVA, *Școala geopolitică germană*, Editura Info-Team, București, 1997.

³ Stan PETRESCU, "Cadrul geopolitic și geostrategic global și european", *Psihologia mass media*, anul XI, nr. 2, 2005, pp. 68-72.

⁴ Constantin HLIHOR, *Istorie și geopolitică în Europa secolului XX*, Academia de Înalte Studii Militare, București, 1999.

⁵ IDEM, *Geopolitica și geostrategia în analiza relațiilor internaționale contemporane. Considerații teoretice și metodologice*, Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare "Carol I", București, 2005.

Also, there is an obvious tendency of many Romanian authors to favor more classic "realist" models of explanations in depicting the international relations. Conflict, rivalry, fear and even the conspiracy theory are dressed in state-centric clothes.

The Globalization Geopolitics

This modern approach is about the effects that this general phenomenon has on Romanian population, state and dominant culture. Theories of European integration combine with theories of nation-states and at the domestic level some authors insist on the role of new and old elites¹ – national, regional vs European and Euro-Atlantic ones. Ilie Bădescu and Dan Dungaciu were both of them very critical with the Romanian political elites, suggesting that the failure of the modernization process was also due to them. The authors deplored the lack of valid and valuable elites in Romania after 1989, they talk about "the sociologic paradox of the elites phenomenon" caused by the counter-selection strategy of the communist leadership². The efforts to rebuild geopolitics and to connect it with the western schools continued in the second part of the nineties³.

The Cultural Direction

This branch of research is interested in the way Romanians define their identity in relation with the European, Euroatlantic identities and vis a vis other cultural spaces. The intense debate on Samuel Huntington's concept of the "clash of civilizations" is an obvious proof of the huge public interest in this issue. Analyzing the post-11 September 2001 events, many Romanian geopoliticians emphasize the universalization of the "Islam" issue which is perceived in the West through the lens of Islamic fundamentalism. The "Islamology" which exists in the USA is frequently used to legitimize certain policies and decision-maker's strategies, and one could discern two dominant school of thought: the "confrontational" one which see Islam as a big danger for the Western democratic world, and the "appeasement-accommodation" theory which separates political Islam from Islamism and asserts that eventually the moderate Muslims will democratize and modernize their societies, acting as de facto allies of the West⁴.

¹ Ilie BĂDESCU, Dan DUNGACIU (coord.), *Sociologia și geopolitică...cit.*, vol. II, p. 326.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 343-356.

³ Also in 1995, a good synthesis called *Geopolitică* was published by Sergiu Tămaș, an academic belonging to the traditional, nationalistic school of thought but more open to the analyze of the globalization's effects on the world order. The book summarizes the well-known theories of the Western authors from R. Kjellen and F. Ratzel till the Cold War's theoreticians but a special focus is also on recent opposing theories of S. Huntington and F. Fukuyama. Analyzing the situation of Romania, a candidate to NATO and EU enlargement, Tămaș stated that Romanian decision-makers should use geopolitical lessons to anticipate the developments within the strategic environment in IR, so as Romania could keep playing its role of regional security and stability factor, while safeguarding its national unity and territorial integrity. See Sergiu TĂMAȘ, *Geopolitică – o abordare prospectivă*, Editura Noua Alternativă, București, 1995.

⁴ Marius LAZĂR, "Aspecte ideologice și geopolitice ale renașterii islamice contemporane", *GeoPolitica*, anul III, nr. 14-15, 2005, pp. 219-254.

Analyzing post-September 11 attacks, some Romanian authors quoted Huntington stating that "Islam is the less tolerant of the monotheist religions, nowadays". In a world culturally dominated by the West, where pluralism and tolerance seem to be the general norm of life, Islam is a huge challenge to the cultural relativism which is the common norm of today¹. But they state that Islam is not a monolithic block with a single identity and common interests, but a common umbrella for different cultural and national traditions. Many of the Muslim states have foreign policies driven by pragmatism and moderation, not by religious dogmatism². Therefore, there is a critique of Huntington's thesis on the Islamic world as a single actor in IR.

The famous Huntington's book on the Clash of civilizations had a deep and persistent effect on the Romanian academics and mass media. The fact that this author draw a line separating Transylvania from the rest of Romania (delimitating the Orthodox Christendom from the Catholic and Protestant one) and he grouped Romania in the orthodox bloc with Russia was widely seen in a negative manner. In the forward written to the Romanian edition of the Clash of civilizations³, Professor Iulia Motoc situates the academic debates on this book within the framework of the IR Theory, insisting on the general tendency for Realism to offer predictions (forecasts), not only explanations and "laws" of states' behavior. In her opinion, Huntington "seems to be under the influence of the same predictive complex" and suggests that the Cold War rivalry may be continued by another conflictual paradigm based on ethnic and national identity issues.

May be the Realist paradigm could not predict the peaceful end of the Cold War because its instruments were not perfectly functional, suggests the American author. Even if he was right to identify a cultural factor explaining human collectivities' behavior and preferences, he exaggerates by excessively simplifying the framework of international politics. Iulia Motoc asserts that Huntington can't go beyond the (neo)realist paradigm, instead he simply substituted states by civilizations and the balance of power with the balance of civilizations (the West versus the rest). Even the more nuanced and exact concept of "balance of threat", proposed by Stephen Walt in order to explain some failures of the balance of power explanative capacity, seems to be ignored when predicting future realignments on the international stage.

At the same time, Huntington sees a world of conflict and competition, therefore a complementary realist instrument, the "bandwagoning" behavior is valorized but

¹ Paul DOBRESCU, *Geopolitica*, cit., p. 357.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 354-355.

³ Iulia MOTOC, Forward to the Romanian edition of the S. Huntington's *Clash of civilizations (Ciocnirea civilizațiilor și refacerea ordinii mondiale*, Editura Antet, București, 1998, pp. 15-23). Sergiu Tămaș was also one of the Romanian authors who criticised Huntington, arguing that the clear-cut separation between western civilization and the rest of world, as a mirroring of the opposition moderates/radicals "is fundamentally wrong, because such antagonisms exists within every civilization and the economic causes of conflict seem to be as pertinent explanatory factors as religious ones, if not more". In his opinion, the conflicts are dealt with (negotiations, threats, wars) by states, not by abstract civilizations, and the rules of game at the world level are done and defended by the great powers. It is true that the non-state actors, the trans-national and supra-national ones are more and more active but the state still remain dominant. Then, he underlined the fact that the problem of well-being, freedom and democracy is not confined to a specific civilization, in fact is a universal challenge transcending cultural differences. TĂMAȘ, *Geopolitica...cit.*, p. 185.

under the civilizational paradigm, that is – culturally related peoples and states tend to come together against different ones and avoid balancing each other. This mechanistic and determinist paradigm ignores not only the existence of complex interdependence, postulated since the '70s by R. Keohane and J. Nye jr., but also topics like ethics and moral in International Relations. Professor Motoc ends its foreword by stating that "Samuel Huntington's best seller could become a dangerous ideological object", that is engendering a self-fulfilling prophecy mechanism. The course of events, after the terrorist attacks of September 2001 against US military and civilian targets, has been widely interpreted by the "realist" thinkers as a confirmation of Huntington's truth.

In contrast with Prof. Motoc's critical view, other Romanian authors seem to embrace a more huntingtonian perspective when dealing with the challenge of radical Islam or the "identity wars" in the Balkans and Africa. For some authors, "political, civilizational, cultural and religious clash"... "spreads widely on the verge between the 'centre' and the ex-third world, more exactly within a part of the 'periphery' – the Islamic world"¹. For others, "there is a terrible geopolitical reality: the geopolitical fracture between the western civilization and the Muslim one really exists, even if, for some reason, the civilized world does not want to assert it".

But why did Huntington's book have such a success in Romania, almost as great as the success he knew in the Baltic states? It is difficult to give an accurate and final answer as long as it is well-known that his famous "map of civilizations" in fact separated Transylvania from the rest of Romania! The success of Huntington in Romania is probably linked with the foreign policy identity crisis of the 90s (to what political and cultural space does Romania belong?), but also with the collective trauma regarding the ethnic minorities (often seen as "Trojan horses" of neighboring revisionist states) and the fascination for a cultural explanations which does not depart too much from the "realist" and materialist view of the world.

In fact, Huntington and his fellows could be labeled as "civilizational realists" as they use the cultural element in a state-centric, realist framework, suggesting that identities are culturally objective facts, a pre-given and immutable reality. Most people in Romania did not really understand that Huntington's theses are giving a deterministic view on cultural issues, which are not objective realities but social constructions! Instead of having a scientific understanding of this perceptive creation, they tended to securitize the whole discourse, blocking any attempt to show its materialism and determinism!

THE SECURITY, DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICY DOCUMENTS OF ROMANIA

These official papers issued by the leading Romanian governing bodies are important narratives which contain the word and image of Geopolitics and could help us recreate the "common sense" which was dominant in the 90s within the leadership and security experts' community.

¹ Vasile SECĂREȘ, *Conflicte ale primului deceniu: câteva paradoxuri*, Editura Millenium III, București, 2002, pp. 47-51. Also you can see Paul DOBRESCU, *Geopolitica*, cit., pp. 354-355.

Generally all of them, in the first post-communist years, refer to this situation of insecurity, vacuum and uncertainty and use a predominant materialist imaginary of geopolitics inspired by Realism and Neorealism.

"The Integrated Concept Regarding the National Security of Romania" from 1994 stated that the country has some "geostrategic" assets – its human and material potential, the territorial size and geographic location (nearing the Danube, the biggest European river), the sea coast and the role played in ensuring regional stability and security. We see a materialist vision on geopolitics, which is very close to the "realist" tradition in IR! Adrian Miroiu and Simona Soare mention the strategic documents from 1991 and 1994 as obvious examples of "realist" logic ("documents constructed in accordance with the neorealist logic which was typical for the Cold War and they focus on the classical threats to national security")¹.

The 1994 text also mentioned that Romania is affected by the "handicap" of belonging to a "buffer zone" between Western Europe and the former Soviet space, the neighborhood with some local conflicts (Balkans, Moldova, Middle East etc). The document stated that Romania's efforts to transform itself and modernize is slowed down by an "unstable geopolitical and strategic environment", without "firm allies" and "security guarantees" and the existence of the tendency towards power politics among the great powers².

The National Security Strategy from 1999 is the least "geopolitical" from all of the NSSs, as its main focus is on democratization, promotion of human rights, rule of law, Euro-Atlantic integration, with only few materialist elements: ethnic irredentism, conflicts in the neighborhood, spread of dangerous weapons, separatist movements threatening state's unity and the risk of denied access to energy resources.

The National Security Strategy from 2001 is also lesser "geopolitical" than that of 1994 and 2006, because it does not use the word "Geopolitics" or some derivatives and does not resort even to classical security imaginary related to geopolitics – it is mentioned that there is no classical risk of aggression against Romania "in the near future" and the main risks are domestic ones³.

The White Chart of the Government, published in 2000, used a geopolitical criteria for anticipating the future of the national security policy – Romania being situated at the juncture of four spaces: Central Europe (future space of stability and prosperity), South-Eastern Europe ("the main area of instability and uncertainty"), the CIS space ("on its way to identity reformation"), and the Black Sea ("an opportunity and also a source of risk")⁴. One could see that from all these areas, three are materialistic and based on "objective" reality (risks, threats, wealth, uncertainty are seen as real things, independent from the observer's perceptions) while the four (CIS space) introduces "identity" construction, suggesting that the states within this area will be more or less friendly and cooperative with Romania, depending on what kind of identity they will eventually build.

¹ Adrian MIROIU, Simona SOARE, "Politica de securitate a României (1878-2006). O perspectivă istorică", in Luciana GHICA, Marian ZULEAN (coord.), *Politica de securitate națională*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2007, p. 163.

² "The Integrated Conception on Romania's National Security", in Ioan Mircea PAȘCU, *Bătălia pentru NATO*, Editura Proiect, București, 2007, pp. 274-275.

³ *Strategia de securitate națională a României*, Președintele României, București, 2001, p. 17.

⁴ *Carta Albă a Guvernului, Forțele Armate Române 2005/2010*, Guvernul României, București, 1999.

This constructivist logic seems to make a first step in the direction of critical geopolitics' instruments. But the text ends in a very materialistic matrix: we are told that Romania is the second biggest country in Central Europe, is a stability factor in the Balkans and a potential security-producer for all this region, has a Black Sea coast which increases its strategic value and is able to strengthen "the Southern flank" of NATO.

The White Paper of Security and National Defense of the Government from 2004¹ was issued in May 2004 when Romania was already a NATO member, therefore the geopolitical imaginary is based on Euro-Atlantic values and norms (democracy, human rights, rule of law but also building and protecting critical infrastructures and the fructification of the Romania's geostrategic position. There is an implicit geopolitical imaginary of a globalized risks and threats, with terrorism and financial crime being the most striking elements on the security agenda. This document is the richest of all in geopolitical imaginary and narratives. There are frequent references to Romania's valuable geostrategic position, to the role assumed in promoting regional cooperation and cooperation, to the country's "global commitment" to fight the new transnational asymmetric risks and to bring together "South Eastern Europe, the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean into a common vision"². This is probably a functionalist geopolitics, built on multi-dimensional security (Copenhagen paradigm), but it is less materialist since it recognizes that Euro-Atlantic norms and values are shaping allied strategies and implicitly Romania's security options.

Finally, the NSSR 2006 contains the word "geopolitics" in several contexts: "combined with its geopolitical situation" (of Romania – the end of communism and globalization favored the rapprochement of new democracies to the Euro Atlantic security space), "as part of this geopolitical space" (the Euro-Atlantic one), "as a state situated in a geopolitical area of strategic importance", "the geopolitical region of the Black Sea", "the Black Sea is a geopolitical space open to the wide democratic community". The realist logic is obvious in a fragment like this:

"At the global level, the world continue to be highly conflictual. The conflicts' drivers operate not only in the realm of access to resources, the mechanisms of their distribution and the selling markets, but also in the realm of identity differences based on civic, ethnic, religious, cultural and ideologic aspects"³.

Thus, the geopolitical common sense which emerges from the official documents is based on a materialistic security imaginary, which considers the risks and threats to originate outside Romania as objective factors.

INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

The sensitive situation of the post-communist Romania seems to have called for a rebirth of geopolitics, as a social "science" able to guide the political and military

¹ *Carta Albă a Securității și Apărării Naționale a Guvernului*, București, 2004.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 4-6.

³ *Strategia de securitate națională a României*, Președintele României, București, 2007, www.presidency.ro, p. 10 (accessed on 23.02.2007).

leadership of a country, based on the geographical, economic, security and demographic factors. A new generation of young geographers, sociologists, historians discovered the inter-war authors, they tried to re-habilitate them against the Soviet-inspired communist blame. More than that, they dreamed to make geopolitics a real scientific discipline.

Therefore, one can assert that in Romania, a combination of domestic trauma, foreign policy's vulnerability (the failure of EU and NATO integration in the first ten years of political freedom) and scientific activity produced the re-emergence of geopolitics. At the beginning of the 90s, there was a general lack of independent expertise on geopolitics and geostrategy, only some civilian colleges and universities and the military ones being able to offer study programmes and a curricula in this field.

Concerning the governmental and non-governmental think tanks dealing with international relations and security, there is some evidence that geopolitics was sometimes approached by their programs but not on a regular basis.

By example, the Ion Conea Geopolitical Association is a scientific think tank dedicated mainly to geopolitics and supported by private sponsors, but hosted by the Faculty of Geography.

The Centre for Geopolitics and Visual Anthropology within the University of Bucharest (Faculty of Sociology) is also specialized in geopolitics but has a sporadic activity. Others think tanks and foundations like the EURISC Foundation, the Association for International Law and International Relations (ADIRI), Centre for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning, The Diplomatic Institute (set up by the unification of the former Diplomatic Academy and the Romanian Institute for International Studies), the National Defense College Foundation, the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Studies (University of Bucharest) and the Institute for Political Science and International Relations, within the Romanian Academy are dealing with security policy and foreign affairs and only occasionally with geopolitics.

The strongest of these institutions are those supported by the state through its ministries, agencies, universities but also the think tanks receiving funds from the EU.

Now, after 20 years of freedom and pluralism, geopolitics tends to benefit from the diversity of state and private support. This ensures a greater independency of thought and will reduce the role played by the state in the control on geopolitical discourses.

REVIEWS AND BULLETINS

Since 1990, the scientific landscape of IR in Romania gradually saw the emergence of some specialized reviews and bulletins. On the one hand, the purely scientific (academic) ones were edited by universities, research centers, institutes and had a wide range of interest areas, from political science to security studies and IR studies. A review of the most well-known reviews and bulletins, both academic and non-academic ones, will allow us to assess the real place of geopolitics within them.

The *Romanian Journal of International Affairs* (Titulescu Institute for International Studies, MFA) had only IR, security and strategy studies, avoiding the quick-sands of geopolitics. This was not the case of the *Gândirea Militară*, issued by the Ministry of Defense (MoD), which also included geopolitics and geostrategy

among the more technical military and security studies. The revues dedicated to political sciences sometimes showed more openness to geopolitics, but this is more an exception than the rule. If the *Polis* did not include geopolitical analysis, the *Sfera Politicii* had some articles containing the word "geopolitics" but there were IR and strategic analysis. The prestigious academic publication *Studia Politica. Romanian Review of Political Science* (issued by the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest) is focusing especially on comparative politics and political theory, only exceptionally the IR becoming the subject of interest, while Geopolitics was for the most time neglected.

The huge interest for Geopolitics was obvious especially within the revues and bulletins published by the Ministry of Defense, the Romanian Intelligence Service and lesser by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The MoD is publishing *Gândirea Militară Românească* which, since the end of the 90s has a permanent rubric "Geopolitics. Geostrategy. National Security". Also *Impact Strategic* and *Monitor Strategic* are frequently publishing studies on geostrategy and geopolitics, but these are especially words reflecting the security imaginary of defense experts¹.

The National Intelligence Academy (ANI), the highest academic structure of the Romanian Intelligence Service, is publishing the three-monthly review *Psychology and Mass Media* with permanent geopolitics and geostrategy sections.

Statistically, geopolitics as a concept or tool of analysis is much more present in the military reviews and bulletins (*Gândirea Militară Românească*, *Impact strategic*, *Monitor Strategic*, *Spirit militar modern* etc), followed by the publications of the intelligence services than in the reviews of the MFA. This could suggest a more materialistic and deterministic view of the military strategic culture, the need to create a distinct profile based on tangible facts and causal inferences. Military thinkers were eager to define space and power and to conceive defense in material parameters. We think the military sociology and geography played a major role in this specialization².

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its specialized Romanian Institute of International Studies has published the *Romanian Journal of International Affairs* between 1991 and 2004, which has some (few) articles related or containing the word geopolitics and geostrategy³, while the International Law and International Relations Society (ADIRI), which is a think tank where many former and current diplomats activate, is editing the *Romanian Review of International Studies*, a publication

¹ Analyzing eight issues from *Monitor Strategic*, one of the revues of the Ministry of Defense of Romania, between 2002 and 2007, we found a presence of geopolitical analysis in a percentage of 5-10%, especially after 2001 and in connection with the Greater Middle East and Wider Black Sea Area.

² Stefano Guzzini noted that in France, the vigorous geopolitical discourse is in connection with the elite military schools and the presence of military in the media. In Romania, I think that the presence of a strong military sociology in the middle of the 90s might have played a similar role. He also mentioned the importance of the "materialist political tradition". In my opinion, in post-communist Romania, the "sociology of knowledge" was based mainly on a combination of a Marxist intellectual legacy plus a Weberian and a French Anals School tradition, the result being a striking materialist positivism in the social sciences. Stefano GUZZINI, "Self-fulfilling geopolitics? Or: the social production of foreign policy expertise in Europe", *DIIS Working Paper* 2003:p. 12, www.diis.dk. (accessed on 20.05.2005)

³ *RJIA* was monitorised between 1996 and 2004, and we found a presence of 3% articles dealing with geopolitical issues, most of them in fact regional security analysis using geopolitical/geostrategy terminology in a vulgarized manner.

which is generally not open to geopolitics. Other MFA bi-annual publication, *The Diplomatic Institute Review*, published some studies dealing with classical geopolitical issues like natural energy and the Middle East conflicts, but without theorizing on Geopolitics as a discipline¹.

Since 2003, the electronic revue *Studii de Securitate*, edited by the Tritonic Publishing House opened its editorial space for geopolitics as a key-factor for explaining the contemporary evolutions in the international relations.

The *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics* (edited by the Romanian Society of Political Sciences) and the Strategikon Centre of Prospective Studies deal with political science, IR, security and strategic studies, only marginally with geopolitical issues.

On the other hand, *Euro-Atlantic Studies*, a revue issued by the Euro-Atlantic Centre within the Faculty of History from the Bucharest University, contains many geopolitical analysis made by well-known historians, military experts and sociologists. The two specialized academic revues, *GeoPolitica* (published by the Ion Conea Geopolitical Association) and *Geopolitica* (issued by the Centre for Geopolitics and Visual Anthropology), are not well-known by the wider public, as they have limited number of copies and a poor spreading mechanism – in fact they are more closed-circuit bulletins.

The wider public, non-academic revues, like *Lumea Magazin* and *Cadran Politic*, the Romanian edition of Foreign Policy, or *Ziua*, a tabloid more focused on IR and strategy and its week-end supplement, had a bigger role in the diffusion of the geopolitical thinking, confirming the important role played by journalists in the success of Geopolitics. They tend to offer a very "realist" image of the IR, suggesting the competition for power/security and the mutual fear among the main powers drive the world, thus proposing a very materialist perspective.

Therefore, if one analysis the frequency of the use of Geopolitics as discipline and as an analytical tool, one can see that in the scientific reviews there is a predominance of historic, economic approaches, IR, security and cultural studies. Geopolitics could not really penetrate the scientific, academic revues dedicated to International Relations and security studies. But it managed to enter vigorously in the wider-public revues and bulletins, probably encouraged by the "realist" collective mental pattern of a huge part of the population who tend to favor a more deterministic and materialist image of the world.

Geopolitics as a "discipline" played rather a marginal role, not a hegemonic one, in most of the scientific bulletins, but a central role in the wider-public journals as part of the security imaginary, creating links with geographical determinism, conspiracy theory, hidden agendas etc. Excepting the two specialized journals (*GeoPolitica*/Faculty of Geography and *Geopolitica*/Faculty of Sociology, both of them under the supervision of the University of Bucharest) and also *Studii de securitate* and *Euro-Atlantic studies*, the other publications only occasionally published papers containing the label "geopolitics". Most of these were used only as a "catch-all mechanism", for attracting readers interested in the realist framework of IR. In fact, they were not about geopolitics as a discipline, only a phrasing structure. The most prestigious academic revues did not contain studies on geopolitics but sometimes there were authors which described international and regional security using the

¹ A whole section of this revue is labelled "Problema energiei și combustibililor: temă centrală și perenă a relațiilor internaționale", *Revista Institutului Diplomatic Român*, semestrul II, anul 1, nr. 2, 2006, pp. 7-112.

word "geopolitics". Among the non-scientific ones, *Lumea Magazin* and the *Ziua's* supplement *Dosare ultra-secrete* frequently contained topics on geopolitics, as a lens for understanding contemporary events on the international stage.

If one asks what role geopolitics could play in the education process and norm-learning process of the Romanian political elites, the answer is that those elites who frequented a faculty (college) of history, sociology, geography and even political science were more probably to learn geopolitics/geostrategy and international relations taught as "GeoPolitik" (materialist and causalist discourse on world politics). Also those members of the establishment who frequented the highly elitist National Defense College, the National Defense Academy and the Romanian Diplomatic Institute (of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) were trained following a security and IR curricula which contained also geopolitics as a fundamental discipline. The military, the geographers and the journalists seem to be the privileged "target" for geopolitical learning. On the other side, the adepts of IR theory (even in a "rationalist" as opposed to "reflectivist" framework), security studies and integration theories managed to avoid the geopolitical hegemonic position, by focusing on a more individualist and scientific behavior.

The elites' learning basis offered a visible place for geopolitics, especially in connection to the strategic and military studies¹. Especially military elites (top officers and high civil servants) studied geopolitics in the Military Academy and the National Defense College, while future diplomats frequented the National Diplomatic Institute where they received a minimal geopolitical training because the curricula were much more balanced than in the military educational system.

UNIVERSITIES, INSTITUTES, DEFENSE AND DIPLOMATIC COLLEGES

It is important to note that not only the previously forbidden disciplines found a new life after the end of communism but also new ones were introduced. The most important universities in Romania, at the beginning in Bucharest and then also in other big cities, set up their own political science faculties and colleges. Together with International Relations, or more frequently as a branch of IR, Geopolitics began to be studied in a systematical way and penetrated the university curricula.

A quantitative analysis of the academic curricula would show us the revival of academic geopolitics.

The Faculty of Political Science (FPS) of the University of Bucharest and the National School for Political Science and Administration (NSPSA) were the first academic institutions to introduce geopolitics in the first post-communist years, but the military high-schools had a longer tradition of geostrategy which they adapted to classical geopolitics. Also the Faculty of Geography and the Faculty of History, the

¹The review *GeoPolitica* has as main "target": the Romanian "elites from the diplomatic, political, military and administrative, financial and economic areas", and it is declared as an "elitist" publication. The public may be governmental people, military, business, NGOs, academics and the main goal of this review is to offer advices to decision-makers. Thus, Geopolitics is directly seen as an elites' instrument for decision-making, more than an academic discipline with auto-referential utility! See <http://www.geopolitic.ro/asociatia%20de%20geopolitica%20ion%20cnea.html> (accessed on 23.03.2008).

Faculty of Journalism of the Bucharest University followed the same path. The National Defense University (the high-school for officers) and the National Defense College (preparing the future executive elites of the country, from all fields) later introduced courses of geopolitics and geostrategy. A comparative analysis of the curricula seems necessary! In almost all of them, these programs were based on classical geopolitics (end of 19th and first half of the 20th century) and shaped by a "realist" framework made of a great powers' world, competition, fear, anarchy, with the acknowledgment of globalization process. The critical geopolitics based on constructivism and perceptive studies on foreign and security policy absolutely lacked!

The Romanian academics introduced geopolitics not only for the undergraduate cycle but also for masteral and the PhD studies. At the beginning of the 2000, two main centers dedicated to geopolitics emerged in Bucharest. The Ion Conea Geopolitics Society, under the aegis of the Faculty of Geography (University of Bucharest) and the Centre for Geopolitics and Visual Anthropology within the Faculty of Sociology became the strongest agents for the spreading of the geopolitical images and lens.

The High Economic Studies Academy in Bucharest set up, some years ago, a master module of studies dedicated to geopolitics and geostrategy and now is preparing even a PhD program within the faculty of International Economic Relations. The former NATO Studies Centre, set up within the framework of NSPSA, and the former Diplomatic Academy of the MFA (now it is called the Diplomatic Institute of Romania) also were heavily influenced by geopolitics and geostrategy, seen as braches of IR and security studies.

The empiric study of the syllabi of these courses shows a marked preference for the classical paradigms of Ratzel, Haushofer and Mackinder and for the "realist" tradition of the IR. All of them deal with the struggle to control the space, the need to advise decision-makers, the need to control resources and information etc. The authors admit the importance of globalization and especially refer to transnational actors and movements and to the contraction of the world space. But they neglect the new critical approaches and focus on state-centric paradigms.

The inter-war tradition of academic reviews and centers dedicated to geopolitics is an important factor when one tries to explain the current revival of this century-long so-called science. Geopolitics reemerged in post-communist Romania in the imaginary and language of military, journalists, professors, politicians, historians and geographers. The academic geopolitics soon separated from the popular one, in that academics tried to find a scientific explanation for the behavior of the power poles around the world, while journalists preferred explanations on the role and destiny of Romania as a state living in a power competition.

The Romanian authors of IR and security handbooks generally acknowledged the important place hold by Geopolitics. A. Miroiu and R.S. Ungureanu's Handbook of IR has a chapter dedicated to "The classical geopolitical theories" which starts with the statement "Geopolitics is probably the most rooted kind of reflection on international politics"¹. There is no chapter for critical geopolitics and postmodernism. Recently, in a collective book on the evolution of international studies in Romania, there is a good analysis of Black Sea geopolitics which is breaking with classical geopolitics and offers a critical image on geopolitics as an "identity

¹ Adrian MIROIU, Radu Sebastian UNGUREANU (coord.), *Manual de relații internaționale*, Polirom, Iași, 2007, p. 71.

reconstruction" through discourses and images. The imaginary elements, when incorporated into identity, build a new reality, therefore geopolitics does not have an objective existence but a subjective and constructed nature¹. The analysis of the state's interests should take into account more identities and "mobilization" than the power games and balance, therefore mental maps and myths are constructing a parallel reality which is pure reality for the Black Sea riparian peoples².

FOREIGN POLICY EXPERTISE AND IMAGINARY

The Foreign Policy Analysis in an unknown discipline in Romania, and its development has been completely obstructed by the other sub-disciplines of the IR field. Only in 2007-2008 a handbook is in the process of drafting, but the authors resent the lack of a national tradition and the exclusive reliance on western (especially American) models. So, the foreign policy expertise remained, for many years, the reserved-area of MFA's diplomats and experts, who expressed the official point of view. Gradually, a group of journalists specialized in IR and FP emerged and some academics and researchers coming from History, Security studies, Philosophy, International Law began to be interested in this field but with the instruments of other disciplines. It took a number of years until some think tanks emerged dealing with IR and FP, but their work largely remained unknown even to the academic circles.

If the FPA is still in the process of emergence, there is an official discourse on foreign policy, held by ministers, MPs, presidents, and a popular discourse, spread by political journalists.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has published a few books dealing with the national interests, the alliances in history and Romania's relations with other states. Former ministers of foreign affairs and defense and former presidents published their memoirs, so we have a somewhat clear picture on Romanian foreign policy.

In the first issue of Romanian edition of Foreign Affairs, some former ministers of foreign affairs and European integration analyzed Romania's foreign policy – national interests, goals, tools etc. Andrei Pleșu believed that Romania's foreign policy goals between 1990 and 2007 had been obvious and non-controversial, accepted by all: to exit from the domination of Russia, to leave the grey area and to prepare for NATO and EU membership. He identifies "the need for a regional prestige" and the fear of decadence after the main FP goals has been fulfilled³.

Professor Vasile Pușcaș stated that "after 1989, Romania had a stringent problem of identity" because the citizens did not understand what kind of state expressed itself through the FP, a state with "multiple voices" and a lack of coherence in its diplomatic activity⁴. Petre Roman militates for a Romanian foreign policy

¹ Dan PETRE, "Geopolitica identităților și geostrategia intereselor naționale. Statutul geostrategic al Mării Negre", in Ruxandra IVAN (coord.), *Direcții principale în studiul relațiilor internaționale în România*, Institutul European, Iași, 2007, pp. 141-182.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 181-182.

³ Andrei PLEȘU, "Politica externă altfel", *Foreign Policy Romania*, no. 1, December 2007/January 2008, pp. 54-56.

⁴ Vasile PUȘCAȘ, "Ce fel de politică externă", *Foreign Policy Romania*, no. 1, December 2007/January 2008, pp. 56-58.

oriented towards "the group of those who want an united and stronger Europe", for an enhanced cooperation with the economical powers, and cooperation in the Black Sea area (EU's neighborhood).

The foreign policy imaginary is still heavily dominated by the materialist and causalist vision on Romania's role as an EU and NATO member: we have a 22 million population, a relatively big territory, resources and a strategic position which could influence the great powers' "big game" for energy, therefore we are "obliged" to play the game of regional stabilizer and democratizer (security "anchor"¹) for the adjacent regions. Our role is that of an "anchor" for the Western world – as EU and NATO members we would help these organizations to deal with Eastern (Black Sea-Caspian) territories by integrating and stabilizing them! Situated between Western-Central Europe and Russia plus Central Asia, Romanian foreign policy imaginary is based on the role of "gate" or "bridge" between these strategic players.

There is even a suggestion that EU and NATO gave us the mission to keep the contact with the East, because of the geographical position, but often the authors does not mention that Russia refused to agree with Romania's "bridge" scenario and the Russo-Romanian relations are at a very low level of intensity!

We help the Black Sea states, especially Moldova, to become part of the Balkans, from a functional point of view, thus increasing chances to EU membership – this is another element of FP imaginary. On the other side, the FP expertise is based on civilian and military schools and diplomatic institutes, with a very small think-tank activity, thus generally lacking alternative discourses.

So, the foreign policy expertise in Romania seems to rely on a common and tacit agreement that the world is driven by structural objective forces like the great powers, the globalization process, the end of intra-state wars, and that Romania should play only the western card, because NATO and EU represent the guarantee of success! The security imaginary of the communist era, based on clever neutrality and non-alignment, has been gradually replaced by a new one, based on value-driven solidarity with the West and the need to profitably use the strategic position and material assets of Romania.

CONCLUSIONS

After collecting many of the available proofs, be they texts, debates, institutional activities, opinions, we can generally conclude that there was a revival of geopolitics in Romania, which became obvious in the first half of the previous decade, immediately after the end of the Cold War.

This phenomenon manifested itself first at the academic level, through the re-discovering of the inter-war tradition and the importance given to the foreign models. Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations and Brzezinski's theory on pivotal areas and the world seen as "chessboard" quickly became quite sacrosanct models for understanding international relations.

The inter-war geopolitics and the collective mentality during Communism produced a more materialist and determinist vision on international politics, which

¹The "security anchor" is a cultural stereotype which appeared in the second half of the 90s to show that Romania is a security producer and then worth entering NATO and EU. It has been used by almost all the ministries of foreign affairs, of defense, MPs etc.

took the shape of a militarized version of classical realism, for many authors. These people believed in the existence of an anarchical and dangerous world, where the power games shape the fate of a middle-sized country like Romania. Another branch of geopolitics inherited from the inter-war era the preference for the identity issue, trying to define the "Romanian-ness" through the territory, ethnicity, cultural space and collective behavior.

In parallel with this academic activity, journalists used medias to spread vulgarized, simplified versions of geopolitics, suggesting that Romania may not be really guilty for its international isolation during the beginning of the 90s, but the relations among the great powers and the geographical location (at the crossroads among strategic areas which are vital for the big players) could explain the difficulty to reach the West and be accepted as EU and NATO member. This was certainly a dangerous inference because it encouraged an escape from its own responsibility and a deterministic view on the world.

Military experts, geographers, historians created their specific discourses on geopolitics, they formed more or less coherent and closed groups and benefited from the economic and institutional support of the Government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of defense and the intelligence services, or of the state universities. A clear cleavage appeared between the old-fashioned geopoliticians, who cannot escape from the Ratzel-Haushofer-Mackinder classical paradigms and some young authors, with academic instruction in Western Europe and USA, more open to the new visions on transnationalism, globalization and cultural issues.

For their part, the politicians preferred to resort to geopolitical clichés (stereotypes), in their attempt to explain the public opinion the foreign policy of Romania and its relations with the big players of the international arena. Their geopolitics is borrowed from the materialist and classical geopolitics of the academics and journalists and usually is even more simplifying and determinist. The most nationalist and extremist politicians cultivated a mixture of xenophobia and territorial definition of the nation, in their quest for ethnic purity and geographical anchor.

Thus geopolitics took several distinct forms. First, the books and articles dealing with international relations in general, and Romania's foreign and security policy in particular. Because the geopolitical classical arguments rested on an inherited materialist background, the proliferation of geopolitics as academic discourse may have had a catastrophic effect, by blocking the emergence of international relations theory and sociology in Romania for a long period of time¹. Most of the autochthonous handbooks called Geopolitics have in fact a poor theoretical part dedicated to geopolitics as a scientific discipline and they are rather classical international politics handbooks dealing with the great powers, regional players, security organizations, disarmament, weapons proliferation, terrorism etc.

Second, the books and articles written by journalists specialized on security and foreign policy, very well suited to attract the common people with no knowledge on the international affairs. These are popularizing studies which are massively relying on quantitative data (energy resources and transportation corridors, economic situation, balance of weapons etc.) and suggesting the need for a more "realist" behavior for Romania's decision-makers.

¹ Șerban F. CIOCULESCU, "O dezvoltare inhibată a Teoriei Relațiilor Internaționale în România? Ipoteza rivalității cu geopolitica", in Ruxandra IVAN (coord), *Direcții principale...cit.*, pp. 19-54.

Finally, the discourses of politicians who usually try to explain their own success or lack of success, relying on some "objective" facts like Romania's population, geographic location, energy resources etc. Politicians, like most of journalists and like some academics, suggest that Romania's evolution towards NATO and EU has been decisively influenced by the interests and views of the great powers and by the balance of power, thus concluding that Romania did what it had to do!¹ As two Romanian new-school academics stated "the logics of balance of power and Realpolitik" in the national security discourse is deeply anchored and "sedimented" within "the mentality of the Romanian politicians" who can hardly understand the logics of cooperation, security community and common values which is so strong in the trans-Atlantic world!² Thus Geopolitics seems to confound with Geopolitik!

Almost all of the universities with political departments, be they state-owned universities or private ones, introduced geopolitics and geostrategy as a scientific discipline, including it in the broader field of International Relations, on an equal foot with international relations theory! Even when the name "geopolitics" was absent, the courses were dedicated to the Black Sea, the Balkans, the land power, thus being in fact specialized geopolitical knowledge.

In the second half of the 90s, a multitude of NGOs and think tanks emerged, most of them supported by state (government) institutions or by foreign political or academic foundations. They specialized on regional issues and multi-leveled security and began to produce their own geopolitical discourse through conferences and publications.

Finally, the big question is – why this geopolitics' emergence happened? The answer is a multiple and complex one. One can mention the historical tradition, the ontological anxiety produced by the new status of Romania as an independent state not covered by any great power's security guaranty or by an alliance, the foreign policy identity crisis produced by the impossibility to decide if Romania was a Western, an Eastern or a Central European state. But we cannot ignore the difficult domestic situation at the beginning of the 90s, the mass psychology focusing on external threats and conspiracy against Romania's interests.

Worth to note that some socio-psychologists, who studied the national collective psychology of the post-1989 Romanians, identified the existence of some strong and false collective memory, following the falsification of the past by the communist regime³. A primary strategy of resistance to such a brain-washing mechanism has been the rediscovery of the inter-wars tradition of thinking. Geopolitics could be seen, perhaps, as an escaping gate from the state propaganda and false record of the past. But, in spite of the apparent logical contradiction, it could also be seen as a reflex of the authoritarian thinking as opposed to a liberal-democratic one in open societies⁴.

¹ Felix CIUTA, Radu Sebastian UNGUREANU, "De ce-am intrat în NATO?", *Sfera Politicii*, anul XI, nr. 102-103, 2003, pp. 25-29.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Alina MUNGIU, *Personalitate și societate în tranziție. Studii de psihologie socială*, Humanitas, București, 1995.

⁴ Stefano Guzzini noted that in France, the vigorous geopolitical discourse is in connection with the elite military schools and the presence of military in the media. In Romania, I think that the presence of a strong military sociology in the middle of the 90s might have played a similar role. Guzzini also mentioned the importance of the "materialist political tradition". In my opinion,

Corroborating most of the psychological analyses of the Romanian people, one can possibly draw an unflattering image made up of consistent proportions of authoritarianism, passivity, some superficiality and sense of fatality¹. If one also adds the Huntingtonian remark that Orthodox countries usually face greater difficulties in the democratic transition, we get closer to the geopolitical common sense. Such assumptions are greatly exaggerative in their nature, because there is no proved strict correlation between religion and the political and economic systems of a state².

But can we be absolutely sure regarding the existence of this huge foreign policy "identity crisis"? There are some indicators telling us that the answer is positive: the records of leading politicians, the observations of Romanian and foreign journalists etc. Many of them insisted that there was in the 90s an incertitude concerning to whom we belong and who we are.

In the domestic arena, the prestige of the Church and of the Army in Romania has been constantly greater than that of the classical "democratic" (that is accountable to the public) institutions: Parliament, Government, and Justice³. Obviously, there was a need for stability and order to be found in solid elements: religion and armed forces, imagined as being consubstantial to the emergence of the Romanian people (ethno-genesis). If we consider that the preference for the "authoritarian" state institutions shows a tendency towards authoritarianism⁴, therefore we could link this kind of deeply-held attitude with the trust put in "geopolitical" thinking, which is itself connected to a non-debatable "truth", the result of a securitization process. Geopolitics is a speech on the national security interest and it is illustrated by the arguments found on the maps. Also, the military sociology at the beginning of the 90s demonstrated vitality and creativity, producing a wave of young Romanian experts in security studies and strategy. They often embraced the geopolitical perspective as an explanatory key for understanding a complex and changing world.

in post-communist Romania, the "sociology of knowledge" was based mainly on a combination of a Marxist intellectual legacy plus a Weberian and a French Anals School tradition, the result being a striking materialist pozitivism in the social sciences. Stefano GUZZINI, 'Self-fulfilling geopolitics'? Or: the social production of foreign policy expertise in Europe', *DIIS Working Paper* 2003:23, www.diis.dk (accessed on 10.06.2004).

¹ Alina MUNGIU, *Românii după 89. Istoria unei neînțelegeri*, Humanitas, București, 1995, pp. 10-15.

² *Ibidem*, p. 12.

³ For example, in October 2006, an opinion poll conducted by INSOMAR (The National Institute for Public Opinion Studies and Marketing) revealed that 83% of the Romanians trusted the Church and 77% trusted the Military. Only 19% trusted the Parliament and 20% trusted the political parties. <http://www.insomar.ro/> (visited in December 2006).

⁴ Alina Mungiu draws arguments about the "authoritarian" tendency of a big part of Romanians at the beginning of the 90s, referring especially to peasantry and less-educated most female urban people. See Alina MUNGIU, *Românii...cit.*, pp. 157-160.