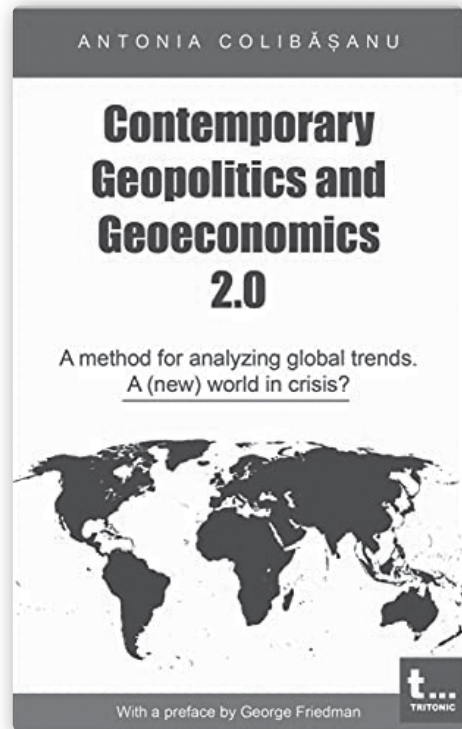


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CONTEMPORARY GEOPOLITICS AND GEOECONOMICS 2.0

Tritonic, Bucharest, 2021, 341 pages, ISBN 978-606-749-518-8

When one merges contemporary geopolitics and geoeconomics in a single title with an intention to affirm a defragmented consideration of the two while intending to highlight a method for geopolitical analysis, the element of reader's curiosity appears. In the preface, George Friedman¹ provides a solid overview of contexts that have been shaping Romania's manoeuvring space seeking support of great powers, primarily the United States, and its significance within Intermarinum². The book has six chapters with theoretical components, each ending with a list of key concepts derived from it, and case studies to substantiate them.

The first chapter focuses on national imperative and interests as attributes of geopolitical analysis. It describes some of the main repercussions of the



Post-Cold war period and dynamic redefinitions of power zones. This development has constantly been followed by vibrant of national imperatives. Challenges related to accesses to natural resources, energy in particular, (re)definitions of both multilateral and bilateral relations in reaction to developments in free

1 George Friedman is an internationally recognized geopolitical forecaster and strategist on international affairs and the Founder and Chairman of Geopolitical Futures born in Hungary.

2 Intermarinum - geopolitical name for a geographical belt covering countries between three seas: Baltic, Black and Adriatic seas.

trade, reaffirmed more traditional interpretation of national interests. Further advances in digitalisation and its boost to economic aspect of globalisation, compose a context within which the author sees geoeconomics and the new global set up becoming the foundations of contemporary geopolitics. Through consultation of different theories of geopolitics, the author derives three main principles: subject of geopolitics is the society organised within a governance system; the subject is given attributes of “objective reality” and “evolutionary attitudes”, in order to nurture its features and defend itself in order to exist and survive; and – a geopolitical subject acts rationally with leadership understanding its opportunities and limitations. France is qualified as the only country which can project power in any part of Europe, given its unique geopolitical feature of belonging to both the North European Plain and the Mediterranean. The weakness is the internal disconnect between the two, shift of the public discourse towards issues of identities, security and unemployment, fuelled by recent phenomena such as migrations and terrorism. Traditionally close ties between the United Kingdom (UK) and Poland are becoming increasingly important for the UK within post-Brexit redefinitions. The author points out that Eastern European countries potentially play an important role for the UK. Regarding German envisions of the future, attention is paid to a

document leaked to Der Spiegel in 2004, called “Strategic Perspective 2040”, that envisages two scenarios in case of more or less challenged continuation of European Union’s (EU) existence and strong cross-Atlantic connections, while the third one that includes rise of nationalistic tensions within Western Europe, that is currently ongoing. Germany continues to be dependent on access to global market, as one of the largest exporters. Polish positioning vis-à-vis Russia, focuses on two paths that have the capacity to limit perceived Russian threats: the first one would be closely working with the US and its backing to Intermarinum and the second one is keeping Kiev closer. Description of the need of the Central Europe for a redefined orientation as analysed in 2014, within a context of challenged cooperation with NATO and the EU weakened by internal divisions, concludes with a note of importance a strong belt of Western values, versus Russian belt of frozen conflicts. Moldova and Ukraine are described as countries “searching for their soul”, being stretched between Euro-Atlantic ambitions and vulnerability to Russia. The chapter focusing on strategic and tactical landscape describes importance of factors relevant for a country’s defence and differences in social dynamism and features of a country’s infrastructure. Geopolitical perspective differentiates between migrating and non-migrating communities, ethnic and those that are multi-ethnic, and national and non-national communities, in order

to understand actions and reactions. Good living standard is identified as the key motivator of the East European countries to embrace the idea of EU expansion. Structured options for geopolitical analysis are based on two kinds of global systems: partial systems and component systems. The author offers the case of German foreign policy on the Balkans here, the Berlin Process and the fact that the Balkans has become one of the major migrant routes. Historical complexities between Poland and Ukraine got another layer when Ukrainian citizens started increasingly to migrate to Poland due to its growing economy, which caused reactions on both sides. Still, both countries are suggested firm up their military ties. The case of a “credible” EU Strategy for the Western Balkans is Serbia-centred with absence of focus on Montenegro, which has been a champion in the process. The case that looks behind the scenes of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Agreement, OPEC notes that it has lost big portion of its control over the oil market, with the US, Russia and China now being the top oil producers. However, OPEC, reportedly, still has the power to distort the market with news that potentially could change the current matrix. The case of fluctuating realities versus seasonal European statistics is stressed as relevant, particularly during periods such as those of austerity measures. Here, addressing structural weaknesses is found relevant. Case of Moldova’s

position marked by balancing, that swings between wishes of citizens and limited options that the country has.

Chapter on structure and vectors of influence emphasise importance of use of history, geography and sociology in geopolitical analysis. Identification of relevant information is instructed through two methods: the metaphor, that operates through analogies, and creation of quasi-models whose success depends on establishment of relevant and specific parameters. Importance of social cohesion is stressed. Case of far-right political option in Germany challenging the mainstream ones has been identified as a sign of dissatisfaction boosted by revived nationalism. Example of Poland is relevant as it is trying to build up own leadership and reduce reliance on Germany. Hungary depends on Russian gas, but remains dependent on EU for trade and structural funding and NATO for defence. Difficult rebirth of Russian agriculture affected by the Western embargo over Crimea made this sector even more vulnerable. Squeezed between Russia and Iran, Azerbaijan has close ties with Turkey. Armenia is supported by Kremlin. The author noted in 2017 that weakening of Azerbaijan can lead towards external powers’ attempts to dominate the country, which in four years turned out to be – true. The fourth chapter elaborates on dependencies and causation in complex systems pointing out that global environment is a complex

ecosystem with spatial and temporal features. It draws attention to importance of the Porter's model that focuses on both subject's internal environment and external relations and communication, which can be well applied in the case of Donald Trump's US Administration trying to interfere in dynamics of global economy. The author criticises NATO's effectiveness and provides an overview of a context in which failure of Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) became a topic of domestic political campaigns. The same went for domestic implications of tensions between Russia and Belarus in 2016. Social innovations and the digital age are positioned in an artificial environment and represents an attempt of a response to an identified problem, which evolves in the world that is both globalised and decentralised. The author offers some examples to substantiate this claim: e.g. internet is linked to work of the US military, while NASA opened the issue of climate change. Flexibility has become an imperative. Internet has become inevitable in telecommunications, information systems and media. This has escalated into new telecommunications focusing on quality of transmission networks and cyber space. Simultaneously with elaboration of the world's reliance on these developments, the author stresses their importance within a context that is economically

still structured by Breton Woods rules, despite novelties in economic realities, such as appearance of crypto currencies.

The sixth chapter on pandemics was written six months after COVID 19 pandemics broke out, in November 2020. Public discourse burdened with syntagms and words such as "herd immunity" policy, restrictions, lockdown, health care system functionalities. The author stressed trends of further separation between classes and revival of nationalism.

The author strikes a good balance between elaboration of national interests, strategic and tactical landscape, lines of influences and dependencies and providing concrete examples for each through case studies published over the past several years, whose selection can be qualified as Eurocentric, but is relevant particularly from the Romanian angle. Weak points are case studies on EU's involvement in the Western Balkans and somewhat outdated case study on challenges in the EU. Strong point of the book in innovative approach to analysis expressed in formulas and good description of positioning of East European countries. Although this book could be vulnerable to criticism that it only partially proves right when insisting on transition and subordination of geoeconomics to geopolitics, it represents a good overview of most recent developments.