

## Abstract

The submitted dissertation tries to introduce neoclassical geopolitics as a viable approach to the study of international politics from geographical perspective. The dissertation is a compact of six already published articles and a common introduction highlighting main points of the articles and further discussing some issues which were (i) eliminated due to space constraints, or (ii) their significance is rather contextual, in the sense that they set the articles into broader discussions.

The first part of the thesis (supported by two articles) deals with a current stage of political geography and geopolitics. The main result is that geopolitics is today a divided (sub)discipline, as geographers are mainly engaged in critical geopolitics and scholars of the International Relations continue in classical geopolitical reasoning (namely those who subscribe themselves under the label of neorealism). The main difference is that geographers consider space as an inter-subjective entity – socially constructed, whereas IR scholars tend to see space as an objective factor. In the combination with other epistemological differences, this different consideration of space has produced an exorbitant barrier between these two fields. One factor dividing the two approaches looms especially large – it is an arduous dismissal of classical geopolitics and political realism and all of its derivatives by (political) geographers. Effectively, it means that neoclassical geopolitics does not exist as a recognized approach within geographical community.

The second part tries to solve the problem of epistemological foundation considering neoclassical geopolitics. Firstly, it is argued that philosophy of science does not provide a final argument for one epistemological position, hence it is necessary to choose an epistemological stance with respect to a specific research agenda. Nevertheless once epistemological position has been selected, it is not possible to change it voluntarily. Otherwise our research will almost necessarily lack a methodological rigor (because methodology is applied epistemology). Also, there are two basic epistemological positions, which can serve as the basis for neoclassical geopolitics – neopositivism and scientific realism. Consequently, I discuss the basic limitations and possibilities of methods for neoclassical geography. I make a point that very promising methodology (acceptable for neopositivists as well as scientific realists) is the methodology of case and comparative studies as implemented in IR.

The aim of the third part is to present neorealism as a theoretical ground base for neoclassical geopolitics. Firstly, I introduce the theory and describe its varieties (offensive, defensive and neoclassical realism). Secondly, I discuss challenges to (neo)realism made by non-realist authors in several last decades. Because I found most of the would-be-failures of neorealism as (domain) irrelevant or unsupported by elaborated logical theory, I see neorealism and its offensive strand as a suitable theoretical base for neoclassical geopolitics.

The fourth part discusses the centrality of war, power competition and (objective) space in current world. I offer an empirical analysis of the development of military power (on the global and regional levels as well as on the level of separate states) after the end of the Cold war. It is evident that the power competition has remained (unfortunately) one of the core issues of world politics. Second goal of this part is to evaluate the role of (objective) space in military affairs. I demonstrate that on the strategic level space has indeed lost its function as an absolute barrier for power projection, but it is still an important relative obstacle causing severe problems for power projection. On the tactical level, there is a surprising conclusion that space and terrain plays much more dominant role in warfare than ever before.

Finally, I summarize results. The conclusion is that the basic assumptions necessary for neoclassical geopolitics in order to be a successful tool for explaining international political events are met. The states (still the most important actors in international realm) exist in the anarchical environment, where military power remains an important instrument of power politics. Moreover, considering the fact that distance, space and terrain are still the important factors for power projection or warfare, it would be foolish to neglect the insight which neoclassical geopolitics can bring into the scholarly as well as to public debates in international politics.