

ARMED FORCES AS A GEOPOLITICS INSTRUMENT FROM A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

MATEUSZ ZIĘTARSKI*

ABSTRACT

Geography can restrain states, or create possibilities to the political activity that states carry out. Following Carl von Clausewitz, one can point to the relation between politics and war. The famous Prussian general claimed that war is an extension of politics made by means of the armed forces. Questions should therefore be posed how geography restrains or strengthens the activity of the armed forces, and how geopolitics determines the functioning of the military. The following article shows the abovementioned imperative in the historical as well as contemporary context. The aim of the study is to place the armed forces in the geopolitical framework and to show the cause-and-effect relationship between the operations of the armed forces and geopolitics. The research is carried out on the time axis: the time analysis is divided into the period of the Second World War, the Cold War and the post-Cold War period.

* Mateusz Ziętarski, Ph.D., ORCID: 0000-0003-2960-7669, Pomeranian University in Słupsk, Słupsk, Poland; correspondence address: Pomeranian University in Słupsk, Arciszewskiego 22A, Słupsk, Poland; email: mateusz.zietarski@apsl.edu.pl

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INTRODUCTION

Observation of threats on the international stage confirms their high intensity. Numerous conflicts, crises and acts of terror cause that the issue of security is often raised by politicians, experts and journalists. The topic of geopolitics often appears in the above analyzes and studies. Reading periodicals in the field of security, international relations, and political science, as well as texts in daily and weekly newspapers about current events does not provide comprehensive knowledge about geopolitics. Critical analysis of subject literature shows that there is a multitude of definitions of geopolitics, which instead of systematizing the terminology results in chaos and misunderstanding. The problem of terminological chaos is particularly evident in the school of critical geopolitics.

In addition, studies oriented on describing the relationship between geopolitics and the armed forces are lacking. The above condition is an inspiration to reflect, and this study is a contribution to a comprehensive research on this topic. The author's intention is to show geopolitics as a useful tool for understanding and creating national security. In this article, the functioning of armed forces embedded in at the geopolitical framework will be discussed.

THE PLACE AND ROLE OF GEOPOLITICS

The term 'geopolitics' arises from the combination of two words, 'geography' and 'politics'. By pointing to the above areas, Czapotowicz creates a definition of geopolitics as a discipline dealing with the impact of geographical factors on the world policy, with particular emphasis on the relationship between geographical features and state policy.¹

¹ J. Czapotowicz, *Teorie stosunków międzynarodowych. Krytyka i systematyzacja*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 84–86.

The above relation can be described depending on the adopted criteria and classification of division of geopolitics. Deudney distinguishes five trends in geopolitics:

1. naturalistic trend,
2. the trend of German geopolitics,
3. the realistic trend,
4. the trend of political geography,
5. the trend of classical global geopolitics.²

The above division should be supplemented with the criterion of world domination, from which the following trends emerge:

- organic state (Friedrich Ratzel, Rudolf Kjellen),
- theory of spheres of influence (Karl Haushofer, Saul Cohen),
- global geopolitics: land power (Halford Mackinder),
- global geopolitics: maritime power (Alfred Mahan, Nicholas Spykman),
- geostrategy: air power (Giulio Douhet, Alexander de Seversky).³

Czaputowicz adds to the above trends Brzezinski's paradigm of the "great chessboard". Brzeziński's categorization, consisting of four areas, is symptomatic. It can determine whether a given state has a position of a world power. These four areas are military, economic, technological and cultural capabilities. The first area, the military capabilities, is the starting point for this work, because the issue of military development and military capabilities of the state is based on the armed forces. Their location in geopolitical processes is the subject of the author's research.

The concept of geopolitics is strongly associated with the concept of security. The above relationship results from the scope of the issues they concern, which means that these concepts often have a common denominator, e.g. they both may refer to world events, or to the principles of a current policy. But the relationship of these issues is not only due to substantive reasons. Both security and geopolitics are affected by popularity and devaluation. The continuous process of creating subsequent definitions leads to information chaos, and the above terms should be assessed as under-specified definitions. This is because, despite the multitude of descriptions of these issues, there is still a lack of consistent definitions that fulfill the explanatory function.

² D. Deudney, *Geopolitics and Change*, [in:] *New Thinking In International Relations Theory*, M.W. Doyle, J.G. Ikenberry (eds), Boulder 1999, p. 95.

³ J. Czaputowicz, *Teorie...*, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

It is worth referring to Brzezinski, who accurately described geopolitics as an entity that reflects “the combination of geographical and political factors affecting the state of a country or of a region”.⁴ Geopolitics described as competition for territory and the way of seeing the world is an integral part of the actions of states. This relationship has led to the definition of geopolitics as “the geography of international relations”, which are the arena in which countries cooperate and compete.⁵ This dual activity of states as subjects of international relations – cooperation and competition – requires the analysis of security policies conducted by interested parties.

The first sphere of state activity is related to progressive cooperation on the international arena. Coudenhove-Kalergi developed the definition of Pan-Europe and described it as a project of Europe consolidated into a political and economic federation.⁶ This author represents the trend of permanent integration, which, according to his supporters, is to lead Europe to fulfill its dream of one large European country.⁷

The second form of activity of states on the international arena concerns competition between them. The result of this are crises between countries, and, consequently, increased threats to global security. Conflicts and wars are examples of the highest level of tension and competition between countries. Referring to the theory of a Prussian general, Carl von Clausewitz, the state implementing a policy oriented in this way extends its activity to a war, whose basic instrument is the armed forces. According to the Prussian strategist, war is an extension of politics, and the tool that allows this extension is the armed forces.⁸ The thought of von Clausewitz is reflected in contemporary considerations on the location of the armed forces, which today is described as “one of the policy instruments by which the state pursues its interests”.⁹

⁴ Z. Brzeziński, *Plan gry. USA–ZSRR*, Warszawa 1990, p. 38.

⁵ R. Potocki, *Saul Bernard Cohen, The Geography in International Relations*, “Racja Stanu: Studia i Materiały”, 2010, no. 2(8), pp. 221–226.

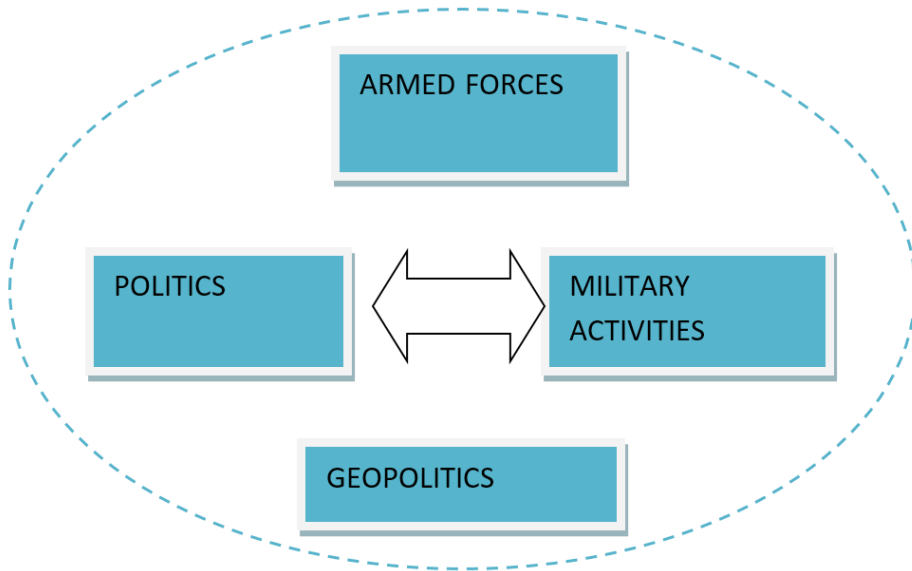
⁶ E. Brzuska, *Idea Paneuropę Richarda Coudenhove-Kalergiego jako determinanta współczesnych stosunków międzynarodowych*, [in:] *Współczesne determinanty stosunków międzynarodowych*, B. Bednarczyk, M. Lasoń (eds), Kraków 2006, p. 128.

⁷ Z. Bauman, *Europa niedokończona przygoda*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 58–59.

⁸ C. von Clausewitz, *O wojnie*, Gliwice 2013, p. 22.

⁹ K. Ligęza, *Bezpieczeństwo morskie państwa: zasady wykorzystania Marynarki Wojennej*, Gdynia 2014, p. 11.

FIG. 1. LOCATION OF THE ARMED FORCES IN GEOPOLITICAL SPACE



Source: own study.

The above illustration shows the place of the armed forces in the conditions determined by geopolitics. Armies, nowadays treated as one of the instruments from the whole range of political solutions of states, depend on the political strategy. This trend has led to a situation in which political issues play a leading role.

The list below, prepared by eminent researchers and security experts, shows that the record number of conflicts was observed after 1945. Although there were no global events, there were numerous conflicts at the regional and local level, as well as border incidents or cases of “muscle straining”. The above trend is determined by the constantly changing nature of modern wars and conflicts.¹⁰ The above characteristics prove that wars, conflicts and crises should be recognized as significant factors in international relations. One can observe their particular intensification in the regions of Africa and the Middle East. The above indication of the escalation of war and conflict is important in the context of the subject of this article. It also leads to the analysis of another aspect of geopolitics.

¹⁰ K. Załęski, *Wprowadzenie do funkcjonowania sił zbrojnych*, Dęblin 2012, p. 49.

The factor that determines geopolitical activities is:

- the size of the space;
- landform;
- climate and resources.¹¹

The analysis of the above determinants should be presented on a timeline. Geographical conditions should be linked to political and social conditions. Such a connotation will be a value regarding a causal relationship between conditions. The current analysis will place armed forces among these dependencies.

GEOPOLITICS IN THE FACE OF WORLD WAR II

During the World War II, the occupation of the Republic of Poland forced the Polish authorities in exile to organize the armed forces in this new geopolitical reality. In accordance with bilateral arrangements between Poland and Great Britain of 19 June 1940, an effort was made to reorganize the army.¹² The process of rebuilding the armed forces and achieving readiness for further struggle was a necessary response of the Polish authorities to the geopolitical situation of that time. The above geopolitical realities are called total war by historians, experts on the art of war and experts in international relations. Territorial expansion, extermination, ethnic cleansing and murder of civilians were the result of this war.

Bellamy, however, rightly points out that the conflict of two prime opponents might not be resolved by a single blow. He adds that in such a case the war assumes a long-lasting and fierce character.¹³ The confirmation of the above thesis is the failure of Operation Barbarossa. Despite the numerous and well-trained army, the Third Reich suffered defeat, and the strategy of the rapid war was discredited. Adolf Hitler's plan assumed the conquest of the Soviet Union areas as soon as possible, so the blitzkrieg strategy was adopted. However, due to the terrain and climate, the German plan could not be implemented.¹⁴ The above example shows the powerful connection

¹¹ T. Klin, *Geopolityka w okresie II wojny światowej*, [in:] *Geopolityka*, A. Dybczyński (ed.), Warszawa 2013, pp. 116–132.

¹² Z. Wawer, E. Kospath-Pawłowski, *Polskie siły zbrojne na obczyźnie*, [in:] *Wojsko polskie w II wojnie światowej*, E. Kospath-Pawłowski (eds), Warszawa 1994, pp. 150–152.

¹³ Ch. Bellamy, *Wojna absolutna. Związek Sowiecki w II wojnie światowej*, Warszawa 2010, p. 62.

¹⁴ A. Seaton, *Wojna totalna. Wehrmacht przeciw Armii Czerwonej 1941–1945*, Krakow 2010, pp. 78–79.

between geopolitics and the functioning of the armed forces, and consequently, the resolution of wars and conflicts.

Klin, while analyzing geographical factors, draws his attention to the World War II. A division into two types of space was made. The first of these are typical spaces characterized by geographical uniformity. During the World War II, it was Western and Eastern Europe, Eastern and Southeast Asia, the Western Pacific, the North Atlantic, and the Mediterranean. The second group of space were highland and mountain areas.¹⁵ Factors related to space make rulers dependent on establishing internal and foreign policy visions on political geography. According to von Clausewitz's thesis, war is a continuation of politics, in a tougher, military form. Consequently, there is a cause-and-effect relationship between spatial factors and tasks of the armed forces.

The greatest military activity and the greatest intensification of the armed forces during the World War II were recorded in the European and Chinese lowlands. Such terrain determined the commanders to create a strategy based on the use of armored and motorized troops. The lion's share of the fighting forces in such spaces was infantry. For operations in the highlands, infantry was also most commonly used, which was supported by a small number of light tanks. Land units were also supported by aviation, which had a transport and logistics function as well. Conditions prevailing at highlands and mountains (climate, terrain obstacles) made it difficult to run campaigns; this applied e.g. to the Balkans (long winters in temperate climates), or Burma (heavy rainfall in equatorial climates). The above difficulties became the reason for slowing down the movement of the war front.¹⁶

GEOPOLITICAL CONDITIONS IN THE BIPOLAR WORLD

Geopolitics is a broad field. Its scope cannot be limited only to the aspect of space, terrain and climate prevailing on a given area. Political geography should also be treated as a division of the world map determined by political strategies. The introduction to the analysis of the geopolitical situation during the Cold War is the division of the world presented by Brzezinski. The author presents a triple division: the First World, i.e. free and democratic countries, the Second World, i.e. communist countries, and the Third

¹⁵ T. Klin, *Geopolityka...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–107.

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*

World, i.e. underdeveloped countries. He then notes that after the collapse of this division, a bipolar world emerged: on the one hand, the rich and developed United States and on the other hand, the underdeveloped Soviet Union.¹⁷ Another criterion presented in this article results from the theory of three worlds, which already apply to the Cold War times.¹⁸ According to this theory, the First World was based on two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, whose rivalry set the tone for the entire Cold War era. The Third World were developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Between the then core which was the US and USSR camp and the periphery, there was also the Second World.¹⁹ In both theories, geopolitical conditioning becomes apparent, which led to the rivalry of two military powers, which are the armed arms of the US and the USSR policy. In 1968, so-called Brezhnev doctrine arose as a result of the Prague spring. The authorities of the USSR wanted to present their vision of the above events, which concerned the absolute control over the area of Central and Eastern Europe. This geopolitical dimension led to the threat of a potential conflict between the two blocs. The theater of this conflict would be Central and Eastern Europe, over which the specter of the war outbreak was permanently hanging over the years. Geopolitics of the Cold War led to an arms race and an increase in the number of armed forces.

The constant readiness of the armies of both blocs reached its apogee during the Cuban and the Berlin crises. The rivalry and tension between the two blocs, Eastern and Western, were particularly visible in the functioning of two political and military alliances. The Eastern Bloc was concentrated in the Warsaw Pact, in which the Soviet Union played a dominant role, while the military and political cooperation within the Western bloc took place through the North Atlantic Pact. The doctrine of Warsaw Pact states contained the reason and purpose of the creation of the Warsaw Pact. It was an opposition to the imperialist impulses of the countries of the broadly understood West.

The Cold War period is the time when military missions appear internationally. The first mission was carried out under the aegis of the UN

¹⁷ Z. Brzeziński, *O Polsce, Europie i świecie 1988–2001*, Warszawa 2002, p. 121.

¹⁸ C. Jean, *Geopolityka*, Wrocław 2013, p. 315.

¹⁹ W. Kazanecki, *Geopolityka okresu zimnej wojny*, [in:] *Geopolityka*, A. Dybczyński (ed.), Warszawa 2013, pp. 200–201.

shortly after the end of the World War II. Its purpose was to bring an end to fighting in Palestine. The United East Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was established on 29 May 1948.²⁰ The above mission was the first of thirteen peace operations that were carried out during the Cold War. The relatively small number of missions in relation to the threats of the bipolar world resulted from the Cold War tension. The United Nations was trapped in a consensus. As a result of the paralysis of the decision-making process, the consensus among UN decision-makers turned out to be unreachable. During the 45 years of the Cold War, veto was reported 279 times, which reflects the fragility of this consensus.

ARMED FORCES IN GEOPOLITICS OF THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD

The implementation of military missions is a bridge that connects the Cold War and post-Cold War reality. However, the intensity of the missions and their character have changed. The first missions during the Cold War, carried out in the Middle East, were *en bloc* observational. The about-turn seen over the years paved the way to post-Cold War missions, which in addition to observation also include:

- supporting the political process,
- organizing elections,
- protection of civilians,
- humanitarian relief,
- disarm,
- demobilization and reintegration of the warring parties,
- administration of a specific territory,
- maintaining public order.²¹

The vision of eternal peace was to prevail in the new post-Cold War reality. Fukuyama in his work *The end of history* postulated to get rid of resentments and focus energy on tasks arising from contemporary challenges. However, the end-of-history paradigm has been falsified by other theories, and above all by time verification.

The concept of cooperative security plays an important role in the process of ensuring global security. It is characterized by a broad reference to preventive diplomacy mechanisms, and operational activities in the form of

²⁰ A. Cianciara, *Operacje pokojowe*, Wrocław 2012, p. 15.

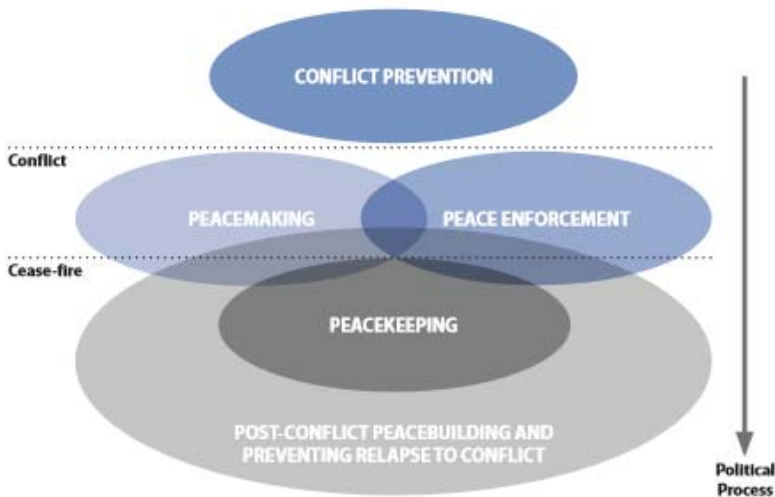
²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 14–15.

missions or peacekeeping operations. The United Nations response to new challenges and threats resulting from changes in geopolitical reality was the development of new forms of mission. According to the goal-oriented classification, there are:

- conflict prevention,
- making peace,
- peace enforcement,
- maintaining peace,
- peace building.²²

The correlation that occurs between these activities is important in the context of the role of the armed forces in contemporary geopolitical challenges. In the context of the place and role of the armed forces, the principle giving priority to political institutions over military institutions is significant. The relationship between peace and security activities undertaken during missions is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

FIG. 2. ACTIONS FOR PEACE AND SECURITY UNDERTAKEN DURING MISSIONS



Source: *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Principles and Guidelines*, New York 2008.

²² M. Marszałek, *Operacje utrzymania i wymuszania pokoju w systemie bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego*, Warszawa 2014, p. 15.

The early warning system is based on the cooperation of states, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, institutes, and think tanks. The next step in the process of ensuring security are two ways to resolve the conflict: peacemaking and peace enforcement.²³ The first way, peacemaking, is based on political and diplomatic tools. The second way, peace enforcement, however, allows for peace and security. It should be emphasized that political and diplomatic solutions are prioritized. Force solutions implemented by the armed forces are a possible consequence.

CONCLUSION

The time analysis of armed forces as a geopolitics instrument shows how much their character, functioning and use have changed in this respect. It is also visible that geopolitical issues related to the location of the state, the terrain, and the prevailing climate are strong determinants for the activities of the armed forces. The conclusions resulting from the above reflections is that under the influence of the changing reality, the political environment, as well as the geographical aspects, the armed forces are undergoing transformation. Permanent development, integration, updating of doctrines and strategies as well as the modernization of the armed forces to suit the changing environment are to lead to a greater efficiency and interoperability of troops. A source of the ongoing transformation process is geopolitics, which focuses on the actions of states in the area of security as related to geographical factors.

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