

Geopolitics and related sciences: theoretical considerations


Geopolítica y ciencias afines: consideraciones teóricas

Abstract: The term geopolitics became stigmatized after the end of World War II, and this occurred since this science was the theoretical basis used to justify the expansionist actions undertaken by Nazi Germany. But the importance of geopolitics has progressively rescued it from prejudices, which is easily measured today, particularly by the constant presence of the word in the speeches of the world's leading statesmen. It is observed, however, that the research work carried out in the field of the geopolitical theory ends up restricted to the main lines of classical and contemporary thought, without going into more detail on the theoretical basis related to the other sciences that are interwoven with geopolitics, and which constantly dialogue with it. This study seeks to present a more comprehensive bibliographic review, addressing also theoretical concepts of various sciences, and which are on interest of geopolitics. In this way, the author intends to contribute with some conclusions aimed at a greater awareness about the multidisciplinary character of geopolitics and, eventually, inspire the development of new academic works in this area.

Keywords: Geopolitics. Political Science. Economic Sciences. Strategy. Geography.

Resumen: El término Geopolítica se estigmatizó después del fin de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, y esto ocurrió desde que esta ciencia fue la base teórica utilizada para justificar las acciones expansionistas emprendidas por la Alemania Nazi. Pero la importancia de la geopolítica la ha rescatado progresivamente de los prejuicios, que hoy se miden fácilmente, sobre todo por la presencia constante de la palabra en los discursos de los principales estadistas del mundo. Se observa, sin embargo, que el trabajo de investigación realizado en el campo de la teoría geopolítica termina restringiéndose a las líneas principales del pensamiento clásico y contemporáneo, sin entrar en más detalles sobre la base teórica relacionada con las otras Ciencias que están entrelazadas con la geopolítica y que dialogan constantemente con ella. Este estudio busca presentar una revisión bibliográfica más completa, abordando también conceptos teóricos de varias Ciencias y que están relacionados con el interés de la Geopolítica. De esta manera, el autor pretende contribuir con algunas conclusiones dirigidas a crear una mayor conciencia sobre el carácter multidisciplinar de la Geopolítica y, finalmente, inspirar el desarrollo de nuevas obras académicas en esta área.

Palabras clave: Geopolítica. Ciencia Política. Ciencias Económicas. Estrategia. Geografía.

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1 Introduction

After the end of World War II, the term ‘Geopolitics’ ended up being quite stigmatized, since it was the doctrinal basis for the expansionist action taken by Nazi Germany. The Concept of Lebensraum (living space), which was frequently present in Adolf Hitler’s speeches, was established in the nineteenth century by Friedrich Ratzel (FLINT, 2006, p. 20), one of the precursors of what would become the geopolitical thought.

A prejudiced perception of Geopolitics developed and contaminated discussions on the topic in the worldwide academic environment, attitude that was very clear in Josué de Castro’s words, considered one of the greatest sociologists in Brazil:

I am not infected by taboos. I won the taboo of hunger. I had the courage to name my book “Geopolitics of Hunger,” knowing that “Geopolitics” is a Nazi word, forged by the Nazis, divulged by Karl Haushofer’s school to justify the expansion of the Third Reich in the world (BRASIL, 2007, p 167, our translation).

But in practice, geopolitical theories have managed to maintain their importance in the global political game, marking the superpowers’ behavior throughout the Cold War. According to Flint (2006, p. 18), Mackinder’s and Spykman’s ideas formed the intellectual basis for the establishment of strategies that made it possible to win the Cold War without risking a nuclear confrontation.

The unquestionable importance of Geopolitics meant that it was gradually rescued from prejudice, which is easily measured by the constant presence of the word in the speeches of the main world’s statesmen.

President Trump, for example, has correlated US energy cooperation with India as an “important geopolitical tool” for both countries (READOUT..., 2017). President Putin had classified the collapse of the Soviet Union as the “geopolitical catastrophe of the century” (PUTIN, 2005). In a speech given in the German parliament, Chancellor Angela Merkel condemned Turkey’s military offensive against the Kurds in Syria, calling it “a humanitarian drama with major geopolitical consequences” (MERKEL, 2019). Chinese President Xi Jinping, referring to the trade war between China and the USA, declared that “tensions are high on the geopolitical and ideological fronts” (XIN; ZHENG, 2019). In Brazil, Minister Paulo Guedes declared that the dispute over the implementation of 5G networks “creates a geopolitical issue in a situation that was previously only related to economy” (GUEDES apud SUSPEITA..., 2020).

Also, in academia, there has been a progressive resurgence of research in the geopolitical theory field. According to Dodds (2019), the topic had literally left the circulation of American political and popular life between 1945 and 1970, a period in which there was little or no interest in the discipline.

Ironically, still according to Dodds (2019), at the time when the term ‘Geopolitics’ was losing its academic credibility in countries like the United States, Japan, Great Britain and

other parts of Europe, it was possible to observe that the American strategy for the Cold War became increasingly oriented by geopolitical ideas.

Nevertheless, since the collapse of the Soviet Union some scholars have suggested other ways of employing Geopolitics to understand this changing world, such as the development of studies focused on human security, the environment, and the role of non-state actors in the global Geopolitics.

Under these new approaches, Geopolitics continues to have a place in discussions on migration, terrorism, the environment, international trade, energy, international relations and defense, as well as in other areas where geographic factors continue to influence political decisions. Even in the recent issue involving the covid-19 pandemic, an attempt has been made to assess the size and geopolitical consequences of this global threat.

In this context, it seems important to develop research works in the geopolitical theory field, as well focusing more closely on the theoretical basis of the other sciences that are deeply intertwined with Geopolitics, and which constantly dialogue with it.

Based on this, the objective of this study will be to present a bibliographic review of the main theoretical concepts directly involved with Geopolitics. For this purpose, a route was established covering the main areas that have a close connection with the discipline, without forgetting to value genuine Brazilian currents of thought.

In order for the objective proposed to be achieved, the study begins with a review of geopolitical theory and how it has developed to date, including what was published within the genuine national thought scope. From this overview, concepts extracted from Political Science, Strategy, Geography, and Economic Sciences will be discussed, exploring some points that are intimately related to geopolitical theory.

Thus, the intention is to present complementarity between geopolitical thought and other theoretical areas, allowing the establishment of a more comprehensive view on a topic that remains so present, thus contributing to a greater awareness of the multidisciplinary character of Geopolitics and, eventually, inspire the discussion on the subject in broader academic circles.

2 Geopolitical theories

The term ‘Geopolitics’ was first used by Professor Rudolf Kjellén in 1899. However, Kjellén did not hide the fact that he had developed such a neologism to better characterize concepts previously presented, and the best proof of that is in his statement that “the term geopolitics originally means the same as the political geography of Ratzel” (apud BACKHEUSER, 1952, p. 51, our translation).

In turn, Friedrich Ratzel’s ideas had great influence in the early stages of the development of Geopolitical Science, and he was a pioneer in the study on the power relations between the State and the geographical space: “It is concluded that what remains to be done to bring all political geography to a high prestige consists of conducting comparative research on the relations between the State and the land” (apud BACKHEUSER, 1952, p. 24, our translation).

In his famous “seven laws of State growth,” Ratzel defended the State’s connection with the land evolves over the stages of its historical evolution, and that its growth depends on economic conditions and incorporation of new spaces. Therefore, it is the State’s task to ensure the protection of its space through territorial policy (RATZEL apud BECKER, 2012, p. 122).

However, according to Professor Bertha Becker (2012), Ratzel’s organic conception, rather than being restricted to comparing the State to a living being, sought to demonstrate that State and Nation merge into one actor, representing something natural, indivisible. Kjällén, in turn, tried to deepen the discussion on several concepts initially brought up by Ratzel, particularly exploring the idea that the State needs growing spaces, conception that ended up serving as a theoretical basis for the expansionist policies of Nazi Germany, bringing an extremely negative image for Geopolitical Science, particularly in the years after the World War II.

On the other hand, the importance of combining Geographic and Social Sciences for the study of Geopolitics had been highlighted by Halford John Mackinder (1919, p. 38) as well, who was also considered a pioneer of theoretical references in this area when declaring that “The influence of geographical conditions upon human activities has depended, however, not merely on the realities as we are now know them to be and to have been, but in even greater degree on what men imagined in regard of them.”

But what would be the most appropriate definition for Geopolitics? Answering this question is not a simple task.

A mandatory reference is the work *Bausteine zur Geopolitik*, led by the German theoretician Karl Ernst Haushofer, where a classic definition of Geopolitics was presented, highlighting in it the deterministic character of the geographical space over political processes:

Geopolitics is the science of the conditioning of political processes by the earth. It is based on the broad foundation of geography, especially political geography, as the science of political space organisms and their structure. The essence of regions as comprehended from the geographical point of view provides the framework for geopolitics within which the course of political processes must proceed if they are to succeed in the long term” (HAUSHOFER et al. apud FLINT, 2006, p. 22).

Quoting French geographer and geopolitician Yves Lacoste, Bonfim (2005, p. 26) has drawn attention to the complexity of Geopolitics and its peculiarity in relation to physical geography:

Contrary to the claims of certain great theorists, a geopolitical situation is not essentially determined by such data of physical geography, but it results from the combination of many more numerous factors - demographic, economic, cultural, political -, and each of which has to be seen in its particular spatial configuration.

On the other hand, Flint (2006, p. 25) also seeks to define geopolitics, but casts doubt on its scientific character, highlighting that:

Geopolitics was the study, some claimed science, of explaining and predicting the strategic behavior of states. States were the exclusive agents of geopolitics. This is the period of “classical geopolitics” we discussed earlier. But, the contemporary understanding of geopolitics is much different; indeed one set of definitions would classify all politics as geopolitics, in a broad understanding that no conflict is separate from its spatial setting.

In turn, Immanuel Wallerstein (2006, p. 93), a well-known American sociologist and political scientist, defined Geopolitics in a much more succinct way in the glossary of his work *World-systems analysis: an introduction*: “Geopolitics. A nineteenth-century term referring to the constellations and manipulations of power within the interstate system.”

Finally, yet importantly, Henry Kissinger (1979, p. 914) stated that “By geopolitical I mean an approach that pays attention to the requirements of equilibrium.”

In the updated and revised edition of *Geopolitics: a very short introduction*, Dodds (2019, p. 41) considers that Geopolitics involves three main characteristics. Firstly, there is its most well-known aspect, which is to deal with issues of power over space and territory. Secondly, Geopolitics allows the creation of geographic models to give meaning to world affairs. As examples of such models, quite common when faced with the so-called geopolitical analyzes, Dodds (2019) presents the concepts of “sphere of influence,” “blocs,” “backyard,” “neighborhood,” “proximity” and similar others. Thirdly, Dodds (2019) points out that geopolitical analyzes can be oriented towards the future, enabling the elaboration of national strategies and offering perspectives on States’ likely behavior, since their interests are quite stable, at least in the short and medium term.

States even have some immutable concerns, among which to secure resources, protect their territory and manage their populations, and all of them with a direct impact on their behavior within the international system scope. It is worth mentioning that the most classic concepts of Geopolitics focus on the interrelations between States’ territorial interests and power with geographical environments, the latter bringing with them an important deterministic factor for any analysis to be carried out, shaping the leaders’ political choices worldwide.

On the other hand, the most updated concepts, said to be critical, focus on the interactions between the human and physical spheres, with the geographical environment weight being considered more fluid and subject to interpretation in the context of the analyzes performed within Geopolitics scope. A very interesting aspect was stressed by Gray and Sloan (2013), when stating that the critical currents analyze Geopolitics from four different points of view: Formal, Practical, Popular, and Structural. Table 1 presents a summary of these different points of view:

Table 1 – Critical views of geopolitics.

POINT OF VIEW	DEFINITION	OBJECT OF INVESTIGATION	PROBLEMATIZATION
Formal Geopolitics	Geopolitics of geopoliticians	Elaboration of Geopolitical Theory	Elaboration of theoretical models
Practical Geopolitics	Geopolitics of diplomats	Everyday execution of international politics (“Realpolitik”)	Conduction of geopolitical analyzes, formulation of international policy strategies and their implementation
Popular Geopolitics	Geopolitics of politicians, mass media, and general population	Establishment of a common language for the complex issues of international politics, focusing on the media and the general population	Formation of national identities and construction of images for public opinion
Structural Geopolitics	Multidisciplinary Geopolitics	Mapping of the geographical, political, historical, social and economic processes that affect the contemporary international system	Elaboration of trends and scenarios based on a multidisciplinary vision

Sources: Based on Gray and Sloan (2013) and Coutinho (2020, p. 10).

It is possible to observe in Table 1 that Geopolitics play an important role in systematizing the study of Geopolitical Science, proposing theoretical models to explain reality. But what is quite clear is the fact that Geopolitics cannot be considered geopoliticians’ monopoly (COUTINHO, 2020, p. 11).

In turn, Dodds (2019) emphasizes that the critical and classical currents converge to a point where both agree that geographical factors should always be considered. However, what puts them on opposite margins is how, where, for whom, and for what reason geographic factors matter.

For the development of this work it is possible to consider a very balanced definition of Geopolitics, in which it can be understood as the study (or science) that aims to analyze the influence of the combination of a wide range of conditions verified in a geographical environment on the political processes carried out by state and non-state actors.

After this conceptual approach, it is possible to consider that geopolitical theories basically come together in three schools of thought:

- German School (Determinism), which proclaimed a preponderance of geographical determinism over nations’ destiny. It encompasses Sea Power Theory and Land Power Theory. This line had Karl Ernst Haushofer, Alfred Taylor Mahan and Halford Mackinder as exponents;
- French School (Possibilism), which emphasized human being’s potential to conduct the possibilities presented by the geographical environment, emphasizing that the relationship between human being and geography is mediated by the political factor (TEIXEIRA JÚNIOR, 2017, p. 35). Vidal de La Blanche was its most outstanding exponent; and

- American School (Integration), which emerged as a criticism of the way of thinking that was studied until then, seeking to combine the ideas of German and French Schools. The central idea is that “possibilism acts, but often due to determinism” (BONFIM, 2005, p. 29). American School comprises many critical currents, but only two will be mentioned: Rimland Theory, whose main exponent was Nicholas Spykman, and more recently, World-Systems Theory, whose principles were presented by Flint and Taylor (2018) in the work *Political geography: world economy, nation-state and locality*.

The main and most representative geopolitical theories will be seen below, which, as already mentioned, are: Sea Power Theory, Land Power Theory, Rimland Theory, and World-Systems Theory. These theories do not exhaust attempts at scientific explanation for understanding the relationship between geographical factors and international politics, but they allow identifying how the evolution of geopolitics has proceeded over the years, as well as allowing the establishment of a necessary knowledge base for understanding the object of this study.

Sea Power Theory was proposed by Alfred Taylor Mahan (1840-1914). Admiral of the US Navy, he presented his main ideas in the book *The influence of sea power upon history* (MAHAN, 1987). Supported by studies on the historical evolution of countries like Portugal, England, France and the Netherlands, he argued in defense of superiority at sea for States’ military success and political victory (TEIXEIRA JÚNIOR, 2017, p. 52-55). Mahan’s ideas inspired many geopoliticians to think of a mathematical relationship between maritime and continental coefficients, in order to assess whether a State had the conditions to become a maritime power. According to Dodds (2019, p. 27), Mahan suggested that obtaining naval power was the most important factor to determine a nation’s geopolitical power.

Currently, Sea Power Theory still finds support in a critical aspect called Atlanticism, “geo-ideology” practiced by some Western countries in the Northern hemisphere, and which is based on the principles of individuality, freedom, and democracy (REGIANI, 2020, p. 48)

With regard to Land Power Theory, the British Halford Mackinder (1919, p. 98) was responsible for elaborating the bases for the study of this aspect of Geopolitics, presenting the concepts of “World-Island,” “Heartland” or “Pivot Area,” “Inner Crescent” and “Outer Crescent.”

It is also important to understand the concept of “Inner Crescent,” which was a land area surrounding the territory defined as “Heartland,” the latter being a crossing area between the center of the Eurasian continent and the extremes of Europe and Asia. There, disputes between land and sea powers would take place. This region, plus the American continent, was delimited by Spykman (1938) as being centered between 25° and 60° latitudes in the Northern hemisphere.¹

1 “The political activity of the world is, and will continue to be, centered between 25° and 60° north latitude” (SPYKMAN, 1938, p. 42).

According to Melo (apud TEIXEIRA JÚNIOR, 2017, p. 64), Mackinder has developed his own historical-geographical conception, which highlighted the constant struggle for supremacy between sea and land powers. In this opposition between sea and continent, Mackinder considered that human inventiveness and technology (efficient means of communication and land transportation) would break down barriers that limited mobility in continental environments, causing the scale to tip in favor of land powers.

According to Regiani (2020, p. 49), a current aspect of Land Power Theory is Eurasianism, which has authority, hierarchy and nationalism as pillars, and prevails in some countries of Eurasia, particularly in the Russian Federation. Eurasianism is an ideology that tries to encompass a whole set of values and identities common to a more conservative and continental stance.

Rimland Theory, on the other hand, constituted a criticism made by Nicholas Spykman (1938) of Mackinder's thought, and which brought new and important elements to the study on Geopolitics. According to him, "geography does not determine, but it conditions" (SPYKMAN, 1938, p. 30). Its main objective was to propose a theoretical model that could serve as a basis for a US global strategy, considering that the United States is located outside the "World-Island." In this sense, he proposed a projection of American power by the "Rimland," which was basically the "Inner Crescent" region of the theory of Mackinder (1919), plus the Americas. He suggested that the USA should establish systems of regional alliances, which would prevent the World-Island from being controlled by the dominant land power, whatever it was. For this, it was essential for the USA to become an amphibious power (maritime and terrestrial).

As a result of this theory, the Western powers established their strategies to face the Cold War, guiding the formation of military alliances established in the period (TEIXEIRA JÚNIOR, 2017, p. 87), particularly the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which proved to be extremely successful in achieving the objectives established.

Finally, among the most recent trends, World-Systems Theory will be addressed, which adds considerable weight to sociological and economic factors within Geopolitics scope. In fact, the development of World-Systems Theory by Flint and Taylor (2018) resulted from the application, in Geopolitics field, of World-Systems Analysis, whose central ideas were presented by Wallerstein (2006) in the work *World-systems analysis: an introduction*.

Since the 1970s, American political scientist and sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein had been dedicated to establishing an analytical methodology that was able to lead to a better understanding of the processes that enabled the modern world's development. This work led him to perform the so-called "World-Systems Analysis," which started being a reference and came to be widely used in the field of social sciences and history (WALLERSTEIN, 2006). It also turned into a reference in discussions on globalization.

The model has become quite useful due to its unique definition of what is meant by "society" in broad geographic and historical terms ("*longue durée*"), considering the evolution of humanity as a whole and not just focusing on individual countries, resulting from isolated events ("big events") or from the action of specific historical personalities ("great men") (WALLERSTEIN, 2006, p. 13).

The result is a geographic political approach that is able to situate current events in a much broader and multidisciplinary context (such as the current tensions between the USA and China, discussions on Climate Change, or even the covid-19 pandemic impacts).

3 Brazilian geopolitical thought

It is important to refer to Brazilian geopolitical thought, which developed from the 1930s onwards and has been very active over the years. After studying this theme, Vesentini (2009) gathered arguments that seek to prove the effective existence of a Brazilian Geopolitical School in that period. His first argument points to the fact that the representative authors of this time dialogue with each other and complemented each other, even considering that they eventually disagreed on certain specific points. Also, he considers that Brazilian Geopolitics of that period contributed directly to formulation of a geopolitical project for the country, a point that will be developed later.

However, the origins of Brazilian geopolitical thought can be identified already from our independence process. According to Becker (2012, p. 130, our translation), “Brazil’s Geopolitics have to be historically understood from national State’s constitution after Independence and its essential and growing role in the formation of a country-continent whose economic, social and political organization was forged under colonial rule.”

It is possible to see that this view had already found strong support in the academic and political performance of statesmen such as José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva (1763-1838), Francisco Adolpho Varnhagen (1816-1878) and João Pandiá Calógeras (1870-1934), to the extent that they clearly expressed in their works the influence of geographical factors (human or physiographic) on the Brazilian State’s political action, which could, in itself, constitute a line of thought of a geopolitical nature in its essence (COUTINHO, 2020, p. 19).

Initially, exponents of the classic current that emerged in the period mentioned above will be discussed, among which Professor Everardo Backheuser, Marshal Mário Travassos, General Golbery do Couto e Silva, General Meira Mattos and Professor Therezinha de Castro stand out.

According to Lima et al. (2017, p. 3), still in the 1930s, Professor Backheuser presented his first ideas about a genuinely Brazilian geopolitical theory, through the work *Problemas do Brasil: geopolítica* [Problems of Brazil: geopolitics] (1932), in which he defined Geopolitics as “the policy made as a result of geographical conditions,” highlighting the national unity maintenance as a major concern.

In this sense, he elaborated a study that presented as main threats to Brazilian national unity the country’s great territorial extension; uneven distribution of territory among the federated entities; population’s regionalism spirit, and the Federal Capital’s peripheral location. In order to oppose the threats he identified, the following measures should be taken: capital transfer to the interior; strengthening of central power (with a return to the Monarchy); a new

territorial division for federated entities, and creation of federal territories in the most inaccessible frontier regions to allow their defense and development.

Another view has been brought up through Travassos (1931), particularly in his work *Aspectos geográficos sul-americanos* [South American geographic aspects]. Mário Travassos explored several new aspects in our literature, particularly with regard to the integration of Brazil into the inter-American context. The main issues raised by him were the emergence of rival and imperialist powers (Argentina and the USA), political vulnerability of South American neighbors, and lack of a Brazilian national strategy in the face of the challenges mentioned (HAGE, 2013, p. 98). This may have been the starting point for the elaboration of a national geostrategic project, only carried out by post-1964 military governments.

Bonfim (2005, p. 98) adds that Mário Travassos presented projects to implement a transportation policy based on a model that currently could be called “export corridors,” aiming at road integration with neighboring countries and providing a multimodal link between Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

According to Becker (2012, p. 132), Travassos’ work focused on the need for effective occupation of the interior that has not yet been explored, in a true “march to the West,” especially along two axes, one towards Bolivia and the other directed at occupying the Amazon.

Another exponent of national geopolitical thought was General Golbery do Couto e Silva, whose proposals and actions effectively influenced strategies implemented since President Juscelino Kubistchek government, with its Plan of Goals, as well as several governments of the Military Regime period (BONFIM, 2005, p. 99, our translation). Golbery defined Geopolitics as “the geographical foundation of political lines of action, when not, through initiative, the proposition of political guidelines formulated in the light of geographical factors, in particular from an analysis based, above all, on the basic concepts of space and position” (apud BONFIM, 2005, p. 25).

It is in General Golbery’s work that it is possible to find the doctrinal bases of a genuine Brazilian geopolitical project, bringing “an expanded view of Geopolitics in terms of concern over realistic theories about the State’s nature and the role of politics and power, around the central theme of the concept of National Security” (BECKER, 2012, p. 133, our translation) Golbery’s thought brought to Brazilian Geopolitics a less regionalized and more global vision (SILVA, 1981, p. 199). Among his main ideas, the need for pragmatism for Brazilian foreign policy during the Cold War period was stressed, which placed the country alongside the former Portuguese colonies in Africa in their independence processes, even though they were at the time aligned with the Soviet bloc, contrary to the positions of the USA. According to Golbery, Brazil’s projection in Southern Africa was fundamental to the national interest and depended on strengthening relations with Portuguese-speaking African countries, neglecting any stance based on any ideological bias.

Another great scholar of Brazilian Geopolitics was Professor Therezinha de Castro, with several works published, in which she spoke about Geopolitics applied not only to topics of national interest, but also to the discussion about geopolitical theory itself. Therezinha de Castro presented several important concepts in Geopolitics field. For her, Political Geography

should be considered the “last, if not definitive term” of political history, spatially reflecting the evolution of the State over time (CASTRO, 1981).

For Therezinha, the State should be primarily considered a creation of collective security, which would exist for defense of national interests. Therezinha considered that Geopolitics was based on a tripod formed by Politics, History and Geography, affirming that:

It [Geopolitics] has as main objective the rational use of all branches of Geography in the planning of State activities, aiming at immediate or remote results. Consequently, Geopolitics can be considered a study on historical precedents in terms of geographical environments; the results of this study lead to practical conclusions that may or may not apply today (CASTRO, 1981, p.10, our translation).

With regard to Geopolitics applied to national interests, Professor Therezinha de Castro defended strategies for active presence in the South Atlantic, Southern Africa, Antarctica, and a policy of closer relations with the countries of the Southern Cone, in a preview of what would become Mercosur.

Finally, one could not fail to remember General Meira Mattos’ work, who also dedicated himself to geopolitical theory and its application to Brazilian reality. He defined Geopolitics as being “the art of applying politics in geographic spaces” (BONFIM, 2005, p. 25, our translation), and which presents itself as a concept quite aligned with the French School (Possibilism). Meira Mattos was a tireless promoter both of the occupation of the Brazilian Amazon, including the military one, and of its definitive incorporation into the national development effort.

There is certain continuity in the formulation of Brazilian geopolitical thought in this period. Since our independence process, a true “geopolitical maneuver” has been progressively forged for the integration and security of the national territory (BECKER, 2012, p. 137).

Initially, transferring the capital to the interior as its flagship, as proposed by José Bonifácio and Varnhagen, going through a strategy based on the trinomial integration, development and security, which began to be forged by Calógeras’ hands, still in the Old Republic (COUTINHO, 2020, p. 19), passing by Kubistchek government’s Plan of Goals, and arriving at the National Security Doctrine and National Development Plans implemented during the military governments, there has been development of a national geopolitical project based on classical geopolitical thought, and it can be characterized by some basic parameters referring to applying power to the territory.

Such basic parameters were highlighted by Professor Bertha Becker: structuring and progressive reinforcement of a national ecumenical base, with its solid articulation from North to South; stimulus to a colonizing wave directed at the central core, and the Amazon incorporation (BECKER, 2012, p. 137).

Vesentini (2009) points to the fact that the model of geopolitical design progressively developed by the national classical geopolitical school, and applied by the military governments, would not have shown itself adjusted to the post-Cold War World, to the new technologies of the 3rd Industrial Revolution era, and to the economic crisis resulting from the enormous foreign

debt, with the last fact having a great negative impact, since it has interrupted the flow of funds from essential external sources for its financing.

In this same sense, Costa and Théry (2012, p. 257) emphasize that the processes of political transformation verified since the 1980s, accelerated by the so-called democratic opening conducted by Geisel and Figueiredo governments, culminated in the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution and in 1989 Presidential direct election, characterizing a regime change. Still according to Costa and Théry (2012), these changes established the conditions for a new group of researchers to start studying national geopolitics from an academic perspective and with relative autonomy in relation to the State.

Among the authors who stood out since then, it is possible to mention Professors Wanderley Messias da Costa, Shiguenoli Miyamoto, Bertha Becker and José William Vesentini, all of them bringing a more critical view in relation to the classic thought that characterized the previous generations, which came to represent a rupture in the line of thought existing until then, when they started to seek a reconciliation between Geopolitics and contemporary practices in Human Geography and Political Sciences.

More recently, the national academic community has been discussing the revival of genuine Brazilian geopolitical theories. The main one is Meridionalism, whose basic principles were presented by André Roberto Martin, Geologist and Professor at the University of São Paulo.

Meridionalism corresponds, in terms of ideology, to the acceptance of the condition of Brazil's meridional aspect, that is, the use of this geographical feature as an asset in the international context, seeking to strengthen alliances with other countries in the Southern hemisphere, such as India, South Africa, and Australia (REGIANI, 2020, p. 52).

According to Professor Bertha Becker (2012, p. 117), it will be important to guide the construction of a new Brazilian Geopolitics within a context that takes into account the transformations experienced on a global scale, for which the sciences, in a general manner, should seek to regain the ability to accompany the movements of society and of new power structures, in order to propose solutions for the future.

The phenomena of globalization and the world's growing complexity in the new technological age that is beginning (4th Industrial Revolution) should lead to a search for new paradigms for Science, subsidizing the development of a process of breaking down barriers built over the years between the disciplines, because according to her:

The search for new paradigms of science and breaking down barriers between disciplines – transdisciplinarity – seem today to become a requirement, and breaking down barriers between Geography and Geopolitics in a critical perspective, integrated with the holistic and strategic nature of space, can represent an important step along this path, since power and space and their relationships are undoubtedly significant contemporary issues (BECKER, 2012, p. 117).

It is in this context that some concepts important for the purpose of this study will be reviewed below.

4 Political science

Before defining what Political Science is, it seems convenient to recall the meaning of Politics. It is a term originating from the Greek word “polis,” which refers to the ancient Greek city-states, organized according to a way of life in which freedom was citizens’ attribute.

“Polis” was a community of equals that, through rules, allowed a harmonious life in society, potentially better than a life in isolation. It is from this perspective that the expression “man is by nature a political animal” has to be understood (Aristotle apud ROSS, 2005, p. 250). This model of social organization became the basis of Western civilization.

According to Dryzek, Honig and Phillips (2006, p. 15, our translation): “Politics is therefore largely about how to reconcile and aggregate individual interests, and takes place under a supposedly neutral set of constitutional rules.” In a strict sense, politics involves a set of formal and informal processes that are expressed through power relationships, including with regard to conflict resolution (RUA, 2005, p. 1).

Darcy Azambuja, by means of his *Teoria geral do Estado* [General Theory of the State], considers Nicolau Machiavelli as the main precursor of Political Science, because “he conceives the foundations of politics as an art of governing States, or more certainly, as an art of reaching, exercising and conserving power” (apud SILVA, 2014, p. 38).

Political Science, according to Professor Maria das Graças Rua (2005, p. 1), is a scientific branch that studies political systems, institutions, processes, and political behaviors. Political Science is basically interested in the phenomena related to its main object of study: the State. Rua (2005, p. 1, emphasis added), however, warns of the fact that most political scientists have an understanding in which their scope is more comprehensive, comprising not only the relations involving the State, but the relations of power in its entirety, highlighting that:

Political Science covers several fields, such as political theory, political and ideological systems, political economy, **geopolitics**, public policy analysis, comparative politics, international relations, political institutions, political processes (such as legislative, decision-making, political change processes, etc.), and political behaviors (such as electoral behavior, social movements, etc.).

According to Morgenthau (1997, p. 3), the history of thought within Political Science scope is characterized by the clash between two schools, which have different conceptions about man, society, and politics in itself.

One is based on the belief that a political, moral and rational order, derived from abstract universal principles, has to be pursued here and now. This school considers that the deficiencies verified in the social order are due, among other factors, to the obsolescence of social institutions and to certain groups’ selfish behavior. Morgenthau (1997) refers here to the school of thought related to idealism and to critical and liberal theories.

Regarding the liberal line of thought, Andrew Moravcsik considers that individuals and social groups, through democratic representations, induce the State's orientation in the face of the international system: "Demands from individuals and groups in this society, as transmitted through domestic representative institutions, define 'state preferences' – that is, fundamental substantive social purposes that give states an underlying stake in the international issues they face" (REUS-SMIT; SNIDAL, 2008, p. 234).

In the second case, Morgenthau (1997, p. 3) refers to the realistic school, of which he himself is one of the main theorists. This school believed that the world, imperfect from the rationality point of view, is the result of the action of forces inherent in human nature. This branch of political thought argues, therefore, that the world's progress can only be achieved through searching for control of the said forces of human nature, and not by going against them.

Morgenthau (1997) considers that, since the world is characterized by interests in constant opposition, generating conflicts, moral principles could not be fully met in all situations, but worked in the scope of negotiations between divergent interests. In the words of Morgenthau (1997, p. 4): "It appeals to historic precedent rather than to abstract principles, and aims at the realization of the lesser evil rather of the absolute good."

The confrontation between the different worldviews defended by idealistic and realistic currents leads us, without a doubt, to the discussion of philosophical and ethical issues. In this respect, the *Escola Superior de Guerra* (ESG) [Brazilian War College] considers that there is a very close link between political actions and ethical requirements, but notes that an individual ethic and a political ethic have to coexist in societies:

It is a mistake, however, to imagine that it is possible to transplant into the universe of Politics, in all its dimensions, the same ethical principles that must govern personal behavior. Individual ethics and political ethics must coexist. The first is an ethics of convictions, and the second, an ethics of responsibility (BRASIL, 2014, p. 51, our translation).

An important aspect to be stressed in Political Science scope is the study of the National State and its role as a territorial actor in international politics.

Sovereign national States are entities resulting from a process of consolidation of global political relations, verified after the Thirty Years' War and the so-called Peace of Westphalia (1648). Particularly after the second half of the nineteenth century, the process of building national States underwent an enormous boost. It was the period characterized by the independence of European colonies in the Americas.

According to Adelman et al. (2015, p. 608), Enlightenment theorists already emphasized the importance of Nations, defined as peoples who shared a common past, territory, culture, and traditions. Therefore, it was expected that the States that emerged in the process of colonial independence has been built with the purpose of shaping the sovereign institutions that would govern Nations, which traditionally inhabited certain territories. From this perspective, a classic definition emerges, in which the State is the politically organized Nation, based

on three basic elements: Man, Land, and Institutions (BRASIL, 2014, p. 34, p. 37). Along the same lines, jurist Francisco Rezek (apud CASTRO, 2012, p. 107, our translation) presents the following definition:

The State, a personality originating from public international law, has three combined elements: a territorial base, a human community established on that area, and a form of government that is not subordinate to any outside authority.

The idea of the organized nation searching for its conformation into a state would be, then, the logical sequence guiding the independence processes. But, as emphasized by Adelman et al. (2015, p. 608), the practice showed that the process worked differently, since what was observed in Latin America from the nineteenth century, and later in Africa and Asia, was the fact that States' formation was driven by local elites' action and interest, and not as a result of the political maturation of the nations involved. As a general rule, nations were only built after States' formation, through the institutions created or the legal framework established.

National identities were gradually being shaped by the State's central administration, and nationalism arose precisely because of need to affirm national identities. According to Castro (2012, p. 103, our translation), "nationalism strength is, above all, a product of state culturalism, initially of a romantic nature and, later, of a realistic-materialistic scope."

Also according to Castro (2012, p. 110), the constitutive elements of a National State are the bounded and recognized territoriality, the permanent population, an accepted government and, above all, the capacity to exercise sovereign power. In this context, sovereignty is a prerogative based on internal and external recognition, guaranteeing the State certain privileges of legal personality, which give it legitimacy and legality for the adoption of domestic and international acts. In the multilateral field, admission as a member of the United Nations (UN) represents the consecration of the existence of a National State, and whose requirements are those contained in Article 4 of the United Nations Charter:

1. Membership in the United Nations is open to all other peace-loving states which accept the obligations contained in the present Charter and, in the judgment of the Organization, are able and willing to carry out these obligations.

2. The admission of any such state to membership in the United Nations will be effected by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

The sovereignty level exercised by a State stems from the power it has accumulated, and which can result in political initiatives that eventually feed a conflicting spiral in the international sphere, arising from ideological, religious, environmental, commercial, and border issues, among others, which can be resolved through diplomatic channels, but which, in some cases, can even reach the armed conflict level. According to Castro (2012, p. 139), maintenance of the physical-

-territorial base and nationalism plays an important role in casualties and in explaining the belligerences between States.

General Golbery do Couto e Silva (1981, p. 5-15) highlighted in his work *Conjuntura política nacional: o Poder Executivo & geopolítica do Brasil* [National political conjuncture: Executive Power & geopolitics of Brazil], another characteristic of the State. According to him, each historical era brings with it specific parameters of physical permeability, diffusion of ideas, exchange of goods, mobility of people and social groups, affecting what he called “effective command and control actions,” resulting in a periodic tendency of centralization or political decentralization, which he called “systoles and diastoles in States’ lives” and is a characteristic trend of modern States, and not only Brazil’s (SILVA, 1981, p. 5-15).

According to him, in the national case this phenomenon could be easily observed throughout our history, pointing out as moments of centralization: the First Reign, majority of D. Pedro II, 1930 Revolution, *Estado Novo*, and the 1964 Revolution, among others. On the other hand, he pointed out events that characterize the cycles of decentralization: the Confederation of the Equator, *Farrroupilha* Revolution, Brazilian Naval Revolts, Governors’ Policy, Constitutionalist Revolution of São Paulo, and the deposition of Getúlio Vargas in 1945.

Another important characteristic of States was pointed out by Max Weber (apud DRYZEK; HONIG; PHILLIPS, 2006, p. 386), when he stated that they have a legitimate monopoly on the use of violence over a given territory. This concept is considered essential for the application of public policies aimed at social control and the maintenance of public order, at the internal level, and for the defense against external threats, at the international system level.

This brings us to the last point to be explored in Political Science scope, which is the question of State Power, which has to be understood as a broader and more complex concept than the pure and simple use of force.

The search for knowledge (*logos*) of the nature of power (*kratos*), aiming at their critical understanding, gave rise to a branch of knowledge called cratology, which, according to Castro (2012, p. 163), constitutes the scientific study of power and its dynamics related to the State’s performance, particularly in the international field.

Thales de Castro highlights some definitions of power, among several that exist. Initially, he cites the one presented by Rosati in his work *The politics of the United States foreign policy* (apud CASTRO, 2012, p. 169, our translation): “ability to influence the surrounding environment in the way that one prefers and determines.” He also highlights the concept presented by Rosen and Jones in *The logic of international relations*, this one more directed at the power in the international system scope: “Ability of an actor in the international arena to employ tangible and intangible resources and means in order to influence the results of international events for his own satisfaction” (CASTRO, 2012, p. 169, our translation).

Morgenthau (1997, p. 31), on the other hand, affirmed that “International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power” and that although governments and peoples may in general desire freedom, prosperity and security, power ends up being an immediate objective. Still according to him, political power constitutes a psychological relationship between those who exercise it and those who suffer its impacts, which has to be evaluated under three aspects: expectation of benefits, fear of disadvantages, and respect for human beings and institutions.

Considering the flows of power between the actors involved, it is necessary to consider that in the search for solving conflicts, adjustments of interests can be made, eventually resulting in mutual gains, depending on the strategy employed (CASTRO, 2012, p. 164). As already seen, the State is the monopoly holder of legitimate means of coercion, not only to avoid violence and anarchy among its citizens, but mainly to endow the Government with the means destined to guarantee the instituted order, whether in the domestic or external field.

In this direction, State Power constitutes a politically institutionalized segment of National Power, the latter having been defined by ESG as the “capacity that the set of men and means that constitute the Nation have to reach and maintain the National Objectives, in accordance with the national will” (BRASIL, 2014, p. 34, our translation). From this point of view, the concept of National Power highlights the role of men in its composition, emphasizing its legitimacy origin triple condition, its main agent, and the final recipient of the results thus obtained, all according to Art. 1, sole paragraph, of the Brazilian Federal Constitution: “All power emanates from the people, who exercise it by means elected representatives or directly, under the terms of this Constitution” (BRASIL, [2016], our translation).

Returning to the international field, Morgenthau (1997, p. 33) considers that the power of arms, as a means of threat or deterrence, constitutes the most important material factor to constitute a Nation’s political power. But military force is not the only component of national power, nor can it be an end in itself, but a means to produce effects. As ESG’s doctrine emphasizes, the ultimate purpose of using Power should not be simply to overcome obstacles, but to achieve goals (BRASIL, 2014, p. 35).

Therefore, the value of National Power is the result of a synergistic effect between its various constituent expressions, and it will always have an aspect of relativity in relation to the obstacles that may interfere with the achievement of national objectives. Thales de Castro (2012, p. 170, our translation) seeks to explore the relativity aspect of National Power through a comparison with the classic canons of Accounting Sciences, by stating that “a power asset represents credit, payable element of a third international actor as part of the exchange currency of the game of favors and influences [...].” On the other hand, he states that “power liabilities mean, in turn, a material or immaterial debt; a need to respond to the third parties’ demand” (CASTRO, 2012, p. 170, our translation).

Another view on the question of power was brought up by Joseph Nye Jr. (2004), when considering that, depending on a State’s capacity to attract and persuade other international system actors, a “Soft Power” could be exercised in order to effectively serve national interests. This was a skill to be developed in the context of international relations, whose essence was the ability to shape other States’ preferences (NYE JR., 2004, p. 5).

According to Nye Jr. (2004, p. 14), the sources of soft power were based on three main resources: the country’s culture, based on values that can be considered universal; its democratic political values exercised internally, and the legitimacy and coherence of its foreign policy.

The application of power over geographic spaces is a central aspect of geopolitical theories. But how national power can be exercised will depend on the capacities available to States and the strategies established by their governments.

5 Strategy

After the approach to the Political Science field, it also seems opportune to devote a little more attention to Strategy, which was popularized in the Western world in the nineteenth century, particularly by the works of Jomini (2004) and Clausewitz (2013), soldiers who were directly involved in the Napoleonic wars. Jomini was the first to establish the idea that strategy is more than an action, constituting an art, hence the name of his work, *The art of war* (JOMINI, 2004). From then on, Strategy became known as the “art of the generals.” Initially restricted to the battlefield, its meaning has been expanded over time. Indeed, Clausewitz was the first scholar of Strategy to point to the fact that war was an extreme, but natural, extension of politics. He was the author of the famous phrase: “War is nothing more than the continuation of politics by other means” (CLAUSEWITZ, 2013, p. 38, our translation).

Starting from this strictly military notion, the meaning of the word started to be used in a more comprehensive way, particularly in the sense of pointing the way to be followed to achieve the objectives set by politics. In this sense, Strategy has also to be concerned with identifying the means and time necessary for the political objectives to be achieved, as well as the obstacles that may eventually interfere with the plan chosen.

It is possible to affirm that Strategy constitutes a politics tool, once the public manager, when capturing the popular desire, establishes goals and indicates directions to implement them, is, in fact, acting strategically. Thinking of it at the macro level, Strategy can continue to be defined as “art,” but now also for politicians, and not just generals. In fact, the exercise of politics is based on very particular intuitive qualities, which constitute a differential, in fact an essential attribute, for the great statesmen. Politics ascends to Strategy, according as only it can define the objectives, by answering the question “what to do?” in order to guide the application of power. Once the objectives are defined, Strategy seeks to answer the question “how to do it?” Politics and Strategy are closely related, but at different levels, since Strategy has always to be subordinated to politics.

In fact, all modern concepts of Strategy clearly define their subordination to politics, even during the outbreak of armed conflicts. This makes it possible to avoid the possibility that the “end” will be subordinated to the “environment,” due to the preponderant use of the military expression of power when a war breaks out. The great objective of any armed conflict is to achieve peace, a political objective, which cannot be translated simply by the act of achieving military victory.

In this way, one arrives at the concept of Strategy, which is “the art of preparing and applying power to, overcoming obstacles of all kinds, achieve the objectives set by politics” (BRASIL, 2004, p. 1-4, our translation). To apply power, Strategy has to be based on

concrete actions that, according to ESG's doctrine (BRASIL, 2004), are called "Strategic Actions." These can be carried out both in geographical areas and in different segments of human activity. With this in mind, it is necessary to give it adjectives to facilitate the understanding of its real meaning and the levels to which it refers, such as: national strategy, regional strategy, development strategy, defense strategy, commercial strategy, etc. It even may be more appropriate to refer to it as a "geopolitical strategy," instead of using the term "Geo-strategy," as the latter gives rise to interpretations that it would be another science. Each of the adjectives that one wishes to use has to represent a set of directed actions in a coordinated way, in order to reach the national objectives established. Only in this way it is possible to avoid an undesirable competition for resources, which are always scarce in any human society, as well as the divergent expenditure of efforts.

In turn, Johanson (2019, p. 5-8) considers that Strategy is a method used to allow the visualization of a desired future in the present. According to him, Strategy deals with the most important issues at a government's high levels, addressing the formulation, implementation, and achievement of State's objectives. Thus, the strategic vision has to allow a perfect distinction to be made between critical issues and the requirements more related to a public machine's administrative details.

Johanson (2019) also stresses that Strategic Governance is an essential element, which emerges from the growing interdependence, it being at the global, national and local levels, and has to consider the internal strengths and the opportunities identified in the external environment.

According to Lonsdale (2007, p. 5), getting to a desired end, at a compensating cost and in a reasonable time, and which was the purpose of establishing a strategy, is not always a simple plan to be accomplished. There will always be winners and losers in conflicts of interest, even when both are equipped with richly designed strategies. There are no formulas for the success of a strategy, as each context is unique and, therefore, will require a peculiar and exclusive calibration of types and intensities of actions. The success of a strategy will often depend on external factors that are not directly controlled by those who are designing and implementing it.

The close link between strategic planning and geopolitical analysis was one of the most striking features of the national geopolitical project implemented during the military governments of the post-1964 cycle, and which can be clearly seen in the model for formulating a national strategic concept, supported by a geopolitical research plan, as proposed by General Golbery do Couto e Silva (1981, p. 251-266) in his work *Conjuntura política nacional: o Poder Executivo & geopolítica do Brasil*.

Many academics consider that Strategy does not constitute science, and should remain today as defined by Jomini (2004) at the beginning of his study: still an art, but essential for the implementation of objectives established by States and large corporations, in a world characterized by ever greater levels of complexity, generating opportunities and threats that need to be considered and processed by the international system actors.

6 Geography

According to Flint (2006, p. 1-2), geographers examine the world through a spatial perspective, offering new points of view on other disciplines. The study on Geographic Science is directed at the characteristics that make the places peculiar, such as climate, vegetation, mineral wealth, energy sources, physiographic aspects, types of soil, as well as everything related to human activities' spatial organization.

However, Dodds (2019) adds that Geography is not limited to maps, since they are simply a graphical representation of the "state of nature." Geographic Science could not even be considered just a three-dimensional form of representing reality. Even though Dodds knows that height, depth and volume are important, he considers that it also involves relationships and scales, which gives it greater importance and complexity.

Geography, as its etymology suggests, could be thought of as 'earth writing'. An activity that highlights the power of agents and organizations to describe space, to occupy space, to organize space, and to create places invested with particular visions and projects. Geography was and is integral to nation building and the creation of the modern territorial state" (DODDS, 2019, p. 33).

In this same sense, Teixeira Júnior (2017, p. 24-27) stresses that the study on Geographic Science sheds light on the relationships between societies, space and power in its multiple expressions, having a sensitivity of its own to study the phenomena concerning the space-human being-territory relationship. In this regard, Geographic Science is divided into two major strands: Physical Geography and Human Geography.

The development of these two aspects within the scope of Geographic Science led to the establishment of a philosophical controversy that resulted in major clashes between schools of thought in several areas. The problem that gave rise to the debate was as follows: does the physical environment have a decisive influence on human activity and States' development?

This philosophical discussion was also carried out within Geopolitics scope, giving rise to the German School (Determinism), French School (Possibilism), and American School (Integration), as already discussed.

Cultural, economic, political and social geographies are the main sub-disciplines of Human Geography (FLINT; TAYLOR, 2018, p. 1). This study focuses on Political Geography. According to Short (1993, p. 1-2), the main object of Geography, that is, the study of people's relations with nature, space and places, cannot be treated without establishing political considerations. One of the main focuses of the study on Political Geography is precisely the Nation-State, which has been analyzed, particularly, based on three aspects:

- people's relations with the environment;
- State's relations with the environment; and
- People's relations with the State.

With regard to the State's relations with the environment, Becker (2008, p. 128) considers that territoriality and territory management are two sides of a single process of political organization of contemporary space.

For her, territoriality includes appropriation of a space, implying the construction of a notion of limit, manifesting the intention of power over a precise portion of the space. On the other hand, the territory management is a strategic practice of a scientific-technological character that directs, over time, the coherence of multiple decisions and actions to achieve a purpose. Thus, the management presents an eminently strategic character, following principles of economic purpose and application of power, and not just of intention.

In these conditions, Flint and Taylor (2018, p. 1) consider that Political Geography is a small sub-discipline with an extremely comprehensive theme: the relations between space and power. Still according to them, Political Geography needs a theoretical basis to allow a strong coherence to be established for this sub-discipline, and in the authors' view, such theoretical support can only be provided within Geopolitics scope through the "World-Systems Theory," since it is the only one that allows an integrated study between the relations of time, space and power, particularly in these globalized times in which we live.

Sociological aspects are also important for the study of Political Geography. Short (1993, p. 2) considers that in the process of the Nation's formation, a series of beliefs is usually generated involving the people and their native environment, which he calls "national environmental ideology." Such beliefs can contribute to creating a national identity and nationalism, which is often positive for and even encouraged by the State's interest. Nonetheless, distortions and excesses can contribute to generating conflicts. In this sense, Sigmund Freud (apud GADDIS, 1997, p. 75) had already identified some problems arising from these beliefs, when stating that:

It is precisely communities with adjoining territories, and related to each other in other ways as well, who are engaged in constant feuds and ridiculing each other [...] the narcissism of minor differences [...] a convenient and relatively harmless satisfaction of the inclination to aggression, by means of which cohesion between the members of the community is made easier.

These beliefs can also shape other types of behavior typical of a national identity. People who establish a closer relationship with the sea over time, according to Mackinder (1919, p. 38) end up establishing a collective behavior that he called "seaman's point of view." This is the case for the Portuguese, British, Dutch and Japanese, a characteristic that contributed greatly to the development of their respective countries as maritime powers. On the other hand, Mackinder (1919, p. 90) considers that the people that over the years have been more dedicated to land matters ended up developing what he called "landsman's point of view," and it is the case of Russians, Chinese and ourselves, Brazilians.

In fact, since Joaquim Bonifácio de Andrada, passing through Tiradentes and even Juscelino Kubitschek, the dream of transferring the Brazilian capital to the country's interior has always been nourished over the generations, almost always under considerations related to national integration, but also constituting a symptom that the "landsman's point of view" was firmly associated with the national identity (COUTINHO, 2020, p. 20).

Closing the overview on Geographic Science, it is clear the importance of the discipline for the object of this study, as it allows us to better understand the increasingly complex and interdependent environment that characterizes the international system, whether in its physical, human, or political aspects.

7 Economic sciences

Political Economy is an important field of study, both in Economic Sciences and in International Relations (through International Political economy), and focuses on the study of the social relations of production, circulation and distribution of material goods that aim to meet human needs, identifying the laws that govern such relations.

Becker (2018, p. 120) affirms that Geopolitics becomes incomprehensible without considering the planet shaping by scientific-technological and economic vectors, emphasizing that the dominance of technology by transnational economic-financial corporations progressively begins to threaten the State power.

Technological developments based on information and knowledge would give rise not only to new production techniques, but to completely new forms of wealth generation, directly affecting social organization in the context of this economic system restructuring.

Still according to Becker, while capitalist production gives rise to an imperative of accumulation, the Nation-State system starts giving rise to an imperative of national survival, which justifies the great interest aroused, in the current geopolitical milieu, in economic issues.

In this context, it is necessary to understand the new concepts that seek to portray the international system configuration, particularly about the meaning of the notions of core and periphery in the context of a changing global economic environment. In fact, attempts to define the modern world in terms of the core (that is, the rich regions of the world: North America, Western Europe and Asia-Pacific) and the periphery (the lands where developing countries are located, basically in the Southern hemisphere).

Wallerstein (2006), when developing his “World-Systems Analysis,” also defended the thesis that the processes of the world economy always operate in a three-level format: core, semi-periphery, and periphery (FLINT; TAYLOR, 2018, p 18). But in his view, the meanings of the terms ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ are completely different from the understanding that has normally remained so far. Such concepts seek to establish a reference to diagnose how complex economic processes affect the international system actors differently, and do not directly refer to the location of areas, regions or states.

The spatial definition of core and periphery, in the view of Wallerstein (2006), stems from the predominance of core economic processes (“core processes”) that operate in a particular area, region, or state. Likewise, in peripheral zones, regions or states are now defined as those in which peripheral economic processes (“peripheral processes”) predominate. According to Flint and Taylor, this is not just a semantic issue, but is directly related to the way the spatial structure is modeled through economic and technological processes. The space itself may be neither core nor periphery in relation to its location regarding the world surface (FLINT; TAYLOR, 2018, p. 20).

In general terms, core processes consist of global economic relations that incorporate relatively high gains, advanced technology, and a diversified production model, while peripheral processes involve relatively low gains, more rudimentary technology, and a simple production structure. The processes are not characterized by a specific product, which can migrate from the productive chains of the core to the periphery as a result of technological developments or other economic factors (FLINT; TAYLOR, 2018, p. 21).

Commodities and simple industrialized products usually result from peripheral processes, and their value is defined by free market competition. The most advanced technological products are normally protected by patents, generating what Wallerstein (2006) classified as “quasi-monopoly.” These are the products that result from core processes. Core processes tend to group together in a smaller number of States and compose the most of their production activity. Peripheral processes tend to be more dispersed, covering many States, where they constitute most of the productive activity (WALLERSTEIN, 2006, p. 28).

However, it is observed that some States have a mixture of core and peripheral processes. Wallerstein (2006) classified them as semiperipheral States. Still according to Wallerstein (2006), semiperipheral States are that which are in a relatively more difficult position. Under pressure from the core States and exerting pressure on the peripheral States, their permanent concern is to prevent them from regressing to the periphery, channeling all their efforts to advance to the core.

Throughout history, the rise of the United States, Germany and Japan to the core category resulted from the mastery of “core processes.” Nowadays, this has also been observed in relation to China. Brazil, on the other hand, can be considered a semiperipheral country.

These concepts related to global economic processes help explain the other central aspect in World-Systems Theory: the Kondratiev Cycles. The model of the aforementioned business cycles was presented by the Russian economist Nikolai Dmitrievich Kondratiev, who, in the 1920s, developed a study to identify economic causes of the World War I. In his research, he also ended up identifying an economic pattern that repeated long before the conflagration of the referred world conflict. This phenomenon was then called by him “long economic cycles in a historical context” (BARNETT, 1998, p. 105, our translation).

According to this view, the evolution of “core-periphery” economic processes is normally characterized by the fact that countries and industries that hold the “quasi-monopoly” accumulate enormous amounts of capital. As technologies are spreading, more and more companies enter the “quasi-monopoly” market, initiating a process of overproduction (greater supply than demand), with a greater price competition and increasing reduction in profit margins. At some point, an accumulation of unsold products results in a reduction in future production capacity.

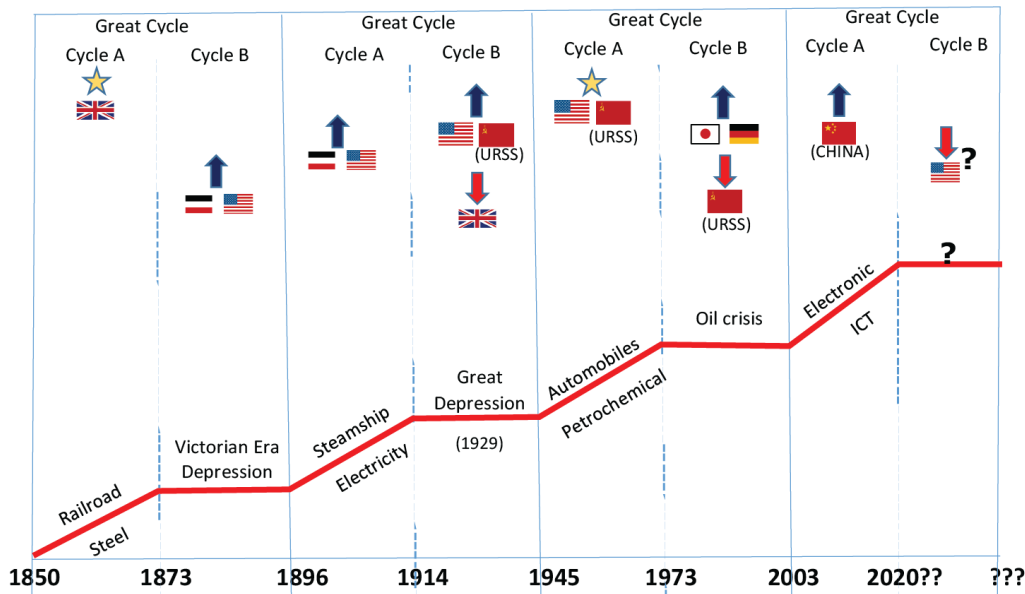
The question of the dispute over the dominance of 5G technology (telephony and data), for example, becomes a central point in the geopolitical strategies of the United States and China, in the context of the 4th Industrial Revolution. When this type of dispute occurs, its result contributes to a considerable migration of the core processes in the scope of the powers involved. This pattern repeats in “Great Cycles” characterized by duration of approximately 50 to 60 years, depending on the political measures taken by the States and on technological deve-

lopments. Such periods are also characterized by global “sub-cycles” of growth (Cycle A) and stagnation (Cycle B) (FLINT; TAYLOR, 2018, p. 21-28).

Also according to Flint and Taylor (2018), the world economy has clearly shown that the international system is heading towards a new cycle of stagnation (Cycle B), whose result may also lead to a global geopolitical transformation and, consequently, to a new configuration of the “core” of the hegemonic powers (one or more). The covid-19 pandemic crisis may contribute to the acceleration of this change, which is not an unprecedented fact, considering that the Spanish Flu crisis, which also occurred in a Cycle B period (1914 to 1945), also brought global economic reflexes.

Graph 1 represents the development of the Great Cycles verified since 1850, and it is possible to observe that the international system is in a moment of transition from a cycle of growth (Cycle A) to one of stagnation (Cycle B). Considering the last two Cycles B experienced (1914-1945 and 1973-2003), it is possible to identify the existence of a pattern of global hegemonic transformations, which may eventually result both in a possible decline in the United States of America and in a China’s possible candidacy for the hegemonic power level.

Graph 1 – Kondratiev cycles.



LEGENDA:

- United Kingdom
- German Empire
- United States
- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
- Japan
- Federal Republic of Germany
- People’s Republic of China
- ★ - Rise to Hegemonic Power status (politics, economics and military)
- ↑ - Accelerated acquisition of Core Processes
- ↓ - Hegemonic Decline
- ICT - Information and Communications Technology

Sources: Adapted by the author from Barnett (1998), Flint and Taylor (2018) and Landes (2008).

Also according to Flint and Taylor (2018, p. 69), the economic processes that have been determining the transformation of the geopolitical order have also been forming some new parameters, among which, the following stand out:

- States continue to be the territorial agents of the international system, with the environment of competition existing among them, always within the scope of the search for hegemony within the scope of the “core-periphery” economic model;
- emergence of other transnational actors, whether economic or civil society, which promote a greater integration between States, but which, at the same time, undermine their sovereignty; and
- existence of movements that resist both the processes of globalization and the State power.

As it was possible to verify, the integrated study between the economic sciences and geopolitics is proving to be increasingly relevant, constituting a central point for the development of the so-called critical theories.

8 Conclusion

In the development of this work, it was possible to verify that a fog of mistrust hung over Geopolitics, either because of its use as a theoretical basis that supported expansionist strategies during the World War II, or for strategies of ideological conflict developed in the context of the Cold War.

However, this fog has dissipated over the past few decades. It was possible to find reference to the importance of Geopolitics in several current world leaders’ speeches, regardless of a liberal or conservative line, adept at positions more to the right or to the left of the political spectrum. This reinforces the universal character of the concepts that have been improved over time.

It was observed that the gestation process of a school of geopolitical thought in Brazil, and which constituted a theoretical basis for a model of national project implemented by the military governments, also ended up being affected by the changes resulting from the end of the world bipolarity, the global economic crisis from the 1980s and the process of democratic opening adopted in Brazil at the end of that decade, from when a process of reviving academic interest in geopolitics began to take place.

After a review of the main aspects of geopolitical theory, including national geopolitical thought, it was sought to identify possible complementarity between geopolitical thought and other theoretical areas, allowing the establishment of a more comprehensive view on a topic that remains so current, and thus contribute to a greater awareness of the multidisciplinary nature of geopolitical studies and, eventually, inspire discussion of the subject in broader academic circles.

Through the bibliographic review carried out, it was possible to prove that Geopolitics effectively dialogues with important disciplines, particularly Political Science, Strategy, Geography, and Economic Sciences.

From Geographic Science, it was possible to find that there are promising fields of interdisciplinary study with human geography and political geography. It was found that the study of the influence of geographic factors on States' political action cannot fail to consider that the term 'geography' involves a multiplicity of complex, and not just spatial, aspects.

Regarding Political Science, it was possible to see, as expected, major areas of interest: State and Power, which are focal points, particularly in international relations scope. The formulation of public policy goals and the development of National Strategies to achieve them can and should also be based on geopolitical analysis and strategies.

With regard to Economic Sciences, it was possible to learn about its importance for the perfect understanding of the most current geopolitical theoretical trends, constituting a very promising field for those who are willing to explore new and important areas of interdisciplinary research.

Our attention is drawn to the fact that World-Systems Theory presents interesting opportunities for the multidisciplinary and critical study of geopolitics in the current context, a time when we are witnessing an unquestionable transition in power relations between States, as well as in their relations with non-state actors. A more comprehensive and updated view of Geopolitics will certainly be of great value for the formulation of national strategies adapted to this environment of high complexity and uncertainty.

Although specific topics on sociology and history have not been presented, they will certainly be present in all discussions, as highlighted at some points in the development of this work.

In this sense, this study was aimed at offering a contribution to the deepening of the study of geopolitics within Brazilian academic community scope, in an interdisciplinary and transversal way in relation to the various areas of science presented here.

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