
Criekemans undertakes an excellent study to discover the “roots” (or “critical genealogy”) of geopolitical researching and its historical and contemporary influence on the field of International Relations (IR). The main aim of his study is to show that geopolitics suffered falsely from popularizing and misuse of the term. Geopolitics should, according to the author, be reevaluated and reintroduced into the science of IR. The author examines literature that has appeared since the end of the 19th century, on ontological, epistemological, and methodological grounds in order to discover the geopolitical researching tradition and to prove its continuous importance.

In order to evaluate the position of geopolitics, Criekemans divides the book into three parts. The first part of the book consists of two chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the research question, the research method and the positioning of the study. The second chapter describes the attempts science has made throughout history to explore the relationship between (natural) boundaries and political decision-making. Criekemans shows that over time, nature, as an explanation for world political processes, has shifted to a broader practice and usage of “spatial” variables. A more realistic view on the reciprocal influence of man and nature was the result. In contemporary researching there is increasing consideration for factors such as interpretation, perception, and interdependence.

The second and largest part of the book discusses the genealogy of geopolitical writing, divided into three chapters describing the early successful developments of geopolitics until World War II, assessing the seemingly absent but indirect influence of geopolitical writings on political science from World War II onwards, and finally addressing the contemporary critical geopolitics that is suffering from false historical accusations.

Criekemans describes that geopolitics was popular among scientists of IR and Political Geography (PG) in the early 20th century. A shift occurred in the 1920s and 1930s, in Germany, when scientist Karl Haushofer used elements of classic authors like Ratzel, Mackinder, and Kjellén to popularize geopolitics and link it to the Nazi regime. This resulted in such a taboo that scientists after World War II were wary or even refused to use the term geopolitics. This false image of geopolitics still affects geopolitics today,
moreover because it was aggravated in the 1960s and 1970s by political figures such as Brzezinsky and Kissinger, who also used geopolitics in their strategic worldview rhetoric.

Criekemans closely analyzes the literature on geopolitics that appeared in this period by German, French, American schools, etc. on the usage of the relation between territoriality and politics, or “geo” and politics. Interestingly, Criekemans looks at both those that have consciously and those that have unconsciously applied territoriality, but refused or denied the usage of the term geopolitics. This way, the author intends to show that even though geopolitics appeared to have fallen into disuse, the practice was still widely applied. This investigation leads up to both a historically relevant research into the practice of the fields of IR and PG and to the main statement of the author: geopolitics has remained popular and should be awarded the status it deserves.

In the third and last section the author creates a synthesis. He tries to define the actual character of geopolitics, the reason for its resurgence and works towards a more operational definition of this field of study. He hints at a comprehensive and more all-embracing analytical model for the study of foreign issues. Criekemans concludes that geopolitics is essential to a better understanding of the developments of the theory of IR. The author moreover believes that geopolitics is a combined study area of both IR and PG. The author makes a suggestion to combine the cognitive geopolitics (established by IR) and Critical Geopolitics (created by PG) into one shared field of study.

Criekemans undertakes an excellent effort to remove the controversy over the term geopolitics. Moreover, the book provides a complete academic summary of the geopolitical thinkers, who have both come from and are influenced by IR and PG.

For readers who are not acquainted with the study of foreign policy, the historical development, and the differences between IR and PG theories, the book could at times be unclear. The author seems to have decided to switch freely between these different theoretical bases, because geopolitics has reciprocally originated from and influenced IR and PG theories. Criekemans has well organized the structure of the book and the clear language in which it has been written is a delight for the reader. The extensive research calendar provided in the last part goes beyond the main topic of this book and offers many directions for further exploration of the