The Geopolitics of the European “New Right”

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1. Alain de Benoist’s Europe of a Hundred Flags

One of the few European geopolitical schools which has preserved an uninterrupted link with the ideas of the pre-war German continentalist geopoliticians is that of the “New Right.” This trend appeared in France in the late ’60’s and is associated with the philosopher and publicist Alain de Benoist, the leading figure of the movement.

The “New Right” sharply differs on practically all matters from the traditional French right consisting of monarchists, Catholics, Germanophobes, chauvinists, anti-communists, conservatives, etc. The “New Right” includes those who support “organic democracy,” pagans, Germanophiles, socialists, modernists, etc. At the beginning, the “left camp” so conventionally, extremely influential in France considered such to be a “tactical maneuver” by typical rightists, but with time the gravity of this evolution was proven and came to be recognized by all.

One of the fundamental principles of the “New Right’s” ideology, analogues of which soon appeared in other European countries, is the principal of “continental geopolitics.” In contrast to the “old right” and classical nationalists, de Benoist believed that the principle of the centralized Nation-State has been historically exhausted and that the future belongs only to “Great Spaces.” The basis of such “Large Spaces” are to be not so much associations of various states in a pragmatic political bloc, but the equal-footed conglomeration of ethnic groups of different scales into a “Federal Empire.” Such a “Federal Empire” is supposed to be strategically unified, yet ethnically differentiated. Moreover, such strategic unity is to be underpinned by the unity of primordial culture.

The “Large Space” which interested de Benoist most of all was Europe. The New Right believed that the peoples of Europe possess a common Indo-European heritage, a single origin, and the principle of a “common past.” The conditions of the modern epoch, in which tendencies of strategic and economic integration are actively essential for the possession of any real geopolitical sovereignty, dictate the necessity of uniting in even a purely pragmatic sense. Thus, the peoples of Europe are destined for a “common future,” and therein de Benoist draws the conclusion that the thesis of a “United Europe of a hundred flags” [16] must become Europeans’ fundamental geopolitical standard. In such a perspective, as in all the concepts of the New Right, a striving to combine “conservative” and “modernist” elements,i.e., “right” and “left” principles, is clearly visible. In recent years, the New Right has rejected such a label insofar as it considers itself to be “right” to the same extent that it is “left.”

De Benoist’s geopolitical theses are based on an affirmation of the “continental fate of Europe.” In this regard, he fully adheres to the conceptions of Haushofer’s school. From this follows the New Right’s characteristic juxtaposition of “Europe” and the “West.” For them, Europe is a continental, geopolitical formation founded on an ensemble of ethnicities with a common Indo-European origin and possessing common cultural roots. This concept is a traditional one. The “West,” on the contrary, is a geopolitical and historical concept of the modern world which denies ethnic and spiritual traditions, instead putting forth purely material and quantitative criteria of existence, i.e., an essentially utilitarian and rationalist, mechanistic bourgeois civilization. Accordingly, the USA is understood as the most complete incarnation of the West and its “civilization.”

The concrete project of the New Right unfolds along this plane. Europe is to integrate into a “Federal Empire” in opposition to the West and the US. Moreover, regionalist tendencies are to be particularly encouraged, as regions and ethnic minorities retain more traditional features than the metropolises and cultural centers affected by the “Spirit of the West.” On this note, France is supposed to orient itself towards Germany and Middle Europa – hence the interest of the New Right in De Gaulle and Friedrich Naumann. On the level of practical politics, since the ‘70’s the New Right has acted in favor of Europe’s strict strategic neutrality, its withdrawal from NATO, and the development of independent, European nuclear potential.

In regards to the USSR (and later Russia), the position of the New Right has evolved. Starting with the classical thesis of “Neither West nor East, but Europe”, the New Right has since gradually developed the thesis of “Europe above all, but better with the East than with the West.” On a practical level, the original interest in China and the project of a strategic alliance between Europe and China for the purpose of opposing both “American and Soviet imperialism” came to be replaced with a moderate “Sovietophilia” and ideas of a European-Russian alliance.

The New Right’s geopolitics are radically anti-Atlanticist and anti-Mondialist in orientation. They see the fate of Europe as the antithesis of the Atlanticist and Mondialist projects and are thus opponents of “thalassocracy” and the “One World” concept.

It should be noted that in the conditions of the total strategic and political domination of Atlanticism in Europe during the Cold War, de Benoist’s geopolitical position (theoretically and logically flawless), being contrasted to the “norms of political thought,” had no chance of becoming widespread. It was in its own way a kind of “dissidence”, and like any “dissidence” or “non-conformism,” it had a marginal character. To this day, the intellectual level of the New Right, the high quality of its publications, and even the number of its followers among European academia have been ignored by authorities and the analytical institutions which delegate authority to geopolitical projects.

2. Jean Thiriart – Europe from Vladivostok to Dublin

Yet another excellent variety of continentalist geopolitics was developed by another European “dissident,” the Belgian Jean Thiriart (1922-1992). From the early ’60’s onwards, he was the leader of the pan-European radical movement “Young Europe.”

Thiriart considered geopolitics to be the foremost discipline of political science without which it is impossible to construct a rational and farsighted political or state strategy. As a follower of Haushofer and Niekisch, he considered himself to be a “European National Bolshevik” and a builder of the “European Empire.” It was his ideas which anticipated the further developed and more sophisticated projects of the New Right.

Jean Thiriart built his political theory on the principle of the “autarchy of large spaces.” Developed in the middle of the 19th century by the German economist Friedrich List, this theory asserts that the potential strategic and economic development of a state is possible only if it possesses sufficient geopolitical scale and larger territorial advantages. Thiriart applied this concept to the actual situation in Europe and came to the conclusion that the global value of Europe’s states would ultimately be lost if they did not unite into a unified Empire in opposition to the USA. Moreover, Thiriart believed that such an “Empire” would not be “federal” and “regional-oriented”, but ultimately unitary, centralized, and would become a powerful, single continental Nation-State in accordance with the Jacobin model. Here lies the fundamental difference between the views of de Benoist and Thiriart.

In the late ’70’s Thiriart’s views underwent some modification. An analysis of the prevailing geopolitical situation led him to the conclusion that Europe’s scale was insufficient to liberate it from American thalassocracy. Consequently, the main condition for “European liberation” was the unification of Europe and the USSR. He moved from a geopolitical scheme involving three main zones – the West, Europe, and Russia (USSR) – to one with only two components, i.e., the West and the Eurasian continent. Moreover, Thiriart came to the radical conclusion that Europe would have to choose Soviet socialism over Anglo-Saxon capitalism.

Thus appeared the project of the “Euro-Soviet Empire from Vladivostok to Dublin” [17]. This proposition nearly prophetically described the reasons which would lead to the collapse of the USSR if it did not commit to new geopolitical moves in Europe and the South in the near future. Thiriart believed that the ideas of Haushofer concerning a “continental bloc of Berlin-Moscow-Tokyo” were relevant to a large extent even now. It is important that these theses of Thiriart were presented 15 years before the collapse of the USSR and absolutely accurately predicted the logic and reasons behind this disaster. Thiriart unsuccessfully attempted to present his views to Soviet leaders, but he did personally meet with Nasser, Zhou Enlai, and senior Yugoslav officials in the ’60’s. It is significant that Moscow rejected his proposed organization of clandestine “European liberation brigades” tasked with waging a terroristic struggle against “Atlanticist agents” in Europe.

Jean Thiriart’s views currently underpin the active, non-conformist movement of the European National-Bolsheviks, such as the European Liberation Front, and are thoroughly in line with the projects of contemporary Russian Neo-Eurasianism.

3. Thinking in Continents – Jordis von Lohausen

Thiriart himself was very close to the Austrian general Jordis von Lohausen who, unlike Thiriart and de Benoist, did not participate in direct political activism or build concrete social projects. Instead, Lohausen adhered to a strictly scientific approach and restricted himself to pure geopolitical analysis, although his original position as a continentalist and follower of Haushofer was one and the same with that of the National-Bolsheviks and New Right.

Lohausen believed that political power can only become durable and sustainable when rulers think in terms of “millennia and continents” rather than in immediate or local categories. His main work, accordingly, is titled The Strength to Conquer – Thinking in Continents [18].

Lohausen was of the opinion that global territorial, civilizational, and cultural as well as social process are only understandable if they are examined from a “farsighted” perspective as opposed to what he termed historical “short-sightedness.” In human society, authority, upon which the choice of historical path and the most important decisions depend, should be guided by the most general schemes which allow this or that state or people to find their place in a vast historical perspective. Therefore, the basic discipline necessary for the determination of power strategies is geopolitics in its traditional sense of operating with global categories while remaining aloof of analytical particularities (like Lacoste’s “internal” school of applied geopolitics). Modern ideologies and the latest technological and civilizational shifts undoubtedly change the topography of the world, but they cannot cancel the basic laws linked to natural and cultural cycles that are measured in millennia.

Such global categories include space, language, ethnos, and resources, etc. Lohausen thus proposes the following formula of power: “strength = force x location.”

Lohausen elaborates:

“Insofar as Strength is Power multiplied by location, only a favorable geographical position offers the opportunity of fully developing internal forces.” [19]

Thus, power (political, intellectual, etc.) is directly linked with space.

Lohausen separated the fate of Europe from the fate of the West as he considered Europe to be a continental formation only temporarily under the control of thalassocracy. Accordingly, the geopolitical liberation of Europe requires a spatial (positional) minimum which can be achieved only through the unification of Germany, integration processes in Central Europe, the restoration of Prussia’s territorial integrity (torn between Poland, the USSR, and the GDR), and the further gathering of European states into a new, autonomous bloc independent of Atlanticism. In this scheme, it is important to note the role of Prussia which Lohausen (following Niekisch and Spengler) considered to be the most continental, “Eurasian” part of Germany. If Koenigsberg was the capital of Germany instead of Berlin, then European history would have gone in a different, more “correct” direction with an emphasis on a European-Russian alliance against Anglo-Saxon thalassocracy.

Lohausen considered the future of Europe to be unthinkable from a strategic perspective without Russia and, vice versa, Russia (the USSR) needed Europe. Without it, Russia would be geopolitically “incomplete” and vulnerable to America, whose location is so much more advantageous that, consequently, its strength could sooner or later outstrip the USSR. Lohausen stressed that the USSR could have four different Europes to its West – a “hostile Europe,” a “subordinated Europe,” a “devastated Europe,” or a “European ally.” The first three variants would be inevitable if the USSR continued its European policy which, indeed, ultimately brought the Soviet Union to defeat in the Cold War. Only striving to make Europe “allied and friendly” at any cost could have redeemed the fatal geopolitical situation of the USSR and signaled a new stage in geopolitical history – a Eurasian stage.

Lohausen purposefully confined his position to pure geopolitical observations, and he ignored any ideological issues. For example, to him him Boyar Rus, Tsarist Russia, and the Soviet Union were all parts of a single continuous process independent of changes in the ruling system or ideology. Geopolitically, Russia was heartland and its fate was predetermined by its lands no matter what regime ruled it.

Like Thiriart, Lohausen foresaw the geopolitical collapse of the USSR as an inevitability if it continued to follow its usual course. However, what Atlanticist geopoliticians considered to be a victory, Lohausen saw above all as a defeat for continental forces. With this, however, there was a nuance. The collapse of the Soviet system could open new opportunities for creating a positive point of reference for the establishment of a future Eurasian bloc, a continental Empire, insofar as certain restrictions such as the ones imposed by Marxist ideology would be removed.

4. Jean Parvulesco’s Eurasian Empire of the End

A more romantic version of geopolitics was put forth by the famous French writer Jean Parvulesco. Earlier geopolitical themes in literature had arisen in George Orwell’s dystopian1984 which futuristically described the division of the world into three enormous continental blocs: Eastasia, Eurasia, and Oceania. Similar themes can be encountered in the works of Arthur Kestler, Aldous Huxley, Raymond Abellio, etc.

Jean Parvulesco made geopolitical themes central in all of his publications, thereby opening a new genre of “geopolitical fiction.”

Parvulesco’s concepts can be summarized briefly by the following [20]: the history of mankind is the history of Power and authority. Various semi-secret organizations strive to access central positions in civilization, i.e., Power, the cycles of existence of which far exceed the duration of conventional political ideologies, ruling dynasties, religious institutions, or states and nations. The two organizations that have acted throughout history, albeit under different names, are distinguished by Parvulesco as the “Order of Atlanticists” and the “Order of Eurasianists.” Between these two forces rages a centuries-old struggle participated in by such disparate figures as the Pope, patriarchs, kings, diplomats, financiers, revolutionaries, mystics, generals, scientists, artists, etc. All socio-cultural manifestations, accordingly, boil down to primordial, albeit extremely complex, geopolitical archetypes.

This is a geopolitical line pushed to the logical limit, the roots of which were even clearly traced by the rather rationalistic founders of geopolitics as such who were “foreign” to such “mysticism.”

In Parvulesco’s plots, General De Gaulle and the geopolitics structures founded by him, which remained in the shadows after his presidency, play a central role. Parvulesco terms this “geopolitical holism.” Such “geopolitical holism” is the French analogue of the Haushofer school’s continentalism.

The main task of the supporters of this line was the organization of the European continental bloc “Paris-Berlin-Moscow” and in this aspect Parvulesco’s theories interlock with the theses of the New Right and the National-Bolsheviks.

Parvulesco maintained that the current historical stage is one of the culmination of centuries of geopolitical confrontation in which the dramatic history of the continental-civilizational duel will come to a head. He predicted the imminent emergence of the giant continental-scale construction of the “Eurasian Empire of the End” and the final showdown with the “Empire of the Atlantic.” He described this eschatological encounter in an apocalyptic tone as the “Endkampf” (“Final Battle”). Interestingly enough, the fictional characters of Parvulesco’s texts act side by side with real historical personalities, many of which the author maintained (and to this day still does) friendly relationships with. Among them are politicians from De Gaulle’s inner circle, English and American diplomats, the poet Ezra Pound, the philosopher Julius Evola, the politician and writer Raymond Abellio, the sculptor Arno Breker, various members of occult organizations, etc.

Despite the fictional character of Parvulesco’s texts, they in fact possess relatively enormous geopolitical value, as a number of his articles published in the late ’70’s strangely enough accurately described the situation which prevailed in the world in the mid ‘90s.

5. The Indian ocean as a path to world domination – Robert Steuckers

The total opposite of the “geopolitical visionary” that was Parvulesco is the Belgian geopolitician and publicist Robert Steuckers, the publisher of the two prestigious journals Orientations and Vouloir. Steuckers approached geopolitics from a purely scientific, rationalist position and strove to liberate the discipline from what he deemed all of its “random” eccentricities. Following the logic of the New Right in an academic orientation, he nonetheless came to conclusions strikingly close to the “prophecies” of Parvulesco.

Steuckers also believed that the socio-political and diplomatic projects of different states and blocs, no matter in whatever ideological form they are clothed in, represent veiled and temporarily indirect expressions of global geopolitical projects. In this phenomenon he saw the influence of the “Land” factor on human history, as man is a creature of the earth (created from earth). As follows, earth and space predetermine man in the most significant of his manifestations. This theory was the precursor of “geohistory.”

For Steuckers, a continentalist orientation was a priority as he considered Atlanticism to be hostile to Europe and believed the fate of European prosperity to be connected with Germany and [21]. Steuckers was an active proponent of Europe’s cooperation with Third World countries and the Arab world in particular.

Along with this, he stressed the enormous importance of the Indian Ocean to the future geopolitical structure of the planet. He defined the Indian Ocean as the “Middle Ocean” located between the Atlantic and Pacific, strictly in the middle between the eastern coast of Africa and the Pacific zone home to New Zealand, Australia, New Guinea, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Indochina. Maritime control over the Indian Ocean was considered to be a key position for geopolitically influencing three of the most important “large spaces,” i.e., Africa, southern-Eurasian Rimland, and the Pacific region. Hence the strategic priority attached to various small islands in the Indian Ocean, especially Diego Garcia which is equidistant from all coastal areas.

Steuckers asserted that the Indian Ocean was the territory on which all of European strategy should be focused insofar as it is through this zone that Europe could influence the USA, Eurasia, and Japan all at once. From his point of view, the decisive geopolitical confrontation which would determine the future 21st century would unfold in precisely this space.

Steuckers actively busied himself with the history of geopolitics and is the author of the article on geopolitics in the new edition of the Brussels Encyclopedia.

6. Carlo Terracciano: Russia + Islam = the salvation of Europe

A particularly active center of continentally-oriented geopolitics can be found in Italy. After the Second World War, the ideas of Carl Schmitt were more widespread in Italy than in any other European country, and thanks to this the geopolitical mindset is very common there. In addition, it was precisely in Italy that Jean Thiriart’s “Young Europe” movement and the ideas of continental National-Bolshevism were most developed of all.

Of all the numerous political and sociological journals and centers of the New Right dealing with geopolitics, the Milanese “Orion” magazine, in which the geopolitical analyses of Dr. Carlo Terracciano were published regularly over the course of 10 years, is of particular interest. Terracciano professed the most extreme version of European continentalism most immediately congruent to Eurasianism.

Terracciano fully accepted the map of Mackinder and Mahan and concurs with the rigorous civilizational and geopolitical dualism distinguished by them. Moreover, believing that the fate of Europe as a whole totally depends on the fate of Russia, Eurasia, and the East, he clearly stands on the side of heartland. For him, the continental East is a positive and the Atlanticist West is a negative. Radical approaches are exceptions among Europeans, even among continentally-oriented geopoliticians, and Terracciano does not put any accent on the special status of Europe, instead believing that it is a mere secondary point in view of the planetary confrontation of thalassocracy and tellurocracy. He fully subscribed to the idea of a united Eurasian State, a “Euro-Soviet Empire from Vladivostok to Dublin,” which brings him close to Thiriart. However, he does not share the “Jacobinism” and “universalism” inherent to Thiriart, instead insisting on ethno-cultural differentiation and regionalism which, in turn, brings him close to Alain de Benoist.

Terracciano underlines the centrality of the Russian factor which he combines with another interesting point – he believes that the most important role in the fight with Atlanticism belongs to the Islamic world, especially the anti-American regimes of Iran, Libya, Iraq, etc. This leads him to the conclusion that the Islamic world is, to a large extent, a proponent of continental geopolitical interests. He even considered “fundamentalist” versions of Islam to be positive in this regard.

The ultimate formula which summarizes the geopolitical views of Dr. Terracciano is the following: Russia (heartland) + Islam vs. USA (Atlanticism, Mondialism) [22].

Terracciano saw Europe as the bridgehead of a Russo-Islamic anti-Mondialist bloc. In his opinion, only such a radical approach can objectively result in a genuine European renaissance.

Terracciano’s views are shared by other associates of Orion and the intellectual center working at its base (including professor Claudio Mutti, Maurizio Murelli, the sociologist Alessandra Colla, Marko Battarra, etc.). A number of leftist, social-democratic, communist, and anarchist circles in Italy, the newspaper Umanità, and the journal Nuovo Angolazione have gravitated in this National-Bolshevik direction [represented by Terracciano].

Footnotes:

[16] Alain de Benoist “Les idess a l’endroit”, Paris, 1979

[17] Jean Thiriart “L’Empire Eurosovietique de Vladivistok jusque Dublin”, Brussell, 1988

[18] Jordis von Lohausen “Mut zur Macht. Denken in Kontinenten”, Berg, 1978

[19] Ibid

[20] Jean Parvulesco “Galaxie GRU”, Paris, 1991

[21] Robert Steukers “La Russie, L’Europe et L’Occident” dans “Orientation” № 4 nov.-dec. 1983

[22] Carlo Terracciano “Nel Fiume della Storia” in “Orion”, Milano, №№ 22 — 30, 1986 — 1987

Translator: Jafe Arnold

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