

## Editorial

### The Age of EthnoGeoPolitics

Babak Rezvani

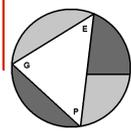
What is ethnogeopolitics and how old is it? These are questions that we encounter a lot. The Association for the Study of EthnoGeoPolitics is seven years, almost eight years, old, and our journal is five years, almost six years old. In this jubilee number I want to express my gratefulness to our readers, authors, editors, and benevolent followers on behalf of the full governing board of Association for the Study of EthnoGeoPolitics and editorial board of our journal entitled *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics*.

Ethnogeopolitics could be regarded as an old practice as there is evidence of its practice throughout history. The practice of ethnogeopolitical policies requires certain studies, and reflection. The Soviet Nationalities Policy, and its resulting hierarchic ethnoterritorial system as well as its intensive engagement with linguistic, religious and generally ethnic affairs, has generated a precedence of ethnogeopolitics since early Bolshevik rule in the Soviet Union. However, ethnogeopolitics is older than that; the Tsarist Russian, the Ottoman and different Iranian empires had policies which could be regarded as ethnogeopolitical.

For example, the Russian Empire encouraged Russian Cossacks to settle in its frontier regions. Nowadays after the evacuation of villages, there are a lot of Cossack settlements in the North Caucasus as there are a lot of Circassian settlements in the Middle East and the Balkans. The system of religious minorities' legal segregation and autonomy is often regarded as an Ottoman policy called the *Millet System*. That was also the case in the Iranian Safavid Empire, which had its precedence even in pre-Islamic times during the Sasanid Empire. A similar system is preserved even after the Iranian constitutional revolution until now.

Another ethnogeopolitical policy formed the often forced migrations of populations for security or even economic reasons. Examples are the aforementioned Circassian and Georgian and Armenian migrations to the Ottoman and Safavid empires. The population exchange between Turkey and Greece could also be regarded as such an ethnogeopolitically motivated policy. However, one should be cautious not to combine ethnogeopolitics always with negative connotations, as for example subsidizing jobs in a scarcely populated area is also such an ethnogeopolitical policy. As in geopolitics in general one has to make a distinction between ethnogeopolitics of scholars and practitioners (See e.g. Ó Tuathail 2006: 8).

In addition, although blurred at times, one has to make a distinction between the ethnogeopolitical practice and the study of ethnogeopolitics which is often reflective and critical of such ethnogeopolitical policies and their consequences (See e.g. Mamadouh 1998; 2009)



Mark Bassin refers (2009) to a certain discourse as “Ethno-Geopolitics” prevalent among the Russian ultranationalists such as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and his associates. Perhaps it is superfluous to mention that they write the concept with a hyphen (ethno-geopolitics, этно-геополитика), whereas our Association does not and often capitalize each component (ethnogeopolitics or EthnoGeoPolitics). Yet their current of thought cannot be ruled out, as they often claim precedent in the works of the Soviet academic Lev Gumilev, and also owing to the fact that their current of thought is influenced by the practice in the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation.

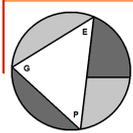
In brief, Mark Bassin’s article (2009) is certainly an important and informative source for studying ethnogeopolitics and Lev Gumilev’s and of Zhirinovskiy’s and his associates’ works are also appealing material for geopolitical studies. However, these, and in fact no other, currents of thoughts or discourses should not get the prerogative to exclusively claim the (sub)discipline of ethnogeopolitics for themselves.

There is still a vibrant debate about definitions and natures of geopolitics. In international relations and political economy, however, the concept geopolitics is often loosely used. Virginie Mamadouh’s categorization (1998: 239, see Table 1; 2009) is still authoritative in political geographical circles. As ethnogeopolitics considers multiple scales, levels of analysis and actors, it is close to the categories of the French ‘subversive’ school of *Géopolitique Interne et Extern* and ‘Critical Geopolitics’ both of which are often considered as progressive and even emancipatory types of geopolitics. According to Mamadouh (1998: 244-246; 2009) Critical Geopolitics is often post-structuralist. Although, ethnogeopolitics similar to critical geopolitics has often a reflective character, it is not necessarily post-structuralist.

All in all, it is difficult to assign a year as the beginning of ethnogeopolitics as a discipline or multidisciplinary field of studies. My own paper in which I used the term is from the early 1990s. However, the term may have been used even earlier by other authors, as it is not very far-fetched to imagine the relevance of ethnicity and cultural factors in geopolitics.

The German political geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) has two major works which are worth to mention in these regards: *Völkerkunde*—which could be translated as knowledge about peoples, or perhaps even nationology—and *Anthropogeografie*. This latter term is apparently first used by L. F. Kämtz in 1842 and established later by Ratzel (Heucke 2006; see also Penk 1912). Even though Ratzel’s conception of the relation between peoples and geography might have been very different than the current perspectives within human geography and anthropology, and certainly many of his statements cannot be confirmed, still, his choice for the titles of these works as well as the name of the subdiscipline ‘political anthropology’ indicate certain academic antiquity of the relation between peoples, their cultures and their political environments.

Our journal and association have paid attention to social issues at the global level. In addition to political, economic and geostrategic factors we have also paid attention to cultural factors in our studies. We have paid attention to ethnic studies; not only ethnolinguistic groups, but also to all collective social actors such as castes, ethnoreligious



groups and indigenous peoples. Although, we do acknowledge the utility of large N quantitative studies, we have paid attention to case studies and acknowledge the importance and even inevitability of area studies for political science and other disciplines related to geopolitics.

The quality of argument is the main criterion for accepting articles in our journal. Although, our journal does not rule out conventional academic papers, we also encourage other types of papers. Usually, academic journals only accept papers of certain conventional style and length. Such papers could be published in several conventional journals.

However, our journal may also accept, and even appreciate non-conventional types of articles provided that these are informative and contribute to (theoretical and empirical) debate. In practice, such articles may turn out to be good, thought-provoking and attractive reading material. We, however, do not necessarily endorse the authors' points of views and perspectives; to us only the quality of articles matters.

We certainly encourage articles and other materials such as movies, databases etc. that are innovative either in style or in theory. Our journal *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* is now developed into a multilingual journal in order to reach more audiences. It publishes and welcomes articles written in English, Russian and Spanish. Soon we may initiate publishing—also in other languages such as Persian and German.

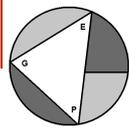
We will have a section called the Development of Ethnogeopolitics that intends to report and discuss about ethnogeopolitically interesting (theoretical) issues. We welcome everyone's contribution, even as post-published comments on already published papers. These contributions could be of any length and dependent on their status will be either peer-reviewed (Main Article) or not. The so-called main articles in *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* are always peer-reviewed as a rule. *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* is a free-access journal and charges authors no fees. It intends to produce diverse papers and articles related to ethnogeopolitics—broadly understood—and in addition to scholarly (scientific) papers, and intends to provide diverse types of reading material for a rather broad audience.

*Babak Rezvani, Editor-in-Chief, Chairman of Association for the Study of EthnoGeoPolitics*  
[rezvani@ethnogeopolitics.org](mailto:rezvani@ethnogeopolitics.org) October 2018

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**Fadi Elhousseini** is a Senior Fellow at the Centre on Governance at the University of Ottawa, Canada. He is a political and media consultant

and an advisory board member of the New Arab Foundation. He received a BA in Economics and Political Science from Cairo University, Egypt and an MA in International Commerce from Lecce, Italy. He obtained his PhD in International Studies at the University of Sunderland, UK. His research interests include Arab and Islamic studies, the Middle East peace process, Turkish and Middle Eastern studies and theories of international relations. His publications include contributions to Turkish Foreign Policy in the New Millennium and Turkish Studies from Different Perspectives.



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