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THE STATE SECURITY BETWEEN GEOPOLITICAL REALISM AND HISTORICAL TRADITION

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Security is a concept that play a central role in geopolitics. Generally speaking, we can assert that geopolitics highlights some historical constants (features repeated in time, regardless ideologies and cultural differences) based on geographic features, in which States, as international politics main players, are collocated. Geopolitics is not the expression of a “geographical determinism”, despite many authors has often fallen into this wrong interpretation. A proper geopolitics working method is in fact not aimed to establish immutable laws in historical development, but it is aimed to identify general tendencies that need to be integrated with cultural, ethnographical, philological and historical information. The study of geopolitics and its auxiliary sciences is also characterized by a typical purpose, that it is not only a descriptive and cognitive purpose, but also a prescriptive and operative one. This is the reason why a geopolitical analysis must be always a summary: on the one hand it has to produce a scientific evaluation to understand reality, and on the other hand it has to provide with tactical and strategic recommendation political decision-maker. For this reason geopolitics has several features in common with intelligence activity and with the defence of State's security.

One of the main category in classical geopolitics is the opposition between “Land” and “Sea” and between land powers and sea powers. Land powers are developed on the continents

whereas the sea powers, thanks to their insular dimension, have a natural inclination to control sea and trade routes. That dichotomy has crucial repercussion in security sphere. A sea power, in fact, takes more advantage in the sphere of defence because of its geographical position: it has no borders in common with other States and the risk of territorial disputes is therefore minimum. A land power, on the contrary, always has to compete with neighbouring States to protect its own security and for this purpose has to put into practice policies that fluctuates continuously between “cooperation” and “competition”. However, at the same time sea powers are often forced to project themselves on the continent to gain access to resources, while the land powers already have a major potential if they succeed in setting up an integrated system with their neighbours.

Due to this substantial duplicity, the relations between land and sea powers are never univocal. The one who pretends to identify an iron law of opposition between these two types necessarily falls into determinism. This kind of interpretation in fact did not consider concretes dynamics and the role of ideas in human history. The “Great Game” of the XIX century between Russia and Great Britain, for instance, indeed represents a clear example of clash between “Land” and “Sea”. The British Empire, a sea power that dominated the Oceans with its fleets, competed with the Russian Empire, that was a land power, for con-

quering the heart of Central Asia. Nevertheless, only a few years before these two competitors were allies during the Napoleonic Wars. During this period in fact typically land powers as Russia and Prussia had joined their forces with Great Britain in order to stop the expansion of another land power with hegemonic aims: France.

After the Napoleonic Wars, into the fragile European order that followed the Congress of Vienna (1815), there were attempts to realize the principle of "balance of powers" theorized by the Austrian Chancellor Klemens Von Metternich. Metternich acknowledged that peace in Europe could be reached only following two ways: the first one was the maintenance of traditional political order and traditional European institutions, and the second one was the creation of a geopolitical system in which the great powers reciprocally balanced themselves. We can assert that Metternich was a "multipolarism supporter", because he was a committed supporter of the balance of powers, that was necessary in the peculiar European XIX century scenario. However the Restoration breakdown and the failure of Metternich's projects showed that geopolitics is a useful instrument, but that it is not sufficient to explain historic phenomenon in its whole complexity. The main reason of the collapse of the European order was in fact the raise of nationalist, liberalist and socialist ideologies. This kind of ideologies had led European people to a mutual antagonism that caused two fratricide World Wars. The main enlightened minds inside the progressive front were well aware of that. For instance, the great Czech historian František Palacký (1798-1876), even though he was a protestant and a strong supporter of the emancipation of his people, he was moderate and he believed that Slavic people had to find their own role inside the Catholic Austrian Empire. He did not want, in fact, to call into question the Habsburg Monarchy, because he believed that a collapse of that political entity would lead Europe into chaos.

So history generally teaches that geopolitical dynamic between "Land" and "Sea" is part of the intra-continental relations typology. As the German historian Ludwig Dehio noted when a land power carries out an hegemonic policy regarding its neighbours, the presence of a sea power always counterbalances its actions. This

kind of dynamics have been known in Europe since the end of the Middle Ages: in the Iberian Peninsula, for instance, modern Portugal historically had strong relations with Great Britain, although Great Britain always represented for Portugal a rival on the seas, and despite the fact that the decline of the Portugal Empire was always strictly connected to the raise of the British Empire. The Anglo-Portuguese alliance is therefore explained by the traditional Spanish hegemonic aims on Portugal. So, in a conflict between two neighbouring land powers a State hegemonic policy encourages the other States to establish alliances with sea powers.

However the sea powers are inclined to exacerbate continental disputes because a high level of integration between land powers represents a threat to their own interests. When an American President Wilson, at the end of the World War I, promoted the principle of self-determination, he was well aware of this kind of logic. The same concept was used also by Zbigniew Brzezinski regarding the "Eurasian Balkan" and it is implemented today by the United States in Middle East, continental Europe and Central Asia-Caucasus region. In every case this policy is aimed to set up a high fragmented continental space with small or medium States in a situation of permanent conflict, in order to force these States to have to count on a "far ally". But the sense of security that originates from the alliance with an external sea power in order to defend itself from a neighbour State perceived as a threat is often merely exterior. The goal of the "far ally" is in fact to support a situation of permanent tension. A clear example is the current US support to Eastern Europe in anti-Russian sense. This reflections are therefore very useful today for all European States that are involved in an epochal shift of the global scenario, where the consequences are not easy to foresee.

From a geographical and geopolitical point of view the definition of Europe as "West" is misleading. Europe should be considered more properly as the "West of the East", or in other words, the western part of the Euro-Asiatic landmass, that is situated in the world eastern hemisphere. However, if on the one side Europe is the Euro-Asiatic landmass western part, on the other side Europe is also an open "peninsula" that looks

on the Atlantic Ocean. The European powers maritime expansion during the last centuries is without any doubt a direct consequence of this feature. Hence, the European double nature, both *continental* and *peninsular*, impose a double strategic evaluation to the European security approach.

On the one side, Europe can not represent the bridgehead of another external power against its biggest neighbour, Russia, because of its geographical continental position. General Charles De Gaulle, the last great European statesman, was well aware of what hostility between Europe and Russia could represent: an authentic suicide for both parts. On the other side Europe always will have the need to set up transatlantic relations in a multipolar context, because of its "peninsular" nature. Furthermore, the European transatlantic relations reform has to invest not only the United States but also Latin America, especially for countries like Spain and Portugal, where the policy of cooperation with former colonies represents the main foreign policy guideline. The European Union, therefore, definitely does not constitute today a political or a geopolitical subject, so the single States bilateral option is certainly the best way to set up a new "balance of power". Other countries already walked through this way with positive results in increasing their international importance and their role in the integration process.

A good example of this kind of contemporary "balance of power" set up by a single State is the "multivectoral policy" of Kazakhstan. This country, located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia and big as the whole Western Europe, was successful in implementation excellent security and economic relations whether with traditional allied States (as Russia), or with basically rival States (like China), but also with leading countries in military and technological areas (like Israel and the United States), and with the European Union. So, concerning the European Union it is embarrassing to admit that Europe actually has a difficulty in expressing a proper cultural, civil and diplomatic capability in order to protect its own interests and its own security, even though the European historical tradition can be proud of

statesmen like Chancellor Metternich and General De Gaulle.

The reason of this lack of capabilities is also a matter of culture and identity. State security is strictly related to sovereignty and independence, but it is also true that no civilization in history was established on pragmatism and economic interests. The European lack of geopolitical vision is due to the lack of a genuine European vision of itself. After the First and the Second World Wars the European integration process allowed European people to finally live in peace. However the price of that peace was on the one hand loss of sovereignty, and on the other hand a series of social and cultural processes that have changed the face of Europe, of which the demographic crisis and the distortion of the concept of family are the clearest signs. It is impossible to build a security culture in the geopolitical sphere if a climate of insecurity in the spheres of values and identity still remains.

Hence the process of enlargement of the European Union should acquire a meaning of mutual compensation. Eastern European and Baltic States, after the experience of "real socialism", today are generally showing more attention to European historic heritage compared with the Western European countries. Nevertheless, the Western European countries seem to be more inclined to setting up a critical review of the post-Cold War relations with the USA and Russia. Therefore Eastern Europe could assume an important role in the cultural and institutional review of European identity, while Western Europe could contribute to formulate a security outlook aim to improve the relations with Russia.

Poland, which was and always will be one of the main players in European history, is certainly called to play a fundamental role in this bi-univocal process.

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