

RATZEL AND THE GERMAN GEOPOLITICAL SCHOOL – THE INCEPTION OF CULTURE AS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT AND FACTOR IN THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

Silviu COSTACHIE

University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography,
1 N. Bălcescu Av., Sector 1, Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: Silviu_C@yahoo.com

Nicolae DAMIAN

University of Bucharest, Research Center for Regional Development and European Integration,
1 N. Bălcescu Av., Sector 1, Bucharest, Romania, centrucercetare@yahoo.com

Abstract: This study deals with the passing from geopolitics to cultural geography. To highlight the translation under discussion, we have set forth the first geopolitical theories on space and frontiers and outlined some theories about civilization and political power; all these are embryonic factors in outlining the cultural identities. The article underlines, also, the evolution of the basic geopolitical terms that constitute the base of the cultural geography approach. The relation between the political geography and cultural geography is shown at the end of this study.

Key words: geopolitics, political geography, cultural geography, space, border

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THE FOREFATHER OF POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

The scientific work of Friedrich Ratzel¹ must be understood within the context of the times when it was written. When analyzing his work, we must have in view the changes that the German society was going through. If until those times Geography had meant mainly description, with his first work in the field ("Antropogeographie", the first volume published in Leipzig in 1882, and the second in 1899) the way of understanding geography changed. Ratzel brings a new way of seeing the relation between man and nature, between man and the

¹ Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), disciple of Ritter, is considered the first of founders of the German school of political geography. He himself named the field of his preoccupations political geography. He continued his mentors' works, Al. von Humboldt and Karl Ritter, having as target the achievement of an efficient and comprehensive method of studying spaces and the human vital. He added to the existent methods of geographical research elements and findings taken from other sciences like Biology and History. In his first work "The Antropogeography", subtitled "Principles of applying geography in history", published between 1881 and 1891, he presented methodologically interpretative concepts. His first approach was constituted in recovering and placing the geographical environment in the kernel of the sciences studying the man, the dimension of human evolution as part of nature not being ignored or missed.

human society and finally the relation between man and the social culture. He opens the geographical research towards the social and state phenomenon, at the same time, without which Geography does not make a sense. Also, he tries for the first time a complex explanation of the state seen through the human geography. For this, it was necessary, as a first stage, the foundation of human geography, which he simply names: "Antropogeography". In the Ratzelian conception, the human geography had to surpass the descriptive defaults which were governing geography at the end of the 19th century and to tend towards a superior geographic systematization in connection with the times when it would have existed. Through his new own conception, Ratzel outruns the primary descriptive level of the [human] geography, going towards a new stage, the relational one, in which the human geography and subsequently the political geography had as their main target the analysis of the geographical phenomena and not only their description.

Ratzel studied the natural history at Heidelberg under the (contextual) impulse of the publishing of Darwin's work "The Origin of Species" (1859). His ideas, promoted by Ernest Haeckel, the founder of ecology together with those of Moris Wagner – a zoologist – who was emphasizing upon the role of the migration in the evolution of species, determined Ratzel to study Geography. Thus, in 1880 he proposed the term of cultural geography, in 1882 he suggested the term of human geography (Antropogeography), pursuing that the geography to answer the questions raised firstly by the theory of evolutionism.

Under this concept the human groups depend on the environment they live in, fulfilling a great deal of their necessities of sustenance subsisting right from the resources of this environment. The man, as any other living, is based on mobility, which becomes a fundamental element in understanding the individual's and the collectivities' lives. The desire to own as much as possible becomes a necessity of land territory. The territory is necessary due to the dynamic of the human groups, which is connected to the demographic features of the respective population. Thus, Ratzel reaches the conclusion, being influenced by the Darwinian determinism, that population, which represents a basic component of the state, being a living organism, will leave the state from its dynamic character, which will imply the necessity of enlarging the territory at the same time with the increase of the respective population's necessities, due to the demographic evolution. Any population which is constituted as the basic component of the state will be characterized by a certain level of civilization due to the fact that the population creates a human society in the frame of the state. The human society means culture and civilization. Different societies own different cultures forming different civilizations hierarchically structured depending on the level of development. Ratzel concluded that a society poorly developed will have a basic culture in which the individual will adapt to the environment which he lives in whereas a society well developed, with a flourishing culture will have an evolved civilization in which man modifies the environment not just adapts to it. Ratzel is the first one who matches a connection between the development of the human societies and the level of culture and civilization and the necessity of territory. Thus, the territory, with Ratzel, is indissolubly connected to the society, the level of development of the society implying a greater or a smaller need for space. The relations man - nature, the mobility and the problems they imply are dependable on the level of the techniques which each social group uses. Ratzel proposes a classification of

the peoples, relying on *Naturvölker* – those social groups incapable of protecting themselves from the environment without being able to mould, to master it effectively. Nature influences essentially their way living. The superior level of hierarchy is occupied by *Kulturvölker*. They are the groups which practise a modern agriculture, less sensitive with the natural hazards (especially climate), disposing of means of transport which determine commercial trades. There is the possibility of completing the existential necessities with products imported from remote areas. During this process, Ratzel considered culture as a super organic reality and the factor which interceded the terms between human individuals. In a first stage of their social organization, people managed to transform the environment they were living in into a more favorable to the human existence space.

The State is the organization by which these social groups dispose of the terrestrial space. In Ratzel's opinion, the state organization becomes a key instrument, a means of satisfying the necessities of territory. This is how the basis of political geography is made. Ratzel considered the political geography a vector in understanding the geo-territorial distribution (in space) of the population and its socio – cultural characteristics. Subsequently, through the evolution and the development of the states, it became obvious that different human cultures are unequally endowed and are differently capable to fructify the nature's wealth. Ratzel assumed that the political geography was the basic level in approaching the problem of cultural geography. A start towards the cultural geography....

Ratzel was the continuer of Karl Ritter's (1779-1859) ideas, being his disciple. Ritter proves, in his main work „*Erdkunde*”², that until then Geography had been studied as an amalgam, without any internal rule or a certain aim. Disagreeing with the rationalist thesis, people are alike everywhere, Ritter emphasizes on the nature's role upon man. He initiates, in a direction specific to German thinking, the organist view by which the homeland (*das Heimatland*) represents a geo-space (a natural geographic space). For this reason the state must own a unitary natural configuration, natural borders, forming in a summit an organic natural territory (organic by its people and its decisions).

The beginning of geopolitics, as a science, was determined by some scholars' efforts, scholars who were coming from different cultural areas. Also, the research was based on socio - cultural groups differentiable at a micro and macro geospatial³ level. The new science begins to be attributed exclusively to the German school of geography. The basis of these issues is in connection with the situation in which the State and the German society exist in the second half of the 19th century. The process of unification of Germany and the achievement of a modern state was a difficult one. The difficulty of the desideratum determined reactions of frustration of the German intellectual and political heads. By the middle of the 19 century, these heads became obsessed with the territorial idea and that of a foreign nation's involvement⁴.

² "Knowing the Earth" (n.n).

³ In a certain geographical space (geospace) there are numerous socio-cultural groups, which determines differentiations. This represents the micro-geospatial level. A larger space (macro-geospace), for example, a continent, is constituted as an existential support for different social cultural groups.

⁴ Along 250 years the German space was the theatre of some successive wars, most frequently provoked by the foreign powers' participation or interference.

The German nationalism developed under the influence of Johann Gottfried Herder's works as well. Herder looked upon the German nationalism differently, as a counter reaction to the French cultural imperialism, conceptualizing it in a specific form. The researcher concentrated his work on the people, offering it the supreme value, unlike his English and French contemporary homologues. The conception remained predominant even after the year of the German unification (1871), marking the German intellectual heads' abandon of the last west-European liberal remnants. By a strong contrast, they were recognizing the belief that the physical force represented any state's adequate instrument of expressing. The amplification of the concept began in 1892, when the new Kaiser, Wilhelm II, proclaimed the world policy of the 2nd Reich. The historical cultural context created did not represent an uncertainty for the development of concepts, aroused by the fertile dissemination of the Darwinian ideas, which sustained the necessity of the German cultural triumph in Europe. From this ethnocentric – spatial view to geopolitics there were just a few steps, and from geopolitics to cultural geography just an only step.

According to Ratzel, he admits the existence of an essential attribute specific to all the peoples: mobility, which is different depending on the ensemble of technique which allows them to establish some close relationships with the near existential environment. The increased mobility of a people – which is not characteristic for the primitive societies – determines the obtaining of a major political power. From this perspective, knowing and measuring the geospatial extension are subordinated directly to the terrestrial area where the peoples' ideas represented by states, large and small, the former being characterized the geographical transposition of the peoples' necessity of mobility and political extension of territory. Ratzel identified the origin and the sources of the first political power of the peoples in the evolution of the historic communities of individuals through spiritual connections. He proposes and elaborates through comparative criteria and means the performances reached by certain human communities. Ratzel used Kant's⁵ ideas about the development of space, emphasizing the important role of it in time, by *Mittelpunkte* – the embryo of the civilization. *Mittelpunkte* became the essential criterion of analysis and interpretation of the state during the process of organic constitution of it.

Geography, through cultural geography needs to give great importance to the cultural events, especially to those which materialize or were concretized through artifacts. The scientist will deal with the concept of vital space (*Lebensraum*), stressing on the purpose of physical geographical space and of temporal space (contemporariness), on the separating barriers of the groups longing continuously for expansion. All these ideas will lead to a greater attention to frontiers. Between the contextual limits of the Darwinian conceptions of struggle for survival will lead him to the vital space and will orient him excessively to the political aspects of the geography. The territory (*der Raum*) materialized as the natural support of the politics of state.

Ratzel identified the people and the territory in historic terms. The political organization of the people and of the land determined the formation of an organism with an antropogeographical stamp. The respective organism assumes an only biologic and geo-cultural identity through the individuals of the same group. The state as a political geography organism could consolidate in two stages:

⁵ German philosopher, Königsberg

a) The configuration of the national territory – Lebensgebiete. This first stage represented an issuing stage, from wills to pretensions...

b) The achievement and the organization of the vital space – Lebensraum. This stage materialized through the direct formation and organization of the vital space, the preservation of the vital functions, the survival (of the state organism).

Ratzel considered the position (die Lage) as an element in close relationship with Mittelpunkte – the embryo of civilization. The geospatial positioning in a favourable geographic space represents the determinations of the embryos of civilization, but the natural geographic element must be valued by the people's political power. In the moment of the incapability of supporting the political forces, with all the advantages of the natural environment, the collapse of the antropogeographical organism began. In this perspective it can be exemplified by the fall of Mesopotamian states (Eufrat's and Tiger's valleys), of Egypt (Nile's valley) and of Rome. For Ratzel, Europe, from an antropogeographical point of view, divided into three regions: a southern region – the Mediterranean civilization, benefiting by the Roman – Greek civilization matrix; the second (chronologically), situated in the Northern Alps – the German civilization; the third, in the steppes of Eastern Europe, threatening for the former ones. Europe was divided in three antropogeographical areas: the Latin coagulating Southern; the German (Anglo – Saxon), Central - Northern and the Eastern Slav.

The borders (die Grenzen) are the effect of the centrifugal movement starting from the Mittelpunkte. Being situated at the outskirts of the state economical and political territory and of the people, the border was not a delimiting line, but a peripheral organ with temporary role, having much importance in the state's growth. The German geographer enunciated three means of extending the borders, under Mittelpunkte pressure:

- with the military force and wars – rapid method, but violent;
- by commercial expansion⁶ - a means which takes much time and is based on an economically developed ? state; It sustains the first method of expansion;
- through spiritual expression and communication, which is cultural triumph. It can only function on the basis of a profitable financial support.

For the last two means we identify aspects of the present: globalization. They request for more temporal resources. Following the previous approach, Ratzel enumerated the most important factors for the state expansion⁷. The extension of some states will be made to the prejudice of others. These facts are only possible through:

- internal stimuli, prominent with the peoples which were capable of assimilating the sense of space (Raumsinn) through the school of spaces (die Schule des Raumes). The two features allowed certain peoples to keep their own vital territory, to extend it and to obtain its supplement;
- external stimuli which are constituted in under populated spaces with potential. They were a magnet for the overpopulated territories.

Ratzel concluded that the power of civilization is proved by its capacity to abolish borders. The great civilizations were constituting geospaces and continental identities. Germany had the historic mission of forming itself an

⁶ A fact suggested by Ratzel in his second important work, "Politische Geographie" (1897), indicting that the historic development of the states should be settled in a comparative relation with the peoples' political flourishing.

⁷ The work "About the laws of the space growth of states" (Über die Gesetze des räumlichen Wachstums der Staaten), published in 1901, was his last major work.

European territory, occupying the spaces where the social, economic, cultural level of civilization had an inferior character. Fridrich Ratzel used frequently the phrase *Volk ohne Raum* (people with no space) in case of not reaching the desired space.

Substituting Darwin's theory of species' selection with that of societies' selection through their degree of adaptation to a geographical space, the culture gains political valences with Ratzel, determining embryonic concepts for Nazism.

Unlike Ratzel whose sources of inspiration were antropology and the geography of communities, Rudolph Kjellen⁸ lead himself to geopolitics on th basis of his preoccupation with the statal science. For the swedish researcher, the geopolitics had the role of conceiving the state as an institution and also of studying it as a geographical organism or as a phenomenon of the geographical space becoming a science. Everything was based on Kjellen's wiew, the relation between the anatomy of power and its geographical basis being essential. The statal organism was involved in a continuous fight for space and existence, only the economically developed statal organismes and with a very clear political view will survive and thrive.

For Rudolph Kjellen, the geopolitics had in view two subjects to study:

- the states in relation with human beings (the people), manifesting feelings and reason in the same way. It like people by birth, growth, development and decline⁹.

- The space considered by Kjellen an essential factor and a vital objective, a sineq – ua – non condition for the existence of the vigurous states, but spatially limited, with the desisderatum of the expansion, a fact to the followed by colonization and conquests.

Kjellen proposed the existence of *MittelEuropa* – the kernel of culture and civilization, in which he included the Scandinavian peninsula, which was under te Russian invasion's threat and danger. With this idea, he proves his Germanic character, giving much attention to the geographical location, to the expansion and standardization. The cultural political space wanted perceived it as a German Empire which existed betwen Dunkerque, Hamburg, Riga and Bagdad. It would have included the Austrian- Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, meant to be a centre of international power with the aim of decreasing England's hegemonic revendications and control upon the seas.

Being an avawed Germanophil, he was deeply connected to the German cultural traditions opposing and discrediting permanently the political ideas of liberalism, of the political expressions through individuals, of the idea of statal legitimacy by social contract. Being an opponent to the exaggerated individual expressions and to cosmopolitan tendencies, Kjellen Rudolph wanted a national state with a development and an expression in the shape of a community based on ethnical, political and economical connections, built on principles of corporatist solidarity. In this direction he promoted through his ideas the existence of the authoritative corporatist state, built like an organicist and paternalist nation-state. Reaching such a stage, eliminating any repressive

⁸ Rudolph Kjellen (1864-1922). Professor of political sciences at the University of Uppsala, Sweden. The term of geopolitic belongs to him, Kjellen used for the first time this term in 1899 at a public conference. In 1900 he introduced the term of political monography of Sweden – *Inledning till Sveriges Geografi* ("Introduction to Sweden's Geography").

⁹ In this respect, it is interesting that this conception was approached by Dimitrie Cantemir in "*Creșterea și descreșterea Imperiului Otoman*" – ("The Rise and the fall of the Ottoman Empire").

manifestations towards the citizens was necessary, especially those which had centrifugal tendencies from the proposed principles.

In the main works there are revealed his geopolitical conceptions: *Die Ideen von 1914*, *Eine Weltgeschichtliche Perspektive*¹⁰, *Staten som Lifsform*¹¹, *Grundriss zu einem System der Politik*¹² and *Die Grossmächte vor und nach dem Weltkrieg*¹³. In his best known work, *Staten som Lifsform*, he reveals the existence of a state organized on the basis of five fundamental elements:

1) The country (**Das Reich**) analysed from the point of view of its internal and external geographical determination. Three subcategories were forming the date of geospatial identity: the toponitics (the position of the country), the morphopolitics (its configuration) and the Physiopolitics (the territory)

2) The Nation (**Das Staabfolk**) – the demographic element manifested through three factors: the Ethnopolitics (the awareness of belonging ethnically), The Plethopolitics (the ethnic body) and the Psychopolitics (the soul/spirit of the nation)

3) The Society (**Die Gesellschaft**) or the Sociopolitics materialiyed through the social structure and form (Philopolitics), the social life (Biopolitics)

4) The Economy of the country (**Ökopolitik**) proved its vitality, its viabilitz through the functionalities of fulfilling the population's necessities (the Autarhiopolitics), the external trade relationships¹⁴ (The Emporopolitics), the economic life¹⁵ (The Economopolitics)

5) The Government (**Das Staatsregiment**) or the Kratopolitics. The government's authority applied its politics by the form of governing (the Nomopolitics), administration (the Praxiopolitics), the govern's authority¹⁶ (the Arhopolitics)

The visionary conception of Kjellen is given by the projection of the possible European political configurations based on pan – ethnical¹⁷ representations. The concepts would be exposed in his work from 1914 *Die Ideen von 1914*, and *Die Grossmächte*¹⁸. The internal impulses generated from *Mittelpunkte* were to impose in Europe three ethnic racial corpuses: the Latin Union (under the seal of Rome), capable through the Iberian identity to include Latin America as well; Mitteleurope, which was to become a world of the Germanic people with the role of counteracting the Slav Pan – idea through *Drang nach Osten*. We can distinguish, from the Swedish professor's view, the existence of two cultural acceptions on the basis of two old civilizations.

Karl Haushofer¹⁹ (1869-1946) occupied a central place in the German geopolitics. His orientation to the study of geopolitics was influenced by his military activity²⁰. On his maritime voyage to the Japanese archipelago and his

¹⁰ The ideas of the year 1914. A global historic perspective, Leipzig, 1915.

¹¹ The state as a form of life, Stockholm, 1916. Translated and published in the German language in 1917 in Leipzig.

¹² The bases of a political system, Leipzig, 1920.

¹³ The great powers before and after the World war; published posthumously in 1935, in Leipzig.

¹⁴ In our view, the external commercial relationships should be dominated by exports and fewer imports. Under no circumstances should the latter constitute vital economic, strategical electrical energy products. Also, the commercial relationships should base on as many partners as possible. We included here the export of cultural issues.

¹⁵ Our note – practically, this term includes structurally the previous ones.

¹⁶ Represented by coercitive elements; conception known as pan-ethnical geopolitics.

¹⁷ Conception known as pan-ethnical geopolitics.

¹⁸ Published posthumously.

¹⁹ He was born in Bavaria – Germany, his father being a primary school teacher.

²⁰ In 1899 he got into the German army and in 1908 he will be detached to Germany's Military Mission in Japan. The Japanese geographical space influenced his scientific work. In this

way back through Siberia²¹, Haushofer was fascinated by the strategic importance of the geospaces under discussion. The German scholar studied geopolitics in a institutionalized way, delimiting categorically the political geography – described as the discipline which studies the distribution of the state powers in the terrestrial spaces and geopolitics – the sciences which studies the forms of political life from the natural spaces of life, which explains the dependence of the former on nature. The identity of geopolitics as a discipline appeared in 1924 when at the University of Munchen there was founded the Institute of Geopolitics. Between 1924-1945 began the publishing of the Institute's Journal ("Zeitschrift für Geopolitik"), starting from 1935, due to the Nazi regime, the studies of geopolitics increased, being coordinated officially by the Nazi government. At the Heidelberg University was constituted the Association of Geopolitical Research, the first president being Karl Haushofer. The passion for geopolitics was transmitted within their family²² to his son Albercht, who became an entitled professor at the School of Advanced political Studies (Hochschule für Politik) in Berlin. Karl Haushofer had an intense journalism activity. In 1924 he published "Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans"²³, approaching the geopolitical problems of the Far East. The interest for the Far East transposes in the concept for an alliances on Berlin–Moscow–Tokyo axis. Russia should have occupied Mongolia and Japan should have controlled Manchuria offering Germany a transcontinental route which was not subject to England's pressure and collision. We recognize in this view a part of Halford Mackinder's theory on the existence of Eurasia. The viewpoint was confirmed during the World War, under the circumstances that Great Britain and USA were dominating with common interests the entire West Hemisphere. Haushofer was convinced that only an alliance of Germany and Soviet Russia with Japan could ensure his country its survival as a great power. With this concept(ion) Haushofer opposed the Nazi who amplified a war with the Soviet Union²⁴.

respect, his doctor's degree thesis is an argument. It was published subsequently with the title "Dai Nihon" ("The Great Japan"). The work, published in 1912, emphasizes the role geographical position and territorial characteristics which influence the destiny of the states. The strong point of this theory is given by the case of Japan.

²¹ In 1910.

²² The relationships of Haushofer with the Nazi politics were lead to extreme limits. Karl was envolved in deep relation of friendship with Rudolph Hess before the National Socialist Party was founded. He frequently visited the prisoners Adolf Hitler and Rudolph Heiss in Landsberg prison after the failure of putsch in 1923. There are testimonies which indicate through irrefutable arguments the influence of geopolitical ideas of Haushofer upon Hitler, identified in *Mein Kampf*. After Hitler's becoming chancellor, Karl Haushofer was named professor of geopolitics and dean of Faculty of Sciences of the University of Munchen. In 1934 he was named president of the German Academy and in 1938, helped along by Rudolph Hess, president of Ausland Organization, an institution which dealt with German residents outside the German borders. His son Albercht was named between 1934 and 1938 representer of the German chancellor with special regime in Czech Republic. After the year 1841, due to Wehrmacht's invasion of the Soviet Union, which ran counter to the geopolitical theses sustained by Karl Haushofer, he gave up the privileged relations with the Nazi regime. His son Alberch was involved in the German officers' plot against Hitler and died by execution in april 1945, just few days before Germany's surrender. Being aware of the damages provoked by the science subservient to the Nazi regime which he had been studying all life, he exculpated himself by showing that his objective was offering Germany a superior political thinking, Wehr – geopolitik (geo –strategy). In this respect, his 1st work was published in november 1945 – "Defence of German Geopolitics". In 1946, the Third Reich disappointed him totally. Karl Haushofer and his wife committed suicide.

²³ Book republished in 1938.

²⁴ See note 23, the second paragraph.

Haushofer can be considered the continuer of Ratzel's ideas taking over and offering an important value to the vital space (Lebensraum). He agreed with Swedish Kjellen, being convinced that the state was manifesting like an organism. The perpetuation was done by the ethnic (Volk), racial (Blut) and cultural (Kultur) dissemination. The most essential elements become the borders, considered places of confrontation and collision and not juridical laws of the state political²⁵ delimitations. This outlook always determined him to find solutions which were to offer Germany the possibility to exist and survive as a great power. Being preoccupied by the dangers which were threatening Germany²⁶, Haushofer analysed and projected the force lines of the cultural political distribution. In this respect, he concluded: through the cultural diffusions (pan-ideas, pan-thinking) the political geography of the world outlines the pan-organisms:

- Pan-Europe, under the German hegemony, independently from the existence of the rival socio/cultural differences like: Western Europe vs. Eastern or South-Eastern Europe; Mitteleurope the Balkans, the centre vs. the European outskirts. All these are areas of ephemeral borders, formal, for Germany despite the aesthetic, economical, moral, cultural or ideologic alternatives.

- EuroAfrica including the Mediteranean basin and the north of Africa, but under the control of Pan – Europe.

- Pan-Russia would have occupied the geospatial vastness between Elba and Amur;

- Pan-Pacific – a geo-space disputed by Japan, USA and the European colonial powers (especially in England);

- Pan-America under the clear determination of USA;

- Pan-Islam including the Middle East.

FROM POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY CONCEPTS TO CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

The concepts of Lebensraum and Drang nach Osten, accepted by Haushofer, had as their goal the building of a compact German Kulturborden. These represented for Hitler the basis of an ideology, subsequently being in favour of a reorientation of the German expansion to south, south – east (Drang nach dem Süden).

It can be noticed that the central geopolitical element analysed constituted the geo-space (the geographical space) under the different proposals as institutionalized forms, limited by borders. There was proposed the existence of a single or of a few political entities which should have included other socio – cultural individuals. For this reason, we can remark in the current period the increased interest by cultural studies on the geographical space. This phenomenon managed to overrun the traditional preoccupation towards the events of the temporal space, all these approached in the national – identity actions. The symbolistic expression became gradually a real space for expressing the social cultural, racial, religions, national identities. This orientation claimed a study subject which could be named cultural territoriality²⁷, in the property of different communities, perceived through laws and active cultural conventions by a tertiary part. In some specialists' opinion, a varied terminology appeared in

²⁵ See "Grenzen in ihrer Geographischen und Politischen Bedeutung", Berlin, 1927 and "Geopolitik der Panideen", 1931, "Geopolitik von Heute".

²⁶ From this point of view the danger was coming from the powers which were controlling the Western European space by maritime navigation.

²⁷ Monica Spiridon (2006), "Inventând Europa – identități și frontiere" ("Inventing Europe – Identities and Frontiers") (1) "Observator Cultural" ("Cultural Observatory"), nr. 60 – 61/ 20th April – 3rd May 2006.

this respect: region, topography, scenery, limit, border, place, sit, geospace etc in order to emphasize, the dimension of the space the relations which it has with the individual(s). The individuals and the society always established and establish significant relations with the geo-space. The cultural space includes the individuals' perceptions and values and also those of various social and cultural communities with which it has contact. Such a geospatial and cultural community, looked upon macroscopically, is Europe, the members assuming the Europeanism as a notable work of their identity.

The concept of Europeanism represents a geographical fact. In reality, the notion hides traps by the representations of some cultural identities determined by alternative options, belligerent maybe. The idea of "European cultural identity" conveys to cutting-ups and delimitations: geopolitical, ideological or symbolical and to unstable borders, traced sometimes in a paradoxical and generating-conclusion way. It is the case of the regions and populations which claim a certain degree of statal autonomy: the magyar from the Romanian intercarpathian territory, the populations from "the Basque country", the interethnic conflicts from the ex- Yugoslav space. Axiomatically, an intellectual construction is accepted, of which cartographic regions are eliminated. It is as obvious as possible the case of the European Union (EU). There were categorical delimitations, the building of the borders and the political economic expulsion of some countries, contribution which was determined by the existence of some "influential spheres". Moldavia and Ukraine become buffer – areas to the imperial colossus of the Soviet Union, the today's Russia.

The border is a spatial fact causing sociological results and a social fact which gets shape in space. The territories, the regions, the countries themselves are cultural geospaces representative of a certain social group, which are not always the same with the political territorial limits accepted. The social groups are constituted with the active role in tracing the borders and the limits incubating a considerable extension of the semantic field for the concept of borders, including any process which aims at delimitation. This fact calls for reflection on the instrumentalization of borders in the social and cultural praxis.

The term of border in the cultural geography is defined as elementary spatial structures with a geopolitically discontinuous marking function, a reference function, perceptible in three registers: red, symbolic and imaginary. The German cultural geography distinguishes in its turn between the divergent borders (*Trennungsgrenzen*) and the convergent ones (*Zusammenwachsgrenze*).

To establish a border means to express a collective viewpoint which involves specific ways of being in relation with the others. No matter if they include or exclude, the borders determine the visibility of the identity which leaves its stamp upon the cultural relationships in an inhabited territory. To define borders from the perspective of identity implies considerable risks generating an extremist nationalism.

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