

7. The Current Situation and Prospects for East Asian Cooperation.
Cai Bingkui
13. China's Energy Resources and Energy Security.
Cai Bingkui
18. China's National Defence Policy at the New Stage in the New Century.
Wang Zhenxi
30. China and its PLA Informationalization.
Wang Zhengde
38. Sino-African Relations and China's Africa Policy.
Xing Haiyan
47. The Magic and Tragic of Equality.
Emmanouel Mikrogiannakis
53. Writing Methodology of a Geopolitical Analysis. Structure, Concepts and Terms.
Ioannis Th. Mazis
60. Expert Systems in Crisis Management.
Ioannis – Christos Panayiotopoulos
68. Constitutional Convention for the Cyprus Problem.
Christodoulos Yiallourides
73. The Balance of Power at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century.
Harry Papasotiriou
90. Kosovo's Independence: Assessing 'The Day After'
Aristotle Tziampiris

Writing Methodology of a Geopolitical Analysis. Structure, Concepts and Terms

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Abstract

The present text puts forward a systemic methodology for geopolitical analysis. It can be employed by researchers to research international political events, international relationships and the associated redistribution of power (defensive, economic, political and cultural) on the whole system of the national state formations in our planet (nation-state and ethnic formations), the phenomena as well as the entities which influence the make-up, the structure and the interaction of power among these formations. Unfortunately, a single research methodology in the field of international politics has yet to be made available to researchers. As a result, the improper use of terms leads to misunderstandings and to scientific eclecticism when approaching these matters. As such, this by no means constitutes an “analysis methodology”.

Keywords: *Geopolitical Complex, Geographical System, Sub-system, Supra-system, Geopolitical trends-dynamics, positive sub-systemic component trend of power, zero sub-systemic component trend of power, Internal of the System, External of the System.*

A. The title of a subject matter and its interpretation

The title of the subject of a geopolitical analysis study (should) define(s) the facts and the objectives of our problem. In particular it defines:

- 1) **The boundaries of the Geographical Complex**, which

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constitutes the geographical area to be analysed.

- 2) **The (internal or external) area of the Complex**, i.e. the area of interest as a field of distribution or redistribution of power due to the impact of a specific geopolitical factor.
- 3) **The above geopolitical factor**, the impact of which can affect the distribution of power in the internal or the external area of the given Geographical Complex.

Example:

«Geopolitics of the Islamist movement in the Wider Middle East»

Analysis of the title:

- 1) The boundaries of the Geographical Complex are defined by the term “**Wider Middle East**”.
- 2) The area of the Complex under study is the “**internal**” of the geographical complex in the Wider Middle East, illustrated by the word “**in**” meaning “**within the boundaries of the...**”.
- 3) The designated geopolitical factor is the “**Islamist movement**”.

B. Analysis

1st stage

At this stage, we establish the boundaries of the geopolitical systems, within which the action or the actions of the geopolitical factor stated in the title of the subject matter, are to be examined.

There are three system scales deriving from the range of the geographical area to which they refer:

- 1) **Sub-systems**, which constitute subgroups of the systems.
- 2) **Systems**, i.e. the main Geographical Complex under study.
- 3) **Supra-systems**, which contain, as a sub-system, the main system under study along with other ones that are not involved in the present study.

In order to define the above-mentioned systems in terms of geographical range, a qualitative element is required which, by its very existence, its forms, its action, and the extent to which it influences the system, will identify the geographical areas encompassed in the above-mentioned systems. Without this qualitative element and its individual parts, the definition of the three above-mentioned system scales is not only impossible but also meaningless.

How to Define the Systems – An Example

In the above-mentioned subject matter, the boundaries of the systemic scales are defined as follows:

1. **System:** The Wider Middle East Geographical Complex, not only because it is stated in the title, which is already a fundamental criterion, but also because the “geopolitical factor”, i.e. the “Islamist movement” exists, acts and affects the whole geographical area of the Complex.

2. **Sub-systems:**
 - i) ***The “Islamist Movement in the Maghreb”*** constitutes a sub-system due to the unique character of the cultural, economic, political and organisational aspects of Islam in this geographical area.

 - ii) The **“Islamist Movement in the Middle East²”** for the same reasons stated above.

 - iii) ***“The Afghan-Pakistan and the Iranian Islamist Movement”***.

² According to the definition of John Foster Dulles in 1977, i.e. Arab Peninsula, Emirates, Egypt, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey.

1. Supra-system:

The International Daar al-Islam (House of Islam) can be designated a supra-system, i.e. the Geographical Complex encompassing the land of Islam at the international level, where Islamic peoples live, and further the Daar al-Sulh (House of Treaty), where the Islamic Diaspora lives, more or less, undisturbed, e.g. Europe, the USA or Australia.

After defining the three system scales, the next step is to specify the fields under study which are influenced by the “geopolitical factor” of the title. That is, we should determine for which combination of the four fields (geopolitical pillars) we will examine the impact of the “geopolitical factor”, always within the framework of the chosen systemic scale, for example, at the “system” level.

Example:

We will examine the impact of the Islamist movement on the three above-mentioned sub-systems, in particular defence, the economy, politics or Culture, Economy or Culture, Politics and Defence or with regard to all four pillars³; i) Defence, ii) the Economy, iii) Politics and iv) Culture / Information.

³ N.B. These pillars are related to the four forms of power: defensive, economic, political and cultural power.

2nd stage

At this stage, we will determine the **geopolitical trends – dynamics** for each one of the sub-systems under study. The trends, defined solely in terms of “power”, inform as to:

1st) The pillars to which the “geopolitical factor” under study belongs (in our example the geopolitical factor is the Islamist movement), and as a consequence, already defines or may define their actions within the framework of each sub-system. This form of conclusion is defined as “positive sub-systemic component trend of power” of the “geopolitical factor” in the “internal of the system”.

2nd) The pillars which act as shock-absorbers for the “geopolitical factor’s” impact thus do not affect the whole sub-system. This form of conclusion is designated “zero sub-systemic component trend of power” of the “geopolitical factor” in the “Internal of the System”.

C. Synthesis

The term synthesis refers to the procedure through which we can find the **Resultant Trend of Power** of the given geopolitical factor on a final systemic scale. When we have found and defined the individual power components (of the geopolitical factor) at the

sub-system level and the objective is the component at a system level systemic scale, then the synthesis stage begins at the system level. If the desired component is at the supra-system level, then the synthesis stage begins after the components of the system have been analysed.

D. Conclusions

The last stage of the study is dedicated to the “Conclusions”. Here, we are called upon to describe the geopolitical dynamics, as well as how the “component of power” of the “geopolitical factor” under study affects the behaviour of the system under study within the framework of the supra-system.

It must be noted that at this stage of the study, as at any other stage of a geopolitical analysis, we make no proposals. We discover and describe the structures, actions, functions, impacts, forms, and dynamics of a geopolitical factor as well as how the system behaves because of them.

Proposals do not form part of a geopolitical analysis. They form part of a geo-strategic approach which may be carried out if asked and by taking advantage of the results of a geopolitical analysis that has been conducted beforehand.