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The Triad of Strategy, Geostrategy, and Geopolitics

We are experiencing a kind of "conceptual confusion" regarding the terms strategy, geostrategy, and geopolitics concepts that are used in many different ways across various platforms by almost everyone, yet whose content, differences, and similarities are not fully understood. Sharing the same sense of discomfort expressed by Karabulut on this issue, I have written this brief piece in the hope that it may contribute, even in a modest way, to clarifying this confusion. I would also like to note that these concepts can only be addressed here in a very limited scope and at a very basic level.

Strategy

In essence, strategy is the outcome of an alliance's, a state's, a political group's, military and civilian leaders', any type of decision-maker's, and even individuals' ability to think effectively and efficiently within the intellectual effort of the decision-making process. In reference to the 19th-century strategist Jomini's emphasis that "strategy is the domain in which intelligence prevails" it is possible to state that strategy lies at the intersection of intelligence defined as the mind's capacity to learn, to make use of what has been learned, to adapt to new situations, and to generate new solutions and analytical thinking, which may be summarized as the ability to break down a problem or subject into subcomponents through a deductive method and to assess each piece of information separately. Concretely, strategy is the set of plans or the roadmap constructed through the integration of existing and potential resources within a framework of time, space, and force, with a focus on practical implementation, in order to achieve a designated objective.

These actors formulate strategy sometimes to gain an advantage, sometimes to preserve an existing one, and at other times for a hybrid purpose, depending on the sector in which they operate, and then implement it in phased steps. Although updates may be made to a strategy in response to developments arising during the process, such adjustments do not alter the backbone of the strategy in the short term; a fundamental change of course occurs only in the long term, or, in rare cases, within a very short period when driven by an exceptionally sharp shift in circumstances.

As a result of the historical expansion and deepening of the concept, strategy today has come to be used across numerous fields. Examples include strategic communication, strategic management, strategic culture, strategic knowledge, cooperation strategy, competitive strategy, marketing strategy, integration strategy, concentration strategy, diversification strategy, organizational strategy, innovation strategy, national strategy, grand (or high) strategy, and military strategy.

Geostrategy

Geostrategy, which may be regarded as one of the subcomponents of strategy is a concept concerned with examining the influence of geographical factors on the formulation of military strategy and drawing conclusions from this analysis. To put it more concretely, beginning in peacetime and with regard to a potential military operation, a state's determination of where and how the main elements of its armed forces (such as armies, corps, navies, fleets, etc.) will be positioned and employed, taking into account the geographical, hydrographic, meteorological, and climatic characteristics of its own territory, its surroundings, and the broader region, constitutes a geostrategic decision.

The elements generally used in geostrategy, and which create a condition of interconnectedness, include territorial, geographic, demographic, social, economic, political, and strategic factors. However, depending on needs, capabilities, and ongoing developments, some of these factors may become more prominent at certain times, while different ones may come to the forefront in another period as the variables shift.

Geopolitics

The final concept, geopolitics, is the most complex to understand and interpret among the three, owing to the breadth of domains it interacts with, the use of diverse perspectives to pursue different objectives, and the fact that it is positioned at times within a single discipline, at other times across disciplines, and occasionally even above them. The inability to establish a common definition of geopolitics stems directly from this inherently chaotic nature of the concept.

Geopolitics is a spatial philosophy grounded in the activation of geography; it comparatively examines the existing and potential roles of fixed and variable geographical factors in the formulation and execution of states' foreign policies, and it investigates future courses of action at the global, regional, and national levels in terms of power and politics. The fixed

components of geography include geographical location, the natural resources found within that location, and physical landforms, while its variable components are human-dependent factors such as population, social and cultural characteristics, political structures, economic conditions, and military elements. The geographical constants of geopolitics correspond to "space" in strategy, whereas its variables correspond to "force." In both types of geographical factors, it is "time" that sets ideas and actions into motion.

Geopolitics, in addition to the knowledge-focused field of political geography, draws on other sciences as well. It includes the study of a state's and nation's history, ideology, culture, civilization, economy, multidimensional power, and foreign relations, monitors the course of world politics, and ultimately provides a foundation for security and development policies aimed at the state's future. More concisely, it is an effort to highlight the importance of certain geographic patterns within political history.

Geopolitics is not a "real" entity but a socially constructed phenomenon and a shifting discursive formation. No matter how abstract geopolitics may appear, it still holds significant political importance and influence. People are displaced and killed to serve geopolitical objectives. This is clear evidence of how discursive constructs are transformed into social practice and how things rooted in discourse become powerful tools of political action.

According to some perspectives, all politics falls under geopolitics, because no conflict occurs independently of its spatial context. Examples include resource geopolitics, such as companies negotiating with governments for mining rights and establishing security zones in sovereign states; the geopolitics of NGOs advocating for refugee rights; or nationalist geopolitics, such as a separatist group using terrorism to establish an independent nation-state.

Conclusion

A hierarchical ordering can be established among the concepts of strategy, geostrategy, and geopolitics. Indeed, if we accept that state-level strategy today generally evolves into "Grand Strategy," it can be said that strategy occupies the top of the hierarchy, followed by geopolitics and then geostrategy. However, it is important to remember that this hierarchical ordering is a generalization and may vary depending on the situation encountered.

As an example of the use of these concepts, in a study or discourse regarding the value of Cyprus for Turkey: a military oriented perspective would be geostrategic, an economic-

oriented perspective would be geopolitical, and a broader, foreign policy focused perspective could be strategy-based.

Note: This article was first published in the December 2025 issue of MarineDeal News.

Resources

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