



CLAVAL, Paul, 2010, **Les espaces de la Politique/The Spaces of Geopolitics**, Armand Colin, Collection U Géographie.

Paul Claval (born 1932) is certainly one of the world's most important humanist geographers. He imposed himself, ever since his early published papers, through the approach of theoretical, conceptual aspects of Human Geography, and through the treatment of some sub-branches less presented or treated in the specialty literature:

Essai sur l'évolution de la Géographie humaine/ Essay on Human Geography Evolution (1964), La pensée géographique/The Geographic Thinking (1972), La nouvelle géographie/The New Geography (1977), Principes de géographie sociale/Social Geography Principles (1973), Éléments de géographie économique/Economic Geography Elements (1976), Géopolitique et géostratégie/Geopolitics and Geostrategy (1994), La Géographie du XX^e siècle/The Geography of the 20th Century (2003), La Géographie culturelle /The Cultural Geography (2003) etc.

The paper *Les Espaces de la Géopolitique/The Spaces of Geopolitics* (416 pages) includes, besides the *Introduction* and the six parts (with eighteen chapters), a *Glossary* of terms, a welcome *Index* (with common terms) and an extremely reach *Bibliography* (approximately eight hundred titles, from various schools, not only the French one).

This recent paper of Paul Claval, follows the same trend, the one of discerning the true dimensions of Human Geography, of the profound interdisciplinarity which characterizes nowadays Science in general, as well as the Geography, in particular. Basically, we deal with the first paper which focuses on all the sciences that contribute to the definition of an unstable space such as Politics: History, Sociology, Psychology, Social and Human Sciences, Literature and Linguistics, Philosophy, Economy, Political Science, all of these, obviously in a geographic context. Of course, it is not at all simple or easy to have in attention so many different sciences and especially to seize the interconnections, as well as the common points of them, and yet the author does manage to successfully do all these.

Among the numerous qualities of this book are counted the particular attribute of statement, the flawless and extremely convincing argumentation, the impeccable logic of the scientific speech, as well as the excellent thematic periodization in time of the concerned subject (the spaces of Politics), reflected on the six parts of the book, each containing more chapters:

1. *The Political Thinking, Political Geography and Geopolitics*: on one side, a review of the stages followed by the political thinking/reflection from Antiquity up until the globalization era, on the other side the underlining of the geographic reflection on the political organization of space in the same time interval.

2. *The spatial logic of politics*: the logic of power (with its different shapes) and their spatial deployment, basically a Geography of power given by skeins (*écheveaux*), bundles (*faisceaux*) and networks (*réseaux*) that canalize the relationships

that human beings and groups weave between them; attention is paid to *the political regulation (régulation politique)* of social systems, both of those of small dimensions (local cells= *des cellules locales*) as well of those of big dimensions, which require the existence of a state, I suppose.

3. *The evolution of Political Geographies*: a very original evolution of the power of architecture ever since the primitive societies up until the apparition and the development of the state (which realized the synthesis of the authority and of coercive power, indispensable to supervise and control a large territorial ensemble), with the variant of the modern state whose origins were the sovereignty and the absolutism.

4. *The age of the industrial state*: a critical analysis and yet objective of the modern forms of the state (the liberal state, the authoritarian state and the fascist state, the revolutionary socialist state, the totalitarian state); the state-civil society relationship in the industrial world, being also taken into account the building of nations, the role of parties and unions, the national sovereignty and the local autonomy (between the “national state” and “the local state”, as the author writes); an original analysis of international relations, with an accent on the building of international networks (the diversity of flows and of networks in the transnational space), the games of power on the international scene, the center-periphery dynamics at a world scale, the international system after the Second World War.

5. *The age of bringing again into discussion*: demonstrates that the rapid mutations on the world political scene are determined by phenomena such as the demographic revolution, globalization (with effects on the economic, technical, scientific, informational etc. domains), environment issues; there are analyzed the mutations known by the state, from the nation-state to the state law and from here to questioning the nation-state and what is more to its implosion; an international scene full of tensions, with new big actors that assure the international equilibrium in a multi-polar world, but also an opening of the space (*l’ouverture de l’espace*), the liberalization of international trade creating big spaces (*grandes espaces*).

6. The last part of the paper, called *The Geopolitical Analysis*, is to a great extent an original approach of geopolitical thinking underlining the ancient origin and yet its late formalization, the territorial logic of Geopolitics and yet its universal vision, an original interpretation of governance as a new form of peace geopolitics (in contrast with the geopolitics of war) and of equilibrium (“governance is based on a profound change of attitude as far as protagonists of the political or economic game are concerned”). The author succeeds the most convincing configuration of geopolitics: “The Geopolitics analyzes the geographic realities in which the power reports (coercion, influence, domination, control) are born from the access to certain resources and are linked by their valorization and utilization. It does not have as a starting point physical data but actors. They are *localized*, rely on *territorial bases*, dispose of *networks*: they (the actors – our note) cannot be understood without taking into consideration their geographic dimensions” (page 321; the underlinings are the ones of the author).

Instead of a conclusion we remind the appreciation of the French editor to which the reviewer also consents: “In a paper that summarizes thirty years of reflection, Paul Claval proposes an extraordinary synthesis, renewing the Political Geography and Geopolitics”.

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Studies