

ROMANIA: GEOGRAPHICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL POSITION

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Abstract: *The paper intends to bring to the reader's attention the importance of understanding the role education plays in creating a good geopolitical position for a state which has a good geographical position, and which is well endowed in natural resources. The case of Romania is the main focus of the paper. There is presented a peculiar strange situation of a country (Romania) which is very well located from geographical point of view but which is incapable to exploit its natural endowments and special location. One reason for this situation is the fact that most people living in present Romania belong to a category named in this paper 'individuals'. Individuals are not aware of their country's geography and history, let alone its possible future development possibilities. They do not know the role their country could play, and living in an atomized society, they choose emigration as the easiest way to escape harsh social and economic environment. Contrary to this attitude is that of a citizen, a man conscious about his country's potential, and which is dedicated to work hardly together with his fellows in order to promote national interests in a peaceful manner. Even there was found remnants of an ancient city close to present day Romanian territory – proves of well endowed environment – moral and psychological factors have contributed after 1990 in an crucial manner to push Romania from its civilization path back to the archaic spirit, from active urban spirit to rural mentality. In such a situation it is not uncommon for a nation to lose its means for projecting power, which could promote the value and the importance of a geographical position – transportation; rural mentality has nothing to do with modern transportation as they are technical tools with geopolitical essence for controlling space. It is a well known fact that transportation and geopolitics are closely interrelated. Furthermore, social dissolution in post communist Romania is identified in population reduction's number, in missing trust in her successful evolution, falling agriculture and deforestation. All these negative aspects have pushed back Romania from geopolitical point of view. As solution for regaining its geopolitical role, Romanian must have an educated population, which would be conscious about the important connection between geography and education, and between Romania's geographical position and the needed tools for promoting it from geopolitical point of view. Cough between East and West, Romania belongs to both areas; much more, in the context of climate change, Romania's land, fresh water, and cheap water transport possibilities on Danube and Black Sea (and well beyond it) must be used at their real capacities. Only in that moment Romania's special geographical position will made Romania an active geopolitical actor, helping Romanians to determine its fate in a sustainable manner.*

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A short view to the ancient writings and there appears a question: Why a country well endowed in a great variety of resources, with a mild climate and without dangerous and menacing animals could face economic poverty? While the natural laws – as we normally expect – should promote wellbeing and happiness for the lucky community inhabiting such a well endowed geographical area, why they are canceled by the *economic* laws? There are some reasons for this strange but much encountered case in the real world, but I suppose the most dangerous and hardly to surpass obstacle is the one connected to the missing of geopolitical consciousness of the people inhabiting such a blessed area.

Geopolitical position of one country depends on its geography and the *people* who inhabit its territory. Of course, number matters, but creeds, will, and character matter more. If number gives weight, speed provides force. Quick reaction in the opportune direction/directions is a key-element for promoting one state's interest on international stage; and that reaction depends on the quality of government and on its capacity to rally national creeds around the best projects for promoting that state's interests.

As Conea said, geopolitics can be regarded as the geographical consciousness of the state, (1937) and as Wendt mention that states cannot be imagined in the absence of territory and peoples, (2007), geopolitical consciousness's missing at the common peoples' level push a state with good geographical condition and well endowments to a lower position from geopolitical point of view.

Any man would praise the situation when a state is such endowed in resources that it has everything at its disposal; having self-sufficient resources on its territory, it can provide its people to live in a free manner and in moderate way, too (Aristotel, 2001). In the same time, accessibility both from the land and sea is an essential precondition for a good state's geographical position, because as Aristotle puts it (2001), it has in this case easy connection for sending and receiving help, and for provision.

When we remember that the most ancient city in the world – probably older than Jericho, with which it competes for the first position in the world – was located very close to present Romanian territory, at Lepenski Vir, on the right shore of Danube River, close to Iron Gates (Toynbee, 1979), in an era when modern technology was missing at all, one cannot miss the question: *Why?* And there could be identified the components of a certain answer: there were *natural* conditions which could have generated self-sufficiency like: the presence of water which was used for sure for both agriculture and transportation, a good climate, a resourceful area from agricultural and pasture points of view, a plenty of wood and forests, and an easily defensible position from military point of view. As city and civilization are inseparable, human civilization flourished very close to present day Romanian territory.

Having these things in mind, there appears a question: why present day's Romania is doomed to stand on such a weak economical and geopolitical position, which has nothing to do with its natural endowments?

And the answer is very much connected to the other indispensable element of the state: *people*. In the case a nation is not conscious about its history and geography – elements which are directly connected to the geographical consciousness of the state – than this nation is a weak one, one formed not from *citizens* rallied around national interests, but from dispersed and atomized *individuals*.

Even it can be audacious to say that the power of a nation depends on how much people who form that nation love their country (evaluation which has a quite complicate answer), some examples enlightens us: let's think about Japanese and Japan, and what are they capable for when it comes about their country; or Swiss men, which have a well known neutrality mentality, coupled with a siege mentality, giving them the impulse for a permanent training and sport activity (especially outside, where they practice risky sports)

which provide them with a deep consciousness of their country, and an ever-present courage. Both countries miss natural resources; in Switzerland there is winter seven months per year, while it is a well known country for its huge quantity, sorts and quality of chocolate it produces. And what makes both of them economic power horses is exactly this crucial element: their *people*. These countries' power depends a lot on their people's will and creeds. India, for example, has a huge population in comparison with them, but the will of its population is far away from theirs. *But I think education connected to those nations' culture and their future position among other countries is a key-aspect for their position in the world.*

A short observation here: people which are conscious about their country's geography and history can easily rally around a national goal, promoting their country's interests. They shape their own destiny, and in many cases even that of other nations. They can thoroughly be called *citizens*. Roman Empire had started to rise from a small community located on Tiber River – with a strong will and discipline – to the strongest empire in history, because of its citizens. Opposed to citizens are *individuals*, which are not conscious about their country's history and geography, and are not capable to rally around a common goal. Their destiny is marked and influenced in most cases by other countries' citizens.

Citizens believe in a strong state, which protect them while they believe in it; individuals are lethargic when it comes about their country, or worst, they can even arrive at a point where they hate it.

Now let's focus upon Romania. The Romania's situation is remarkable in this regard. In its case, *territory*, could be a strong element for pushing Romanian state to a good position on the international stage; country which is well endowed in a variety of resources, especially land and drinkable water, with access to the sea and mountains, with different sort of resources underneath and good pasture conditions, while good rivers cross Romania's territory, this country should have wealthy population. Furthermore, Romania has been and as it is still today, a state of European necessity. The creation of Moldavia and Wallachia were of "European necessity, due to their role to be played in the creation of the new trade routes in the 13-th century" (Iorga, 1985). But missing these truths in Romanian common peoples' national consciousness pushes Romania on a lower rank on international stage.

Caught between East and West, between North and South, at the commercial, cultural and imperialistic crossroads, Romania cannot be separated from the complex geographical context which surrounds it, and influences its destiny: the mountain and the sea (Brătianu, 1941-1942).

But to master its destiny, to command a land one population inhabits, and to provide the necessary conditions to gain the position a state deserves, there are needed the *belief* and *will* of that state's population in its destiny. Only in this context, a good geographical position of a state with resources can be transformed, and more important, can be maintained on an important geopolitical position. While a state's geography is a visible and measurable aspect, the *culture* of the peoples inhabiting its territory is a much harder to understand aspect; the national morale adds to cultural complexity the social momentum. In case a country's peoples are culturally active, we deal with educated citizens, which are capable to rally around common national project and goal, being ready for self-determination and obtain gains in international harsh competition. Other way, we have to do with incapable individuals, having no power to handle their destiny, being doomed to live in conditions which contradict their potential based on geography.

Turning again on Romania's case, this is a very good example of how this country's key geographical position is underused by its own peoples, pushing it to a weaker geopolitical position face to face with its huge potential.

It is easy to see that common Romanian peoples are far from being conscious of Romania's geography, let alone its geopolitical position. If one asks at odds a common Romanian about the surface of Romanian territory, about the length of Danube in Romania, or the length of its Black Sea seashore, the answer would not come or would highly probable be wrong. As two of three elements which form Romania's security complex – Danube and Black Sea – are not present in common Romanian's consciousness, one should not wonder why the huge potential for cheap transport of these two waterways is underused. Furthermore, Constanza harbor is port at two seas: the Black and Caspian seas, connecting the huge wealth of countries which border those seas, with Europe exactly through its middle, using Danube's natural path. One should ask what would Bayern, or Austria be in the absence of Danube, while Romanians should meditate at the possible answers...

The third element which forms Romania's security complex is given by the Carpathian Mountains. They guard the Central Europe fortress of Transylvania, with its resources, rivers which head towards Danube, and its strategic position in relation with Eastern steppes, while close guarding Danube's exit from the Central Europe, at Iron Gates.

From population angle, Romania has been registering a steady decay, both from quantity and quality points of view. If in 1990 Romania had had over 23 million peoples, in 2010 this number would have been 21460 thousands peoples. Aging represent a negative quality shift, too; in only two decades there has been a steady decay in this regard. In 1990 there were 5.5 million persons under the age of 15, while those over 55 were 4.9 million. In 2010 there were only 3.2 million in the first category, while the second rose to 5.7 million. Coupled with a high emigration rate (some 2.5 million Romanian fled the country during these 2 decades), the politico-social equilibrium and a high probability of social system's collapse is the worst scenario this country will face (Georgescu, 2012). Furthermore, the ratio between the number of dependent persons (age over 65) and those between 20-64 years could be 30% in 2030, while in 2040 it could be 40%, and in 2050, 50% (Georgescu, 2012). The prognosis for the total population of Romania is alarming: taking account the last 26 years' evolution, there will be in the year 2050 only 16.7 million people in Romania as mentioned Ghețău (in Malița și Georgescu, 2010: 111); while old population's rising number coupled with the reduction of that of active peoples pose in the same time a threat to medical system, which is already underfinanced.

Regarding qualitatively, from cultural point of view, the decay is more than impressive: the human element's decay is marked by a rural mentality which has been gaining an upper hand face to face with the urban civilization, a punishment made by archaic spirit upon civilization based on professionalism, education, and culture (Malița și Georgescu, 2010). Furthermore, after 1990 Romania has registered the lowest degree of social cohesion in its modern history (Malița și Georgescu, 2010). All these negative aspects were coupled with another negative element: it has constantly become harder to found real professionals in post revolutionary Romania.

Missing visionary leadership after communism's fall, coupled with moral depression of Romanian common man due to uncertain objectives and the "foggy" atmosphere which has facilitated Romanian industrial and agricultural bases' destruction, while creating the preconditions of a negative situation, from where it is difficult to rise again...

Romania is now a NATO and EU member, but these achievements haven't brought relief and better life conditions. Contrary, after 2007 more than 2 million Romanians have chosen emigration path – especially to Western European countries – hoping to find there what was missing in Romania. Particularly hope for a brighter future for their children. Taking a larger view on the effects of Romanian deeds, one can say that in the last hundred years there was only one important national objective achieved by Romanians:

The Union in 1918. Since then, one realist observer can say there hasn't been any great deed made by Romanians for their international statute's improvement (with the exception of a short period: 1962-1972, respectively). Even today, Romania's geographical position and its natural resources are really exploited by others. Striving to promote its geopolitical position, Romania hasn't successfully transposed its geographical position into reality. Romanians have lost their dual character. They belong simultaneously to East and West. Western integration hasn't brought for common Romanians what they were expecting for; as such, exclusive focus on the West gave birth in Romanian only to a pipedream, which has a little in common with Romanian national character and Romania's geographical position. Pipelines which could connect vast resources from the East of its territory with big Western markets don't cross its territory; another point which reveals that this state needs to militate in order to transform a good geographical position into an important geopolitical one. The gas and oil pipelines' international itineraries are arranged by big players, while a weak state such as Romania, misses active diplomacy, losing the possibility of attracting at least one of such pipelines through its territory. Worst, even the accountability of such looses is missing altogether (Malița, 2012).

The power of a nation can jump to the highest possible level – taking account its geography and resources – only when there is a correspondence between national leadership and *citizens*. Here is needed a distinction: there is a huge difference between a political man and the man which thinks politically. The later one deserves to have a position of statesmanship. Political man concentrates upon political sociology, with its subdivisions given by religious orientation, age, sex, social class, ethnicity of *individuals* which constitute its potential electorate. The man who thinks politically must deeply know the peculiar traits of the citizens which form the nation he represents – the style, as the philosopher Lucian Blaga puts it (2011) – and taking account of geographical, historical, and prospective context, to provide his nation as much as he could, an important place among other nations. The man who thinks politically is searching for viable *solutions* for his nation's present and future problems, and not votes.

But the highest position a nation can arrive at is to be encountered only when a man who thinks politically is supported and followed in his action by his fellow *citizens*.

Individuals have credit cards and "legitimate" with them when they buy goods and services which in lot of cases are provided by private financial and/or commercial interests, while citizen legitimate with identity card, which is endorsed by state when he votes, as well as when he interact with the influences of foreign interests. They are conscious they belong to a strong state, while the individuals belong to a weak state. Here is noteworthy to say that a strong state is based on citizens, while a weak state has the illusion he could count on individuals.

A country where citizens are politically active – so, they have a political active culture because they know their country geography and history – the vote is very expensive and the responsibility of elected leadership is great. Where individuals are becoming lethargic from political point of view, due to material and/or cultural incapacity, the vote is cheap. And as a man of state it is difficult to base the vision upon economically weak population, dominated by a low morale, and where the culture is underappreciated. It is almost impossible to envisage a better future for a nation whose individuals are focused only on immediate gains and interests, and where citizens focused on great and important national projects are few. In such a situation, even a man who thinks politically sees himself limited in its thinking and aspirations, understanding the difficulty of reforming a crowd composed from few Men and a lot of population...

The hardest and the most complex problem Romania faces has to do with its population's *mentality*, and the difficult solutions and fittest ways to transform through culture and

education, its individuals into citizens. Some of them feel themselves in so desperate situation that they do not believe in themselves and in their destiny. And without taking successful actions in these areas, aiming at *cultural renaissance*, Romania's geography and endowments will not help Romanians to improve their life's quality. Much more, they could be the curse for Romanians' fate. I bring here into reader's attention only the forests of Romania and their spoiling by foreign interests after 1989. In the absence of education aiming at understanding this country's history and geography and fighting peacefully for this country future, the crude law of Geopolitics will bitter splash its fate again, as it did in the past... As geopolitics and transportation cannot be separate, the decay and dissolution of the most important and visible symbol of national power – transportation sector, especially the railways and the fleet – is the best example of dormant spirit dominating Romania in the last quarter century.

Put in simply words, good geographic position and resources endowment in the absence of educated population can push a country to a geopolitical periphery, while a well endowed territory with good geographical position coupled with a population which is conscious about its geographic potential and its history, doubled by active diplomacy, would promote such a country to a much better geopolitical position on regional and global stage.

This is particularly the case of Romania. To transform its geographical potential into a geopolitical reality there are needed peoples which understand their country's geographical place and the geopolitical role which Romania could play, especially at regional level. As Aristotle (2001) pointed more than two millennia ago, in order to create the conditions for a good city (state, n.a.), "education must be unique and uniform for all, and its surveillance common and not let on private evaluators' hands", one cannot regard but with skepticism the alternative books' role (especially geography and history books) and their impact upon Romania's future fate. Geography and history are a nation's ancestors and teachers and having alternative books for these disciplines is like a man having an alternative mother...

The solution for transforming Romania's geographical position into a remarkable geopolitical position must have as its cornerstone *education*. The education must aim at transforming Romanian individuals into active citizens who love their country and are ready to mobilize around common goals, which could promote peacefully Romania's interests on international arena.

Simultaneously with changing values in Romania's education system, there must be the constant preoccupation for its forests and clean water resources. In expectation of rising complexity on international stage due to two plagues which will visit humankind in the near future, well before viable solution could be found for present economic crisis, Romania's leadership must take care of agricultural land, fresh water resources, and coupled with them, of forests. Fresh water and available food in context of climate changes and rising world population's number will be main focus point on visionary statesmen's agenda.

As forests, as quiet as they are, speak about present and future financial and moral credit of a country's population, their "reconstruction" in Romania is – face-to-face with cultural renaissance – the indispensable base for promoting its huge agricultural potential. Forests, agriculture and fresh water resources are interconnected, and their availability will be more and more valuable in the context of climate change. In the last 25 years the Romanian forests have known a steady decline. We inherited some 27% of the surface of past Romanian forests (which occupied in the past approximately 80% of present day Romanian territory), in comparison with optimal percentage of 45%. If we take into consideration only the ecological functional forests, the real surface covered by forests in Romania is only 22%, as Giurgiu mentioned (in Malița și Georgescu, 2010: 93). Coupled with this, there is another negative element: as a Japanese Bank Nomura report

mentioned in 2010, Romania is on 12-th place in the world regarding the danger of being hit by famine in the future! Although it is a country which could feed over 75 million peoples, it covers 80% of its agricultural products' needs with imported agricultural products, some of them being unsafe for human health (Georgescu, 2012).

Financial capital is created by man, while natural capital, with its unique role in sustainable development can be destroyed by man. We can easily observe Western countries which destroyed their natural capital in order to create financial capital and an artificial way of life, but this path proved to be unsustainable both from economic and ecologic points of view. Taking account of this experience and the future risks humankind is facing connected to water and food scarcity, a wise and sustainable policy should take into consideration natural capital's preservation and the development according to this aim. Countries which will adopt this path will have a much better geopolitical position in the future. Here again, Romania's potential is immense, but underused. And Romanians must rediscover themselves in order to have a voice in shaping affairs at least at regional level.

As a conclusion, for Romania to play an active geopolitical role in this part of the world, in connection with its natural position and endowments, and to transform a potential geographical position into a more valuable geopolitical one, there must appear a renaissance in the Romanian equilibrated spirit which dominated popular mind during complex periods in Romanian peoples' history, coupled with the understanding of the importance of Romania's most valuable resources in the context of climate changes: its position, its land, its fresh water springs/rivers, and its waterway transportation possibilities. In this way, geography, land, fresh water and Danube will go hand in hand with cultural and spiritual evolution of this nation and with Romanian individuals' metamorphose into real citizens.

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