

Engagements of cultural factors in geopolitics

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Abstract

In the research studies of ethnic and religious relations, various theoretical approaches have been applied in modern sciences, starting from the reaffirmation of geopolitics through the cultural and sociological approach. Given the complexity and polyvalent structure of the determinant node based on such issues, it is necessary to emphasize both the possibilities and the limits of the particular theoretical approaches applied in the analysis of these relationships. Culture is one of the permanent and enduring geopolitical factors in time and as part of the experience of a people's history, values, myths and religion, it is essential for the geopolitical analysis of a country's power. From a quick glance we notice that international history acquaints us with the fact that cultural issues have been widely debated and have been the subject of international relations and foreign policies of states. In this context of analysis, it is observed that culture is an essential and enduring part of the nation's identity. It affects the elements of power, which are important components for the realization of national interests, which in turn serve to shape geopolitical scenarios. After the Cold War we have the emergence of many such scenarios, where we mention: the clash of civilizations, the five-pole world, the three-pole world, the creation of different pan-regions and different blocs, the balance of forces and finally the geopolitical scenarios after 9/11. Culture is one of the permanent and enduring geopolitical factors in time and as part of the experience of a people's history, values, myths and religion, it is essential for the geopolitical analysis of a country's power. Issues on culture are inevitably linked to the national identity of a state and if we read carefully throughout the history of international relations it is noticed that, although indirectly, states have always promoted and exported their culture.

Keywords: Geopolitics, culture, civilizations, conflicts, geoeconomics.

Cultural factors in geopolitics

In the research of ethnic and religious relations, various theoretical approaches have been applied in modern sciences, starting from the reaffirmation of geopolitics through the cultural and sociological approach. Given the complexity and polyvalent structure of the determinant node based on such issues, it is necessary to emphasize both the possibilities and the limits of the particular theoretical approaches applied in the analysis of these relationships. At the end of the twentieth century, scholars emphasized the role of geoculture, in relation to the prevailing importance of culture and civilization in social change, predicting that the major global conflicts of the twenty-first century will take place between different cultures and civilizations. Therefore, more and more attention is being paid to cultural geography, where for the most part, studies relate to its importance as a necessary instrument for understanding geopolitical phenomena and establishing relations between states, in what Brzezinski calls international chess. On the other hand, great attention has been paid

to a particular model of cognition, based on imagination and which can be defined as cognitive imagination. Geopolitical contrasts generally have their roots in the difficult coexistence in the same territory of populations with different cultures, none of which tolerates the influence and even more so, the control that the other in itself lays down or imposes. In other words, it lacks or refuses to be understood in other ways of interpretation, of the meaning of life and even that of the community in which one lives. So cultural geography is about recognizing cultural characters located in specific territories. Understanding cultural goods is facilitated if we try to look at it from a different perspective. For example, if we analyze the difficult coexistence between two distinct communities living in the same territory, one party's perceptions of the territory are unacceptable to the other. This is attributed to the fact that in the relationship of a population with its own territory, the imagination that this population has is closely related to symbolic elements. Therefore, it becomes unimaginable and unacceptable that others may, in the direction of that territory, perceive a report of the same affiliation (Samuel P. Huntington, 2004).

In this perspective, in the current era of ethno-nationalism, the presentation of historical rights conceived by different ethnic and political groups in confrontation with each other is of particular importance. According to Herder, the tendency of ethnic groups to self-determination is general, just as the tendency of states to include the entire population that speaks a language within its borders is general. So, the contradiction between the principle of self-determination of peoples and non-violation of borders, today is at the root of most of the current conflicts. Thus, political judgment is not based on emptiness, but on the scientific content of data - physical, human, statistical and so on - which are provided by geography (K. Jean, 1998).

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Daniel Bell's latest ideological paradigm stems from the fact that technology and modernization have eroded most traditional ideas: the pressure of industrialization, in generating a democratic consensus on the means to be used to achieve common goals, will to resolve conflicts that have led to the strong ideologizing of social life. In particular, the "last ideology" event materialized and was welcomed with the fall of Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe. In this optimistic climate, there was a call for taking a political stance that would value ideas and values on the basis of their sustainability and in the name of negotiations and public debate, renouncing the claim that a single

vision of the world summed up in the truth itself, hence a kind of anti-universalism. According to Bell, “a moral order, to exist without coercion or deception, must overcome special interests and quell the appetite of passions, and that is ideological defeat” (Daniel Bell, 2000).

Bell envisions the end of ideology, but not the end of ideas and ideals as a political and social force. He believes that the strong point of ideology is its passion, the emotional element, globalization, in the exploitation of emotions. While these energies of passion were once channeled through religion to otherworldly purposes, modern ideology channels them into politics. With the end of ideology, Bell does not foresee the end of any form of ideology, but of what is understood as secularized theology, the universalism of whose values gave man a source of salvation in the earthly world.

The last paradigm of history is theoretically based on Hegelian philosophy, which has found its empirical verification in the political and economic successes of the West. Francis Fukuyama claims that the end of the Cold War makes us witness to the very end of history: marked by the victory of capitalism over communism. The end of history should be understood not as the end of events, but as a complement to the historical process that culminates with liberal democracy (K. Jean, 1998). In liberalism it is possible to set ourselves on the path that leads to the end of history, if supported by the abundance of the economy. Thus, the victory of liberal-democratic principles, though not accepted by all the regimes of the material world, would be absolute and final in the realm of ideas. leading to the emergence of contradictions that move history. The state that develops at the end of history would be liberal, as it defends through a system of universal laws and human rights.

Fukuyama argues that at the end of history it is not necessary for all societies to become liberal, but they give up their ideological claims. He also notes that the end of history does not mean the end of international conflicts: the world will be divided into a historical part and a post-historical one. On the one hand, nationalist forces, terrorism, wars for national liberation will continue to exist. On the other hand, conflicts between major states will emerge (Francis Fukuyama, 1989). The universal period of democracy would make possible the creation of a world government. However, given Jean’s critique, such radical theses are purely theoretical and rely on an imagination intended to foretell history (K. Jean, 1998).

The third paradigm, the clash of civilizations, relates to post-Cold War geopolitics, perceived as a new vision of the world by Samuel P. Huntington and illustrated by the ancient doctrine of “divide and rule”, which envisions an Anglo-American crusade. against China and Islamic countries. For Huntington, the end of the Cold War restored moving history in reverse, modifying the paradigms of international competition. In 1993 he proposed an imperative model of a general geopolitical nature of the restructuring process initiated by the fall of the Berlin Wall. We have the emergence of a new type of clashes that replace international matches and those of the ideological type: the match between civilizations is predicted. In this perspective, it seems that divisions and conflicts, mainly, do not derive from economic and political motives, but from cultural motives. Today, it is observed that many cultures are

stable and will not be assimilated by the Western values of democracy, respect for human rights and the market economy while dealing with them (K. Jean, 1998). The criterion of aggregation and dissolution in the international arena already consists of belonging or incompatibility with a civilization, determined essentially on the basis of religious factor. Aggregate structures are identified locally with ethnicities and globally with civilizations. The most dangerous conflicts are the latter because they can take on global proportions, where other states and groups can come to the aid of sister countries, for reasons of cultural proximity.

Western civilization, which for Fukuyama is destined to be universal, according to Huntington would be just one of the greatest expressions of human culture and political organization, in a pluralistic world where we participate in the rebirth of other great civilizations, under the impetus of economic success or in demographic dynamics: Cynic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western, Latin American, and potential African civilization (Samuel P. Huntington, 2004). According to Huntington, to explain the current reality of the globalized world we need to refer to the model based on civilizations.

Conflicts will tend to emerge along the lines of divergence that divide the world's largest religious areas, with a particular focus on the borders of Islam. Each of the parties to the conflict would point out cultural ties with similar states, calling on war the leading power of the civilization of belonging. It is precisely such powers that have the task of restoring peace and order. Huntington believes that the only way to extinguish the conflicts of civilizations is through "approximate" interventions. The wars in Yugoslavia brought about a truly unanimous alignment of the Orthodox world after Serbia (Samuel P. Huntington, 2004). It is explained that the success of the Dayton Agreement was achieved thanks to Russian intervention in Serbia and analogously, the lack of configuration of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stems from the fact that the Arabs do not have a leading power of their civilization and the circumstance that Israel is in itself a state-civilization.

Huntington's thinking has obvious political implications. According to him, the division of the West into two branches, the American and the European, should be avoided, because it would be a weakening factor for an already declining civilization in its complexity. This division of the West is also opposed by Henry Kissinger, though in various arguments from Huntington. Analyzed from a geopolitical point of view, the market economy, Western-style democracy and respect for human rights are today not universal values, but ideologies in function of the political, economic and cultural rule of the West over the rest of the world (K. Jean, 1998).

The fourth paradigm, the geopolitics of emotions presented by Domienique Moisi, unlike Huntington, states that after 9/11 the world is divided by deeper rifts than those described in *The Clash of Civilizations*. Today, Moses explains, the geopolitical situation is described by a clash of emotions. The framework of world geopolitics is formed using three basic emotions: fear, hope and humiliation. So, on a global scale we do not have a clash of civilizations, but that of emotions. Moses's argument starts from the West, which is the continent of fear, a non-geographical but conceptual west that includes Western Europe, the US and Japan, or advanced industrial societies. The

West is afraid first of all of the “difference”, the fear that someone, hungry and aggressive, will come to steal what it has already consolidated, but of which it is aware that the balance is precarious. He is afraid of losing the competition in the workplace, being replaced by younger, skilled and lower-cost workers. In recent years, both the US and Europe have been dominated by the fear of the “other”, for fear of losing their identity, due to the lack of a project. Asia, on the other hand, although still described by unresolved conflicts and poverty, is for Moses the continent of hope, of those who have not yet fully succeeded, but who will reach it with pain and enjoy it with joy. all the pleasure of victory. A sentiment that can be found today even in Eastern European countries living in a booming economy, which is coveted by Western markets. What the West lacks to turn to hope is what Moses calls l “*apetit de reussir*” (Dominique Moïsi, 2008), the appetite for success, the desire to gain what they do not yet have, but who see that others have it and want it. China and India are symbols of this state of affairs, focusing on a better future. Unlike the first two, Russia seems to be dominated by a gloomy atmosphere of humiliation: the humiliation of the empire that collapsed, in the ruins of failed violence (Chechnya, Georgia) to restore ancient splendor, domination, power. Russia is devastated by an eternal regret of its glorious past and a lack of desire to surrender to the present. Arab countries, like Russia, are dominated by humiliation. A humiliation that leads to violent acts, when the desired goal seems very distant and unattainable with the limited resources it possesses and, just then, religious fundamentalism arises. Arab countries and the Muslim world in general continue to condemn others for the injustices suffered throughout history, feel excluded from the benefits of globalization and suffer from contexts and civil and religious clashes, which from their countries reach the Muslim diaspora.

As a solution Moses argues that, in the face of this clash of emotions, the priority for the West should be to recognize the nature of the threat that the culture of humiliation of the Muslim world poses to the West. Denying the existence of a threat or responding incorrectly to it are equally dangerous. The war that is unfolding is what the culture of humiliation cannot win and a war that the West can lose if it continues to divide or betrays liberal values. Today, the challenge is not to understand how to play moderate Islam against the forces of radicalism. It is to understand how to instill a sufficient sense of hope and progress in Muslim societies, so that despair and anger do not orient the masses towards the radicals (Dominique Moïsi, 2008).

The fifth paradigm, the concept of soft power has become an increasingly debated topic since the early 1990s, when Joseph S. Nye, described the power of attraction and the ability to persuade others without using strong power. This paradigm penetrated from a state perspective into a widely accepted and widely used concept. According to the concept of soft power, a country can get the results it wants in world politics because other countries admire values and follow its example. “This power - assuming others want the results we want - chooses with people more than it forces them to” (Joseph S. Nye, 2004). Nye has identified three main sources that generate soft power: culture, values, and foreign policy (Joseph S. Nye, 2008). The concept of soft power takes on a central importance in state power debates, precisely because if we do not understand how to delve into the cultural conflicts, we are interested in recognizing

and analyzing, our interest, security and national identity will be trusted. inevitably randomness and improvisation. In the context created by the establishment of the new world order after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the redefining of balances and diplomatic means to achieve the desired national power, its culture and orientations of influence gained a very significant importance because in a global reality in change, in which information is power and an accurate analysis of it is hegemony, knowing the other is essential. Knowing what to offer in order to be accepted and internalized means to exercise power. It is precisely such a vector of influence that culture offers. Therefore, an analysis that aims to undertake effective policies, should start exactly from knowing the other, knowing everything that identifies him by making him "different" compared to himself: the value system, human vision and history, perception of culture and civilization. Naturally, anyone reading about the importance being given to cultural issues in foreign policy in recent decades will ask: why right now? Issues on culture are inevitably linked to the national identity of a state and if we read carefully throughout the history of international relations it is noticed that, although indirectly, states have always promoted and exported their culture. We find such examples that with Rome and Byzantium and beyond, what became a real diplomatic matrix in French foreign policy, *raison d'état*. Culture has taken on a primary importance in foreign policy in recent decades because, under the drive of modernity, global politics is being reconfigured along cultural lines. Peoples and countries with similar cultures are coming together ... political boundaries are increasingly being redefined to match cultural boundaries. Cultural communities are replacing the Cold War blocs, and the dividing lines between civilizations are becoming the focal point of conflict in global politics (Samuel P. Huntington, 2004).

With the decline of the bipolar world and technological advances in transportation and communication, in a world without borders, people are closer and interacting faster. This dynamic is enabled by the globalization of social relations, understood as the rearrangement of time and space in social life: our life is increasingly under the influence of events that occur quite far from the social framework where we carry out our daily activities (Anthony Giddens, 2002). In other words, in an age where globalization affects our lives in many ways and inevitably affects our perception of the world and our way of life, the cultural dimension unites individuals in an unprecedented way. Under these influences, the study of culture is complicated and simplified at the same time. If in modern times territories were conceived as bearers of cultures, in the present era culture is studied in a perspective of mutual and intertwined relations. In this context, if we were to project a cultural map of the world, it would be different from a geopolitical or geoeconomics map. Geocultural areas are not static, but in a constant development and in a continuous continuity. If we were to decide to position ourselves as actors in these spaces, they could be transformed into spheres of responsibility, interaction and coexistence, in the same way as regional entities on other issues, and provide the basis for cultural pluralism as part of political framework for globalization. Power, rivalries and conflicts are no longer held outside the framework of a physical territory as they were when the main concern was the control of natural resources. Power is already tied to the ability to manipulate symbols in the mediated global space. Today, the production of symbols and concepts

is at the heart of power struggles and has a leading role in the complex dynamics of globalization. Culture and its ways of expression, structure the relations between people and societies at every level of human interaction. For this reason, cultural issues should be treated with the same importance as political and economic issues.

Conclusion

Geopolitical contrasts generally have their roots in the difficult coexistence in the same territory of populations with different cultures, none of which tolerates the influence and even more so, the control that the other in itself lays down or imposes. In other words, it lacks or refuses to be understood in other ways of interpretation, of the meaning of life and even that of the community in which one lives. So cultural geography is about recognizing cultural characters located in specific territories. Understanding cultural goods is facilitated if we try to look at it from a different perspective.

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Conflicts will tend to emerge along the lines of breakage that divide the world's largest religious areas. Each of the parties to the conflict would point out cultural ties with similar states, calling on war the leading power of the civilization of belonging. It is precisely such powers that have the task of restoring peace and order. As an opportunity to extinguish the conflicts of civilizations exists in "approximate" interventions, as in the case of the wars in the former Yugoslavia brought about a unanimous alignment of the Orthodox world after Serbia.

In the context created by the establishment of the new world order after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the redefining of balances and diplomatic means to achieve the desired national power, its culture and orientations of influence gained a very significant importance because in a global reality in change, in which information is power and an accurate analysis of it is hegemony, knowing the other is essential. Knowing what to offer in order to be accepted and internalized means to exercise power. It is precisely such a vector of influence that culture offers. Therefore, an analysis that aims to undertake effective policies, should start exactly from knowing the other, knowing everything that identifies him by making him "different" compared to himself: the value system, human vision and history, perception of culture and civilization.

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