FRIEDRICH RATZEL AND THE EASTERN QUESTION: FLAG FOLLOWS TRADE

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Abstract: The considered as certain collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of 19th century brought the Great Powers into competition having as aim to increase their influence on the wider geographical area between Asia Minor and India. In the newly established at that time German Empire appeared the vision of exercising international policy, which was fulfilled with the creation – inter alia – of the Hamburg–Persian Gulf commercial axis, factor of penetration to the East. In contrast to the ultranationalist views proposing war solutions, Friedrich Ratzel chose the version of economic and cultural penetration.

1. Introduction
After giving a general approach of the Eastern Question, the present study presents, through the nationalist prism of the end of 19th century, the two fundamental parameters of the German expansionist view to the East: homogenization of Central Europe (henceforth Mitteleuropa) under German dominance, as a base for the creation of the Hamburg-Baghdad economic axis, which was traversed by the well-known Bagdadbahn. These parameters are then examined within the frame of Friedrich Ratzel’s views [1], who supported

1  German merchants’ saw, (Dem Handel folgt die Flagge), with which they expressed at the end of 19th century their strategy, aiming at the colonial activation of the under Bismarck German government. It refers to the view, according to which commercial and economic relations are initially established with areas, which later on are militarily occupied. The opposite view, that trade follows flag (Der Handel folgt der Flagge), supports the reverse process. This phrase is also found in the English colonial dialect (the flag follows the trade). In Ratzel’s works appearing in the bibliography, this phrase is spotted at least three times: RatzelI p. 363, Ratzel4 p.44 and Ratzel8 p. 101.
an economic penetration and expansion in the area. Finally his views on “Eastern Questions” are presented in detail.

2. The Eastern Question - approaches
The Eastern Question, a term which was established in the vocabulary of national diplomacy since the period of the Verona conference [2], is met in bibliography with two notions: on the one hand, through the wide historico-philosophical prism, as a struggle between eastern brutality and western culture, which was transformed into a struggle between Christianity and Islamism, and on the other hand, in a narrower sense, as a conflict between western countries and the Ottoman Empire, with the expectation of the latter’s collapse and with main object for each of the opposing European powers the control of the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, against rivals’ interests [3].

French historian and geographer Ε. Driault, defines e.g. the Eastern Question in the wide sense of the term, considering that the Egyptian Question and the African Questions in general are closely related to the fourth [4] risk, which threatens European peace, the Muslim risk, or, in other words, to the Eastern Question [5]. Despite the remarks in the introductory texts of the book, the French historian and geographer admits that the initially cultural and religious character of the problem was transformed into economic, into a form of vital conflict, which brings even cousin peoples against each other [6]. Attributing to the Eastern Question wider geographical dimensions, he describes the Suez Canal as the great commercial road of the Old Continent, which connects Europe with India and China, and notes that all European countries need to occupy a position on this great commercial artery. For it seems that the ones which will not participate, will have to quit the ambition of playing a leading role in the future economic activity [7].

Contrary, Th. Laskaris (Θ. Λάσκαρις) considers that Driault’s wide definition is due to his nationality, as it includes the issues of Syria, Lebanon, Egypt etc., for which there was great French interest. Therefore, he adopts W. Miller’s definition, according to which the Eastern Question is the problem of filling the space left by the gradual retreat of the Turkish Empire from Europe, a definition

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2 Laskaris, p. 11  
3 Driault [Greek translation, preface by I. Aktoglou, p. 18 – 19]  
4 the other three are, according to the writer, the American, Chinese and African ones  
5 Driault, [G. Monod, Preface, p. 65, Greek translation]  
6 Driault, [Greek translation, p. 84]  
7 op.cit., p. 85

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which restricts the question in between the geographical boundaries of European Turkey [8].

From the English view, G.D. Clayton considers that the decline and probable collapse of the Turkish empire was a diplomatic constant throughout the period, that had already provoked rival ambitions among the powers by 1821, [9] which were able, while the Ottoman Empire existed, to compete each other without risks, for political influence and secondly for territorial or economic gains, taking advantage of its weakness. Collapse of the Sultan’s authority, however, would mean a total disintegration of the empire, for no one power was strong enough to dare to take it over complete [10].

This extremely up-to-date, for that period of time, issue was also thoroughly treated by the theorists of historical materialism, Marx and Engels, who analyze the complicated correlations, on the background, of course, of their ideological perception and the expectation of a pan-European revolution. So, Marx notes that the Eastern Question is principally geographical and military, but he doesn’t miss to note its commercial aspect. He also considers that Russian politics is composed by geographical, historical factors and the desire of descending to the hot seas. He describes at the same time a competition between West and Russia which is not confined to the conflict between opposing economic interests, but which is defined as a conflict between cultural traits characterizing the behaviour of political subjects. Crucial parameter of the Eastern Question is – according to Engels – the importance of Straits and Black Sea for western trade, as well as for Anglo-Russian commercial competition [11].

The above indicative definitions of the Eastern Question denote the (geographical and temporal) broadness and complexity of the subject, which creates the ability of multiple approaches, depending on the specificities (national, religious, ideological) of each of the concerned parties. In bibliography is recorded an amazing range of thematic units, which concern distinct regional disputes and conflicts (e.g. Austria - Bosnia, Cretan question), localisms or national integrations (Greek, Serbian question), pan-ideatic expansionist policies (pan-Turkism, pan-Germanism, pan-Slavism), imperialistic and economic retributions (conflict between colonial powers), religious and cultural conflicts, each of which caused diplomatic manoeuvres, treaties and conferences, or short-lasting strategic alliances with armed conflict as usual outcome. Therefore, we could talk about many regional conflicts, which could be considered

8 Laskaris, p. 12.
9 Clayton, p. 9.
10 op.cit., p. 10.

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as components of a bigger and more complicated question, titled Eastern Question [12].

We could note here that apart from the fall of the Ottoman Empire, concerned parties’ analyses included also the possibility of collapse of the Chinese Empire too (after being defeated by Japan, in 1894/95). This expectation led all the mighty powers to obtain an as good as possible starting-point for the Scramble for China [13].

A modern geopolitical look on the Eastern Question can distinguish historical, political and economic sequences, that cover long historical periods and wide geographical areas, placing the facts within the evolutionary frame of an age-old, always feedbacked and at the same time extremely up-to-date collision of powers (national, supranational, economic or of another nature, depending on the period of time), always having as stake the international (re)distribution of power, as this is conceived in each historical frame.

2.1. The Eastern question from the German ultranationalists’ point of view

Having fulfilled with a long delay but successfully its national integration, the under Bismarck newly established German Empire was expectedly left behind in the colonial competition which reached an apex by the end of the 19th century. Furthermore, at that period of time, the almost total occupation of Africa caused a turn of all the colonial powers to the East and more specifically towards the territory of the – considered as about to fall – Ottoman Empire, Middle East and China.

However, the creation of the unified German state provoked a new wave of ultranationalism in Germany, due to the absolutely different evaluation of this establishment and its meaning for German nation. Contrary to the widespread – after 1871 – view that the creation of the empire was the apex, the end of a long and hard course of Prussian-German history, extreme nationalists [14] – organized since 1890 – considered Bismarck’s national state not as completion, but as the beginning of Germany’s national development [15].

12 Similarly Ratzel titles the below presented work “The Eastern Questions”.
13 Walkenhorst, p. 189.
14 P. Walkenhorst uses the term radikaler Nationalismus (radical nationalism). In the present essay was chosen its conventional translation as “extreme nationalism” or “ultra-nationalism”, without any effort to grade national intensities of that period of time. Certainly this distinction is crucial and necessary, since German nationalism experienced many changes until the tragic events of World War II.
15 Walkenhorst, p. 12.

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In these conditions, in the newly established state began immediately the conversation about the participation of Germany in the colonial game, a perspective to which Iron Chancellor strongly resisted (until 1895), aiming at peaceful coexistence with the European colonial powers. Bismarck, who was a realist, took into consideration the economic consequences of a colonial expansion, as well as the inefficiency of German navy, which rendered pointless any thought for overseas colonies. Typical of his perception about colonial issues was the rejection of the French offer (during the post-war negotiations of 1871) to cede the colony of Cochichina to Germany with the argument that Germans were not rich enough to economically sustain the luxury of colonies.  

Chancellor Bismarck’s resignation, in 1890, favoured the political and organizational expression of a powerful nationalistic movement, having as landmark the year 1891. In this year, with the occasion of the Helgoland-Sansibar Treaty, was established on 9th of April the General German League (Allgemeiner Deutscher Verband), which was renamed in 1894 into Pan-German League (Altleutscher Verband). Among its founder members were many eminent German nationalists, such as Alfred Hugenberg, Emil Kirchdorf, Friedrich Ratzel et al. Its aim was initially to support government, according to its proclaimed and programmatic aims.

Although at that period of time there were many nationalist unions in Germany, the impact of the Pan-German League seemed to be greater in political level, as it posed with great emphasis the question of exercising international policy (Weltpolitik) and therefore the foundations of Pan-Germanism. Characteristic of how widespread were pan-Germanic views was H. Morgenthau’s...
view (USA ambassador in Turkey from 1913 to 1916), who used to consider Pan-Germanism as a philosophical and political movement which reached a peak at the time of Wilhelm II and revived with Nazism. [20]

Although the idea of Weltpolitik coincided with Wilhelm’s ambitions, Pan-German League exercised since 1903 a nationalist opposition, which adopted gradually more and more radical attitudes, and after World War I emerged among its members a latent anti-Semitism.

As we will analyse below, conflict between nationalists and ultranationalists was one of the fundamental reasons for the redefinition of German policies in the direction of fulfilling its pretensions to the East, since the perspective of obtaining sufficient overseas colonies was moving away due to delay in the fulfilment of the navy arming programme, a fact which did not allow military conflict with England. That attitude of the German government was considered by its critics as lack of decisiveness, which constituted precondition for the creation of a World Empire. Pan-German League was the cream of the discontented ones and so it became the strictest judge of German foreign policy. [21]

The long-lasting preparation of a combative navy, combined with German government’s hesitation, would postpone the German expansionist plans and many ultranationalists believed that the cost of this delay would be very high. So there were many voices which demanded even the annulment of the expansionist policy overseas and its replacement with continental eastward expansionism. [22] Indeed, in the Pan-German League broke out (from 1904/05) hard confrontations concerning the question whether Germany should insist on obtaining overseas colonies, or focus on the area of Central Europe. Although this disagreement never came to an end, gradually dominated the opinion that the endeavours in continental area had more chances to succeed, at least as long as Germany did not have navy capable to confront England. The redefinition of objects provoked the request for creation of a competent army – without questioning the navy arming programme – which was considered as equally important to navy in exercising international policy. [23]

Apart from the above disagreement, it is also recorded a qualitative difference concerning the way of expansion, which ultranationalists strictly perceived as territorial, and they did not content themselves with commercial and economic penetration in the claimed territories. Typical example of this different approach is their attitude towards the agreement of Jaugtse, within the

20 Morgenthau, p. 40.
21 Walkenhorst, p. 183.
22 op.cit., p. 239.
23 op.cit., p. 216.

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framework of the race for the partition of China which was realized – with the participation of Germany – principally with the form of unofficial economic penetration in Chinese market. With this Treaty, in October 1900, Berlin and London agreed on the principles of free trade and open doors, while at the same time the two parts were bound to respect and defend the territorial integrity of the Chinese Empire, given the occasion, against attacks of third powers. Practically, this agreement meant (after the suppression of Boxer rebellion and after the war of Boers reached a climax) a demarcation of the economic influence zones of the two powers, which turned particularly against Russian expansionist purposes. However, this, oriented to free trade imperialism, policy met the ultranationalists’ refusal, who supported territorial expansion. [24]

Another typical example of German ultranationalists’ different approach of the colonial competition is the Morocco Crisis, during which the imperialistic interests of France, England and Spain were initially focused on acquiring naval bases and economically penetrating into Moroccan commercial centres. In Germany, contrary, this was considered as an ideal place to create a colony, with population transfer. [25]

Under the above briefly described pressure from the ultranationalist circles (and as the fulfilment of the navy arming programme was delaying), took place at about the end of 19th century in Germany the conversation about the expansion to the East, which had as ulterior motive the descent to the hot sees of Persian Gulf creating a continental railway and commercial axis Hamburg – Persian Gulf. The fulfilment of this plan basically included two fulfilment stages: creation of a unified, under German domination, Centro-European area (from now on with the term Mitteleuropa) and of the Berlin-Istanbul-Baghdad railway axis (Bagdadbahn), which would connect North Sea (Hamburg) with Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.

2.1.1. Mitteleuropa

The architecture of the wider area of Central Europe, aiming at the creation of a unified economic, political, cultural and transport space (according to the priorities of each political subject), gave life to the term Mitteleuropa. Without specific geographical, political or cultural boarders, the motivations of this expansionist view were (as well as the ones of colonization) of economic, geo-strategic nature, i.e. economic-political competitions of power, forming two large streams, Pan-Germanism which was expressed via pretensions in the

24 op.cit., p. 189.
25 op.cit., p. 192.
East (Drang nach Osten) and Pan-Slavism which was expressed by the Russian effort to take hold of the West (Stremlenije na zapad) [26]. Main field of battle between these two large movements was, geographically and culturally, the Balkans and the Austrian-Hungarian territory, the population composition of which (Germans, Magyars, Czechs, Serbians, Croatians, Romanians, Italians et al.) [27] provoked civil conflicts. This population polyphony, in combination with its bad economic and administrative situation, discouraged Austria-Hungary from taking action in the European geographical field, but only in the East, where it enjoyed the maximum of German support. [28] Therefore, the German-Russian dispute for the area of Mitteleuropa had to do with the future of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Although many organization models for the area of Mitteleuropa are recorded (to which we cannot refer, in the interest of brevity), it is worth mentioning that principal starting-point of discussion in Germany about this area were F. List’s points of view, who, since the decade of 1980, had indicated the creation of a powerful German-Magyar Eastern Empire, extending from Adriatic to Black Sea. This empire, in cooperation with England, would have the role of counterbalance, creating a common economic space, against the emerging huge Empires of USA and Russia. At the same time it would serve as a reception area for German immigrants. Despite that List referred to this German-Magyar Central Empire mainly as form of economic cooperation and that his thought had very few common elements with ultranationalists’ expansionist views, the latter ones considered him as forerunner of their reflections. [29]

Bismarck initially seemed to underestimate the subject of Mitteleuropa, favouring the creation of small Germany without the participation of Austria. However, his further actions show an escalated effort to promote (pan-)German influence on Central Europe via Austria. Soon after Austria’s exclusion from unified Germany he changed his tactic against its ex-opponent and avoided to impose onerous terms of peace. He took care not to offend the dignity of the neighbour country. [30] At the same time he decisively encouraged its penetration in the Balkans, since precondition for the pan-German expansion to the East was the maintenance of Slavic peoples in the bosom of Austria and the German control of the under Sultan lands which were populated with

26 Krejčí, p. 89.
27 op.cit., p. 81.
28 Kalogeropoulos - Stratis, p. 142
29 Walkenhorst, p. 204
30 Kalogeropoulos - Stratis, p. 128

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Christian Orthodox people. [31] Having in a relatively short period of time obtained prestige and weighty opinion on international issues, German Chancellor played a leading role during Berlin Conference (1878), during which, among other regulations, Austria took over the administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of the Muslim county of Novi Pazar, between Serbia and Montenegro. [32] This concession is a clear German penetration in the East, so that is justified the point of view according to which this Treaty opened for the whole Germanism the way to the East in the direction of Asia Minor and Persian Gulf. At the same time the occasion was given for a collision of interests between Germanism and Slavism. [33]

The new crisis in German-Russian relations (1879/80) rendered again the issue of Mitteleuropa subject of public discussion in Germany. Many people considered this redefinition of German foreign economic policy as an answer to challenges of the evolving economic globalization. A Centro-European union under German domination created expectations for economic development in the frame of an internal market and at the same time it was considered as an economic and political counterbalance to world powers (England - Russia - USA). [34]

From the scope of ultranationalists, the imperialistic aims on European territory were focused mainly on the East. Although the aspired big Germany would include Holland, Luxembourg and Flemish-speaking regions of Belgium, central aim of their expansionist plans remained the acquisition of living space in Central and Eastern Europe, mainly in the areas of Hapsburg Empire, where German-speakers lived. The Drang nach Osten was therefore connected, from an ultranationalist scope too, with the future of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, [35] certainly under the shadow of national-cultural conflicts in Central Europe, which rendered its future rather uncertain.

Keeping in mind the example of the German Customs Agreement (1866), forerunner of the German Union, ultranationalists of the Pan-German League were certainly in favour of the creation of a, under German influence, Centro-European economic area. Its chairman, Ernst Hasse, [36] undertook to propagandize, under the shadow of the above mentioned national conflicts in Aus-

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31 Berstein - Milza, p. 149.
32 op.cit., p. 157.
33 Naltsas, p.83.
34 Walkenhorst, p. 205.
35 Walkenhorst, p. 203.
36 Hasse, Ernst (1846-1908), professor in University of Leipzig and deputy of Freedom party from 1893 to 1903 –1903. He was chairman of Pan-German League and kept close contact with F. Ratzel.
tria, the creation of a «Centro-European Customs Union», as main duty of German international policy (Weltpolitik). [37]

Similar perceptions are detected later on in publications of more moderate publishers, such as Ernst Jäckel and Paul Rohrbach, who used to publish since 1914 a newspaper with the programmatic title Bigger Germany (Das größere Deutschland). They supported through its pages an economic and dominitive expansion of the German Empire to South-eastern Europe and Middle East, on the basis of an integration with the Empire of Hapsburgs. Therefore, the occupation with the subject of eastward expansion was not Pan-Germanists’ privilege, but a subject much discussed about publicly and from many aspects. [38]

Typical of the atmosphere of that period of time is the establishment and function (already in Berlin since August 1887) of the School of Oriental Languages [39], in which interpreters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as other professionals were taught Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Swahili. In these seminars, which were co-organized by the Imperial and Prussian government, linguistic education was accompanied with elements about religion, mores, geography, statistics and modern history of those areas. Between Berlin and Hamburg gradually developed a great scientific rivalry having colonization as focal point, which led to the creation of schools and institutes with university validity.

2.1.2. Bagdadbahn

The territorial expansion in “Central Europe” gave birth at the same time to the vision of German predominance in the whole Middle East, which inspired the plans for the creation of a railway line from Berlin to Baghdad. In other words, German domination in Central Europe was the first step for the creation of the German World Empire, the borders of which they envisaged extending to the Arabian Peninsula. In this sense Hasse had proposed since 1896 the concession of whole Asiatic Turkey (except for Armenia) to Germany in case the Ottoman Empire fell. [40]

On the expectation of an imminent collapse of the Ottoman Empire were also based Albert Ritter’s expansionist views. He was a political columnist and former vice-chairman of the Pan-German League. He published in June 1913 – using the pen name Karl v. Winterstetten – a booklet with the programmatic title «Berlin - Baghdad», which was republished seven times until World War I

37 Walkenhorst, p. 206.
38 Walkenhorst, p. 220.
39 Ruppenthal, p. 146.

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broke out. A. Ritter was of the opinion that concepts *German Empire and Austria-Hungary* had lost their magnitude due to economic and political developments and he was asking for the creation of a Confederation of States including German Empire, Eastern Balkan Countries and Turkey. Its members would be typically independent, de facto recognising German primacy. [41]

Political and geographical preconditions for the fulfilment of this ambitious plan – ulterior aim of which was to render the whole area of the East a commercial and economic space – was on the one hand the control of Balkans, where Austria served as passage for the commercial expansion of Germany [42], and on the other hand the Ottoman Empire’s liberation from English influence. This liberation was facilitated after Egypt’s detachment from England, Persia’s colonial partition [43] between England-Russia and the gradual abandonment – by Britain – of the doctrine for territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.

From 1888, when they received permission to construct a railway line from Istanbul through Anatolia to Ikonion, German businessmen and bankers tried to economically penetrate in the territory of the Ottoman Empire. So, Anatolische Eisenbahn-Gesellschaft joint venture [44] (Eastern Railway Company) under *Deutsche Bank*, with the participation of Austrian, Italian, even English investors, created for the first time a modern economic connection between Berlin and Turkey’s Asiatic part. [45]

Tracing a Muslim policy during the next decade, Emperor Wilhelm II appeared almost as patron of the Muslim countries. He visited Istanbul during the autumn of 1898 for fifteen days (after the slaughters in Armenia) motivating Sultan Abdul Hamit II to actively work for the revival of Islam with the help of Germany. At the same time, the Ottoman government charged a German society with the construction of the Baghdad railway – which would have

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41 Walkenhorst, p. 220.
42 Driault [Greek translation, p. 306].
43 During the British-Russian approach were also arranged the two countries’ disputes in Asia. So, it was accorded that they would not be involved in Tibet, that Afghanistan would remain under British influence and Persia would be separated in three zones. The southern zone belonged to the British sphere of influence, the northern one (including Teheran) to the Russian sphere, while the south-western zone remained neutral. Morgenthau [Greek translation, p.77, footnote 26].
44 www.wasistwas.de/technik/alle-artikel/artikel/link//74d7e0d2f1/article/die-konstantinopel-bagdad-bahn.html.
a length of 3000 kilometres – decisively contributing to the German expansion on the Hamburg–Berlin–Vienna–Istanbul–Baghdad axis. [46]

_Deutsche Bank_ finally undertook the financing of the second and biggest part of Bagdadbahn, unwillingly and after being forced by the Kaiser and the German government [47] – when all their efforts to get funds from England and France failed – since the German bank knew that it did not dispose enough funds to finance the whole project. Therefore, already in 1899 Wilhelm II travelled to London in order to convince his grandmother Queen Victoria for the participation of English banks in this project. Although the English Prime Minister Lord Balfour initially agreed, he was soon forced to fall back, under the pressure of the sharp critique exercised by the Lower House and the English Press, according to which he was favouring with this railway line the German descent to Baghdad and to the Persian Gulf. [48]

Finally, this great project was fulfilled with 30% French funds, since German financing was not sufficient and gradually appeared difficulties in the payment in full of the commitments assumed. [49] But apart from the economic aspect, rivalry between the powers in the area created for Germany serious problems concerning the safe use of the line, which were overcome with the Potsdam Agreement (4th November 1910). With that agreement, Germany recognised the supremacy of Russian political interests in North Persia (reaffirming the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1907) and resigned from the exclusive exploitation of the Baghdad–Basora line, which would be constructed by a Turkish company with international funds and under equal Anglo-German influence. Russia recognized to Germany total commercial freedom within the zone of the line and in the whole Persia, declaring that it would not hinder the passage of the Bagdadbahn. Furthermore, it committed itself to connect Persian railways with the line of Baghdad, creating branch-lines to the East. At the same time, England withdrew its veto from all which could hinder the continuation of the Baghdad railway construction, gaining Turkish recognition of its economic and political interests’ supremacy in Kuwait and Mohamerah. [50]

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46 Driault [Greek translation, p. 306 - 307]
47 www.bagdadbahn.de/
48 www.vorkriegsgeschichte.de/content/view/15/31/
49 Driault [Greek translation, p. 307]
50 op.cit. p.312 - 313

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The Bagdadbahn became subject of thorough discussion in Germany during the second decade of 20th century among politicians, speakers about public issues, even scientists, who were trying to scientifically substantiate the importance of that project, when the war solution of the Eastern Question seemed inevitable: *Our mission must be the development and financial support of industry in the East*, supported for example in 1917 the engineer of the Prussian railway service and former engineer of the *Nouvelle Ligne de Bagdad*, Karl Hermann Müller, warning, though, that they should avoid to create factories, before ensuring the necessary raw materials. [51] In a study of 128 pages he examined the economic importance of the railway, mentioning – admittedly striking – analytic elements for the soil, economy and habitants of Asiatic Turkey.

Earlier, in 1913, Professor F. Frech used to class Bagdadbahn in the category of railways-pioneers, which promote civilization in sparsely or not at all populated areas, showing a power which contributes to the creation of states. Furthermore, he gave to this railway line great cultural importance, since – contrary to the American and north Asiatic railways which cross lands without historical and cultural past [52] – it enclosed and connected the partly deadened lands of civilized peoples of antiquity and early Middle Ages: Babylonia, Assyria, Persia, N. Syria and Asia Minor [53].

3. The Eastern Question in Ratzel’s Political Geography
Ratzel’s *Political Geography* is a theoretical text, in which the German geographer analyses the parameters influencing the development of states, consid-

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51 Müller, p.80.
52 According to the imperialistic view of that period of time, redskins’ culture was not … culture, neither had any historicalness.
53 Frech, p. 29.
ering as constant the existing between them rivalry for (re)distribution of power. Therefore, in this fundamental work it was not possible to use case analysis for the Eastern Question (as it happens in the homonymous study), but were only included his views interspersed in an effort to substantiate his theories using examples.

3.1. Importance and interdependence of Verkehr [54] with politics
Nodal notion of Ratzel’s analytics is Verkehr, which constitutes principal precondition and precursor of states’ territorial growth. [55]

According to Ratzel’s point of view, the increase of population and of produced material goods [56] bring a people in contact with others, in a process through which it obtains the means for quicker development, in order to become wealthier and more powerful. This connection takes place with Verkehr via individuals, who cross the boundaries of an actually immobile state, carrying the state itself in their luggage.

Citizens’ removals from one area to another bring, however, political consequences, able even to unify the two states, underlines the German geographer noting that the development of a necessary road network – even rudimental – must precede the growth of states. In this way, economy and politics develop a common interest to connect settlements and countries, surpassing any possible obstacles.

This process leads, according to Ratzel, to creation and development of states, since the initial area of circulation (Verkehrsgebiet) aspires to become political area. In colonization usually “flag follows trade”, the German teacher notes, invoking the history of the internal states of USA with special reference to Nebraska, sperm of which was a commercial place of the American Fur Company. He parallels this process (without directly referring to it) with the process of the German unification, as it is the same phenomenon, when forerunner of political borders promotion is a customs agreement. [57]

Despite the close relation between Verkehr and politics, Ratzel perceives them in a dialectic way, since the former is more and more released from polit-

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54 The term Verkehr is translated as (vehicular) circulation / traffic, transports and communications, even as association. In the present essay it is used untranslated, since all its versions define an important parameter of Ratzel’s thought: the ability of space management.

55 Ratzel1, p. 357.

56 i.e. cultural development! Culture is a central notion of Ratzel’s geographical and cosmo-theoretical view.

57 Ratzel1, p. 363.

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ical bonds appearing independently. From servant of states’ creation it became really important prop of theirs and often their forerunner, he notes, considering that this independence was favoured by the developments in the means of transport. Facilitating the transfer of cargos, mainly with locomotive and railway, without further territorial claims, Verkehr increased the abilities of transports and the profits entailed and gave to big transport companies the ability to exercise great influence. Mainly in S. America, railways increased their influence beyond transportations, since their owners obtained a lot of metallurgies, shipyards and repair zones, merchant fleet, hotels, coal undertakings et al. [58]

This is the way in which total independence of Verkehr from politics derives, since the commercial arteries take over political functions of higher level, penetrating independently into culturally poor areas, having as conscious aim to culturally and politically develop them first.

Typical example of this influence of Verkehr on territorial policy is – according to Ratzel – the American payoff system for the roads and railway lines construction, taking in return land on both sides of the line to a certain extend, a model based on the increase of land’s value, through its development.

Analysing deeper the relation between Verkehr - politics, i.e. the relation between Geography of Transports and Politics, he does not hesitate to note even an unbalanced analogy in favour of Geography of Transports (and of Economic Geography in general), which politics has to follow, even against its will, as happened with England in the case of the Suez Canal or in N. America in some phases of the railways and canals construction in the continental straits of Central America. [59] He also notes that Verkehr’s aim is the political isolation of areas absolutely necessary due to their position for the transport of long distances, mentioning as typical of this parameter the example of Syria, as well as Egypt, which is so important for Verkehr, that it is not allowed to remain independent. [60] This remark makes clear the way in which economic-geographical analysis and particularly its branch, geography of Transportations, drives us to important geopolitical and geo-strategic conclusions of scientific validity.

Concerning international relations, the above remark is interpreted as an effort of great political formations to satisfy the continuously growing transportation demands by concentrating circulation in the best, from economic-geographical aspect, roads. In this effort, whole countries constitute transit areas, characteristic which much increases their political value. To support his point of view, Ratzel mentions the examples of Austria (which needed to occupy the

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58 op.cit., p. 370.
59 op.cit., p. 371.
60 op.cit., p. 369.
area of Steiermark, in order to keep the way to Adriatic Sea and Hungary open) and Syria (country which once constituted passage of Mesopotamia powers to the Mediterranean Sea and to the rapidly Hellenized Iran during Greece’s Macedonian Era). However, he attributes great importance, as areas of passage, to the straits of Suez and Central America, which possess – as conveyors of the shortest connection between Atlantic-Indian and Atlantic-Pacific – a real international position, since they connect the largest natural spaces of the earth. The effort of a single power to occupy them, gives to the term ‘world domination’ this more practical meaning. [61] This important geopolitical conclusion, which interprets lots of geostrategic events that took and will take place in the area, is the result of a specific economic-geographical analysis, which penetrates all texts of his geopolitical period of time.

Certainly, the nationalist and defender of Weltpolitik, Ratzel, could not define the state-Verkehr relation as a strictly antagonistic relation, allowing funds “without nationality” to determine the political game all over the world. So, he conceives the autonomy of Verkehr – which initially serves state … and creates interests preceding political expansion – as a virtually transitional stage, since, one day [interests preceding political expansion] will shed their apolitical mantle and immediately support state. [62] Here Ratzel in fact clarifies the difference between geopolitical analysis and geostrategic use and interpretation! So, he considers that state and Verkehr (in its economic, as explained above, dimension) are ultimately the components of acquiring power, which allows the exercising of international policy: But due to the fact that every artery is actually ground, i.e. a part of political space which is surrounded by ground, unable to be detached from it, a politico-geographical parameter necessarily interferes in every circulation issue. A linear policy, a policy of simple linear directions and lines of force cannot exist. The spaces between the lines of force are swept along by the great movements made in this direction. The historian says that wealth, power and culture follow the international route; but concerning power, he considers that it extends from the international route in all directions, having as binding agent power itself, which dominates on the international route itself. [63]

The economic-geographical conditions, i.e. the geopolitical conditions, precede the political, i.e. the geostrategic ones, but Ratzel associates state-economy relation with the age of the former, since the newer a state, the more the space occupied by the economic interests in its political life. Having studied well American history, he classes this factor as one of great importance for the relation

61 op.cit., p. 367.
62 op.cit., p. 366.
63 op.cit., p. 366.
between colonies and metropolis, which often maintains only political form around an economically independent content. Besides, this is the reason of customs frontiers creation between metropolises and colonies, or of the friction between the preceding expansion of transport areas and the following with lower pace expansion of states. The fact, however, that Verkehr develops before politics – i.e. the economic-geographical (geopolitical) reality takes place and is perceived before the geostrategic one – does not exclude the case that the apex of historical value of an area or sea precedes their transport value, since the utmost transport value presupposes a series of conditions, principally productivity in all directions, which is not prerequisite property of historical magnitude. Mediterranean’s historical value was greater in antiquity than at the present time, but its transport value nowadays is greater than ever. [64] At this point, we should note that Ratzel compares to a certain extent the two geopolitical pillars, cultural and economic, of the under Professor Ioannis Mazis [65] Greek school of geopolitical analysis.

Apart from its significance for the developing, economic and expansive course of states, Verkehr plays a significant role for their internal organization and cohesion. The developing countries in particular need it constantly for their organization and for the development of each authority. Initially Verkehr unifies politically splintered states, while political unification follows. Ratzel considers the case of Germany – with the innumerable internal customs frontiers and transport obstacles – similar to that of China, which in correspondence to its political splintering was a transport underdeveloped country, as its local sovereigns isolated as much as possible their territory from land, preferring to let transport arteries in border areas get destroyed and to use sea ways instead. [66] This situation was different during Mongolian domination, when Marco Polo faced during his visit in China a really good road network, proof – according to Ratzel – of the close relation between state power and transport infrastructures which is demonstrated better than nowhere in China. [67]

Finally, Ratzel directly associates the importance of Verkehr – and consequently of the Geography of Transports – with the analysis of importance of each state’s territorial width, underlying that the smaller the state, the smaller the organizational significance of Verkehr, becoming minimum in the cases of the smallest states, due to the isolation tactic they choose because of their inability

64 op.cit., p. 359.
65 The other two pillars are the defensive and political one. For the methodology of Geopolitical analysis see Mazis1, p. 140, Mazis3.
66 Ratzel1, p. 358.
67 op.cit., p. 365.
of self-protection. Contrary, the expansion of Natural Space, Human Space and Economic Space of goods production [68] entails immediate increase in Verkehr’s importance. This reaches a peak when it concerns a country, such as Russia, for which the creation of transport arteries does not only means facilitation of goods exchange and people’s moving inland and abroad, (but)...it is a matter of existence, not only from economic, but also from political and military scope. [69], [70]

Without transport arteries, Russia is a colossus whose power is in hypnosis and which cannot even move [71], comments the German geographer, underlining that the opening of big canals and railways were considered in Russia, and abroad, as political actions. He praises at the same time the Russian administrative well-adapting in the new facts, the establishment of separate sections in the Russian Ministry of Transport for the construction of railways and the management of sea ways and of trading powers, as well as the establishment of a separate section of merchant shipping in the Ministry of Finance. He praises even more Tsar Nicholas and the rumours that, facing the initial project of the 700 km long railway line Petersburg-Moscow which had many turning points, he drew a straight line between the two points indicating that the connection should be done in straight line. This line did not only express the vigorous imperatorial will, but something more: the higher, heavy duty that an Empire as Russia has towards Verkehr, comments Ratzel, making distinction between connections of long and connections of short distances. The former ones connect the most important places either inland or on the periphery, while the latter ones carry out local transport. The bigger is a country, the more important are the connections of long distances, since they are necessary for the management of space. Which greater connection could exist now in European Russia than the one between two megalopolises and capitals, the historical capital and the present administrational centre? wonders Ratzel, adding the remark that Petersburg is the biggest marine και commercial city of Baltic Sea and Moscow the biggest inland industrial and commercial city. The trans-Siberian railway is a point of reference and comparison too, since it connects Moscow with Irkutsk, a distance of about 6000 km, without many turning-points.

Similarly, first duty of Austria-Hungary after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina – which did not have railways, not even local roads – was the im-

68 Concerning geographical spaces see Mazis 1 p. 34 - 37.
69 Ratzel1, p. 363.
70 At this point, reference to them is clear: Defensive, Economic, and Political geopolitical pillars. See Mazis 1 p. 140.
71 Ratzel1, p. 363.
provement in connection of the occupied area with the monarchy and secondly with the Adriatic and the Aegean Sea. [72]

3.2. Railways, telecommunications and military roads

3.2.1 Railways
The previous chapter clearly shows the importance given by Ratzel to the railway development, as a means of connection not only between big commercial centres, but also between sea areas.

Observing that the density of the European railway network generally increases from East to West, he attributes the backwardness of Eastern Europe on the one hand to the width of space and on the other hand to the cultural youth (Jugend der Kultur) of habitants, so that the construction of a dense network is not possible. [73]

He substantiates the above remark using elements about the density of the railway network, according to which Russia has 88 km network for every 10000 km2, Siberia 119, Romania 242. N. Europe includes under-populated, therefore transport ing poor areas, such as Finland with 76km and Sweden with 237. Moving towards Central Europe, the density of railway network increases: in Hungary 550 km network/ 10000 km2 ground, in Austria 673. Among the great powers of Europe, Germany presents the highest development in its railway network: 1005 km / km2. Therefore, in Germany’s borders with Russia, the “intensity” of density of the railway network („Spannung“ in der Dichte des Eisenbahnnetzes) is the highest. [74]

Main care of the big powers after the occupation of a new area is, according to Ratzel, the construction of a capable transport network. So, Russia – the wide spaces of which had demonstrated the political necessity for transport infrastructure – immediately after its expansion in Turkmen steppe and the occupation of Gök Tepe and Nerw started constructing a railway. Typical is also the example of Austrians, who entered Bosnia (in 1878) – a country almost without roads until then – and constructed in the occupied area until 1901 a 760 km long railway network. [75]

Commenting on the development of the English railway network, he notes that it clearly shows an expansion of transport areas, through the shortest poss-
sible way in the direction of the great sources of transports. Each company separately is searching for access to large areas of carbon and iron, while the effort of finding ways to England is particularly intense, the success of which is the reason of their economic growth. [76]

The development of railways signals, according to Ratzel, the rise of a new era of great continental commercial arteries construction, which find their politically more important expression in the great trans-continental railways (American railway, trans-Siberian), because of which the too long sea bypasses are reduced. The revival of transport arteries, for a long time inactivate, from Danube to the Aegean and Black Sea, with which the political uplift of Balkan countries is closely associated, is – according to Ratzel – the most eloquent expression of this movement in Europe, having as a result that even Great Britain itself was looking for new terrestrial ways between India–S. China, in order to ensure its relations with the latter, mainly concerning the opium trade, but also to pull it away from the U.S.A.’s influence. [77]

3.2.2. Telecommunications

The most important political attainment of transports is news transfer, mentions Ratzel, analysing the telecommunication and postal standards of areas which he placed within the geographical area of the Eastern Question.

He detects in China a – since centuries existing – postal service, with emissaries, more than 10.000 stations, minimum railway network, but also 23000 km long telegraphic network. This situation corresponds, according to the German geographer, to the particularly close connection between politics and this branch of transport, when the arteries and means of transport are much behind: Telegraphic lines have been created even in those countries where other modern means of transport faced suspicion and negation. So, telegraph preceded all the other European inventions in China, even in the most xenophobic regions, such as the region Unan, where initially only faced habitants’ denial.

He observes the same phenomenon in Persia too, where the telegraphic network precedes all the other arteries and means of transport in the country. Having a length of 7700 km, it is among the most advanced ones in Asiatic countries.

However, he observes that more than 1800 km were administrated by two English companies and he thoroughly analyses the English penetration in Persia’s telegraphic network, mentioning facts according to which the dependent

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76 op.cit., p. 333.
77 op.cit., p. 333.

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on English government *Indo-European Telegraph Department in Persia* possesses the Tehran-Bushir line. The under Persian possession Tehran-Meshed line is administrated by the same company, while the English *Indo-European Telegraph Cy.* possesses the Tehran-Dschufla (Russian borders) line. England and Persia signed in 1901 an agreement about telegraphic connection between Kashan-Bushir, via Yerd, Kirman and Bampur, with the same conditions under which the Tehran-Bushir line was constructed in 1872 by the English. The line, three wires, would be constructed by the government of Persia under English supervision and would be leased by the *Indo-European Telegraph Department*. This agreement was not welcomed by Russia.

Further, Ratzel opines that comparing Indian administration before and after telegraph shows that, once, kings were enthroned and dethroned or empires were conquered without the rest of the world learning much. *Now the relation between Indian government, India Office and Parliament is much closer and soon we will learn about the most important events from India as quickly as from Ireland,* he observes, adding that only telegraph renders possible the current organization of India Office, the distance between vicegerents-administrators and governmental centres during periods of tension, the uneven distribution of power et al.. [79]

### 3.2.3. Military roads

Apart from the advantages mentioned above, the control of nodal points of Verkehr, ensures the control of the roads beginning there. This is the reason for the ambition of countries to occupy such points, which are always politically central points and the loss of which have often led to the loss of entire wars [80].

The development of arterial roads also corresponds to the military needs, since many roads have been constructed exclusively to meet them. Terms *military roads* and *strategic railway* characterize this relation, says the German geographer, noting that in Asia Minor there are some military roads which are used by oxcarts too, but *in general transport vehicles are horses, donkeys and mules* [81].

Therefore, it becomes clear that Ratzel examines and underlines the contribution of Defence to the Security of Transport and Telecommunication networks and infrastructures. This allows us to discover even more common ele-
ments with the analytic frame of four pillars of the mentioned above I.Mazis’ Systemic Geopolitical Analysis.

3.3. The need to support the Ottoman Empire
Considering that Asia Minor in general is an area of passage between East and West, [82] the German geographer attributes the great historical position of Syria, S. Arabia and Asia Minor to their role as conveyors of a politically and culturally effective circulation. For the same reason, he correspondingly attributes to Hebrews great historical value, considering that as neighbours of important arteries of international trade – in the past but nowadays as well – they have played maybe the most active role in the spread of culture. [83], [84]

However, particular position on this road possesses the Ottoman Empire, which is menaced by the shift of old arteries towards India and Suez Canal. Ratzel sees as unique possibility for the survival of the Empire and its economic value the development of road networks in its Asiatic part which extends between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean and urgently needs transports.

The German geographer substantiates his opinion about the geographically important position of Turkey mentioning that:

- all the roads from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean are passing through the Turkish territory or by its side.
- despite the loss of Egypt, the crescent flag waves along the whole East coast of Red Sea.
- the eastern of Port Said access in southeast direction towards Persia, having as starting point Aegean, Bosporus or Euxine Sea, is possible only through Turkish coasts. These areas have, indeed, the greatest Turkish population, while Asia Minor, having 5 million Turkish people in a total of 8-9 million habitants, is the powerful rear-guard of the Turkish race in Asia.

Despite any discussions about the imminent fall of the Turkish Empire (which is traversed by the Eastern railway and the Baghdad railway in a length of 2800 km, both in very fertile areas), its existence is a fact. Therefore, protec-

[82] op.cit., p. 234.
[84] At this point appears, contrary to the stream, a total lack of anti-Semitic attitude, in a period of time during which anti-Semitic views were widespread in Europe and particularly in Germany. The same attitude against Hebrews is also detected in Ratzel’s works.
tion and support of Turkish authorities is – always according to Ratzel – a necessary precondition for the success of all these great projects. He believes that these new transport arteries will balance the disadvantage for Asiatic Turkey caused by the opening of the Suez Canal. This opening had shifted westwards a large part of the long distance transport, which until then was usually carried out through Asia Minor and Syria. The opening of the Suez Canal meant for Syria and Mesopotamia the beginning of a ceaseless regress, which can be treated only with railway connections with Persian Gulf, underlines the German geographer, adding that Turkey will be included among those who fulfilled great modern cultural projects, if it successfully finishes the construction of the railway to Mecca [85].

Attributing, as expected, great importance to the opening of the Suez Canal, Ratzel goes on with a flashback of the situation in the area: Starting from the period of time when the Suez canal was being constructed, he mentions that Red Sea was a Turkish Gulf in its north half, while in its south half there were only vague claims of weak countries. Only Massana belonged to Turkey, the territory of which extended to Idwit in Arabia, opposite the Farisan islands. It was only a narrow strip on the coast – which of course included Mecca and Medina – while it extended approximately to the area above Suakin on the African side. Egypt was then a protected country in a notion stricter than today. Only England – which had already occupied Aden since 1839 – coveted Socotra, without, however, having occupied this island which had a really good position. At the end of 19th century the image is completely different: Turkey has appropriated the whole Arabian coast on the Red Sea to the borders of the expanded English colony in Aden. Yemen is a turbulent province, though firmly occupied by the Turkish Empire. On the African side, the Egyptian coast cannot be really characterized Turkish, despite that the official Turkish occupation on Khevide still exists. Now, however, north of it begins the Italian area of Eritrea, which extends to the politically insecure principedom of Rahaita, next to which lie the French colonies Obok and Tadschurrah, on a bay with exceptional position, and after those the English colony on the northern coast of Somalia and the Italian one on the cape Guardafui. Apart from that, England has settled on the island of Perim, in the entrance of Red Sea. It has also occupied the twin islands in front of the cape Guardafui. Socotra – coveted since many years – finally became English colony in 1886 and, with Aden, Perim and Somalia, are administrated by India, in which they are militarily included. [86]

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85 Ratzel1, p. 333.
86 op.cit., p. 369.
3.4. The dispute for Persia

Having detected the agreement for partition of Russia’s and England’s interests in Persia, he considers reasonable the effort of Russia to undertake the construction of roads and railways in Persia as counterbalance to the English predominance in the sea transports of Persia. [87] At the same time he underlines that the aim of Russia to render Black Sea a Russian sea becomes more and more difficult with the construction of every additional railway line in Asia, since Turkey’s and other powers’ interest of free navigation becomes more and more intense, while Turkey’s military preparation in the countries of S. Propontis is intensified. [88]

The relation between Russia and Persia shows the variety of possibilities to promote political influence using economic means. Initially, Russia favours its trade with Persia using the advantages that the Caspian Sea offers in navigation, subsidizing sugar and cotton textiles exports, establishing Russian banking and communicational institutions in Persia. The mortgage of Persian customs roads for the Russian loan of 1900, with the exception of Gulf and Farsistan ports, allowed a Russian influence on the greatest part of Persian trade, which seemed to scary even the, organized by Belgian clerks, port customs authorities. At the same time there were English protests claiming hindrance of their trade, while Indian merchants too faced a lot of difficulties.

87 op.cit., p. 336.
88 op.cit., p. 333.

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concerning the new route of tea import from India through Quetta - Nuschki to Seistan. [see map no. 2]

Ratzel foresees that a greater part of Persian trade will definitely end under Russian control, since Persians who have commercial transactions with Russia consider as benefit to become vassals of Russians, in order to enjoy protection and advantages. [89]

Map 3: Indian merchants faced many difficulties in the import of Tea through Quetta to the province of Seistan. Historical map of 1856.
Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/persia_afghanistan_1856.jpg

3.5. Suez Canal changes balances in the wider area
Having analysed the value of the Suez Canal in relation to the need for protection of Turkey, Ratzel compares the political value of Bosporus–Suez, referring to Lesseps’ saying [90] (1854) as self-evident. Lesseps had said – surprising the diplomats of that time – that the political importance of Bosporus will be in the shadow of the one of Suez Canal. It is peculiar that this was not discovered earlier, despite that Venetians had perceived it and used all their power to occupy the sea straits, he wondered, clarifying that Bosporus and Suez have in front of them exactly the same seas, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean. The great difference, however, is the fact that behind Bosporus there is only the Black Sea, while behind Suez the Indian Ocean and after it the Pacific. The access to regional seas always constitutes gate to the inland of continental countries. [91]

Ratzel appreciates that the occupation of land between Baltic and Black Sea is for Russia a political advantage of isthmian type, and he refers to the development of railway lines after the opening of Dūna–Beresina–Dnjepr canal:

89 op.cit., p. 358.
90 Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894): French diplomat and engineer. He undertook in 1854 the opening of the Suez Canal, which held from 1859 to 1869. Contrary, his involvement in the construction of Panamas Canal was unsuccessful and resulted in bankruptcy of the offeror company, and his sentence in five years’ imprisonment.
91 RatzelI, p. 498.
where terrain is not suitable for connection through canals, a railway line takes over the connection between the seas. Countries having the same position in reference to an isthmus always had the same function with this of peninsulas in reference to islands. [92] Syria and Egypt are countries of passage between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Through Syria passed the Arabian road, through Egypt the road of Eritreans. So, Bagdadbahn will be one day equal to the Egyptian Suez Canal. There was a time during which Cyprus and Bosporus were the final points of Indo-Mediterranean roads, and those areas – exactly as the countries of passage in relation to peninsulas – were theatres of fighting between the policies of great neighbour powers. Egypt, Assyria, later on Cappadocia, Pergamon, Armenia, even later Venice, France, England were looking for space and influence on Syria. [93]

4. Presentation of F.Ratzel’s analysis: The Eastern Questions

4.1. The Mediterranean Sea subsystem of a European system [94]

Ratzel notes that historical activity does not take place any more exclusively in Central Europe, since it is now unthinkable that wars with so important goals, as in 17ο and 18ο century, could nowadays take place only in Germany, Holland and Hungary. Noting that the view of interdependence between Central Europe and Balkans becomes wider and wider, he attributes to the Mediterranean Sea international significance, not only due to its position on the international transport axis, but also due to:

- its position in the middle of the three known continents of the Old World
- the control of all great European powers – except for Germany – on its coasts and islands and
- the dependence of weak countries of the area on these great powers

During the Greek-Turkish war of 1897, he considers that issues such as the possible reoccupation of Thessaly by Turks, the change of situation in the Aegean sea, the outcome of the Cretan Question and the general turbulence in the Mediterranean Sea will have pan-European and international impact. However, he defines the opening of the Suez Canal as the great cultural event, which gave great geopolitical value to the Mediterranean Sea, creating new

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92 op. cit., p. 465.
93 op. cit., p. 466.
94 Definition of subsystems in the frame of wider systems is also met in pr. Ioannis Mazis’ methodology of geopolitical analysis. See Mazis4, Mazis3.

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terms for sea transports and the possibility of easiest access to the new countries for the great powers: *When transport towards India was looking for Atlantic paths, the Mediterranean Sea was lying aside. But when the routes to India, East Africa, East Asia and Australia were crossed on Suez Canal, the Mediterranean constitutes again prize for the greatest political ambitions.*

### 4.2. The conflict of Great Powers in the Balkans and Mediterranean Sea

Paralleling the position of Russia-Central Europe with that of France, he detects in the Balkans a severe conflict between Russia-England, which had as stake the access of the former to the Mediterranean sea: *Russia approaches the Mediterranean Sea from North, where, looking for free expansion, it hits on England which seeks to block its (Russia’s) free access to the open Mediterranean. Aiming at this, England has made great sacrifices, while at the same time it has convinced other powers to make greater ones. England achieved to render widely plausible the view that “the occupation of Istanbul means world domination and the Crimean war was the apex of this policy. The end of this war meant as well the fall of this policy, the German geographer notes. He also estimates that Russia has totally different motivations, maybe much more temporary than those of the Centro-European powers. So it desires the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire, since the need for concentration is extremely important for it, after a period of expansions.*

Concerning the determination of the Centro-European interests [95] in Balkans, Ratzel accepts Albert Schäffle’s analysis, who foresaw in his book German current and central issues (Deutsche Zeit- und Kernfragen, 1894) the need for:

- isolation of England
- satisfaction of Russia’s natural desires
- effort to render the remnants of the Ottoman Empire free field for common European economic and colonial activity

He also expresses his satisfaction about the attitude of German and Austrian officers during the negotiations about Crete, *which concurred with that of Russians, while it was totally opposite to the English one*, and he observes that German and Austria have the same interests in the Balkans. Furthermore, he estimates that Austria improved its position with the expansion beyond Sava River since, *trouble spots around it, which formerly always threatened with disaster, were wiped out, while the independent and semi-independent Balkan countries constitute a com-

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95 Ratzel10: the term Centro-European interests should be interpreted within the frame of the view about the need to create an economic space as counterbalance to the great empires of that era. The powers which, according to Ratzel, define Mitteleuropa’s fate are Germany, Austria-Hungary and France.
mercial and suitable for transport networks area, the relations with which become more and more close and profitable for Germany and Austria. In the area of Balkans he does not observe any Russian precedence but rather a recession of the trade of England, which used to take advantage of theses countries from sea without any competition.

During this Russian-English conflict, he defines the mission of Central-European countries in the East (relating it with that of France during the flourishing period of Napoleon III) as preservation against Russia and England of the non-European Asia’s interest to maintain the Mediterranean space east of Italy as a large free space for the cultural work of the western countries:

He considers as main geopolitical issue for England the ensuring of at least two ways to India (Nile – Suez) and the colonial control of the areas around the above mentioned arteries, which Russia contests too from North.

According to the above gambles within the frame of the Central Europe–Balkans system, he analyses the geopolitical situation in the Mediterranean Sea and he also defines the purposes of great powers, as well as the situation in the countries of the area. He places on the focal point of his questioning the ability of free navigation in the area, using the words spoken by French Deluns-Montaud during the ceremony for the constitution of an Egyptian committee: The question is nowadays whether an exclusive domination on lands and seas should be in the exclusive interests of a unique people, or whether each culturally advanced people may hope that with cheap agreements it will ensure a place in the sun and it will be able to expand up to the borders of neighbour empires, and finally whether international transport should be equally accessible by all. [96]

4.3. Ratzel’s geopolitical doctrine for the Eastern Mediterranean Sea

Based on the above, Ratzel creates his geopolitical doctrine for the East Mediterranean [97] which could be summed up as follows:

Having as main aim to ensure the commercial roads to the East, the construction of the Suez Canal has given great value to the Eastern Basin of the Mediterranean Sea. Within this frame, he finds in Mediterranean 4 strategic points of passage, in areas where it becomes narrower between the south-European peninsulas and the north-African coasts, i.e. Gibraltar, Malta, Crete and the artificial canal of Suez. [98]

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[97] Ratzel considers Eastern Mediterranean as “metacenter” of the Mediterranean, since France and Spain were not any more great sea powers and trade with India was held now on through Mediterranean.
[98] Concerning modern axes of geopolitical influence see Mazis 2 p. 17 and Mazis 5 p. 28.
Since these three areas are under British occupation, the effort to set Crete under international control is significant and has as obvious aim to deter England’s total control. The significance of Crete is presumed by its position in the centre of the eastern Mediterranean Sea. This position is of great importance for sea transports on the horizontal sea axis, since it controls the entrances to Adriatic and Aegean Sea, as well as Mar di Levante and Port Said. Consequently, he considers Crete [99] much more important than Malta and he attributes to the Gulf of Souda equal importance with that of Kiel for the East Sea.

The domination of England on the way to India, via Suez as well as via Egypt, renders necessary the discovery of alternative continental accesses to the area.

4.4. Geopolitical players and Realpolitik

It is obvious that Ratzel has perceived the complexity which characterizes international relations, recognizing only a few dominating geopolitical players. He conceives international relations as relations of competition between the Great Powers, and considers as secondary the role of some weak countries—satellites. [100] At the same time he describes the relation between core countries and countries satellites. The latter ones subordinate their interests to those of great powers for reasons of survival. So, he considers Russia and England as geographically and historically great Mediterranean powers that lie behind the Greek-Turkish warfare having as ulterior aim to control Crete, Greece and Turkey. [101] He notes that the other powers are involved via those two and because of those two, and he continues demonstrating realism: If the rules of diplomacy allowed it, then the other powers could actually leave for those two the arrangement of the disorder. It is incredibly characteristic, how international conditions govern and paralyse local interests. The Mediterranean Sea does not exist any more for itself, but it is important only as a small part of the world with an incidentally important position. [102]

These views obviously influenced Mackinder and Spykman, who spoke about Heartland and Rimland creating the basic view for the creation of

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99 The Cretan question is at this period of time top problem of the Eastern question and pretext for a conflict on European territory between England–France–Russia and Germany. (Since the former ones supported Cretans’ right to choose their sovereign, while Kaiser Wilhelm II reinforced the uncompromising Turkish position for election of a Turkish national for this post.

100 consideration which straight refers to the classification of Huntington and Cohen

101 Ratzel2, p. 357.

102 op.cit., p. 357.
NATO, which caused as counterbalance the Varsovia agreement. Especially during the second half of 20th century, USA and Soviet Union imposed through these two great military coalitions the rules of geopolitical game in the largest part of the planet, subordinating the regional conflicts or needs to the aims of their bipolar rivalry.

The German geographer also considers that the Centro-European powers do not certainly have only economic motivations as the English press supported, but it is clear that through cultural predominance (Kulturarbeit) they try to gain in Nearer Asia the benefits which correspond to their position. For this reason he considers as self-explanatory Turkey’s calm reaction and Turks’ friendship, whose policy should be praised twice, if it manages to deter the imminent compromise between England and Russia, which could bring greater risks for Germany than a possible alliance between Russia and France.

Within this frame (although he refers with sympathy to the fair patriotic feelings of Greeks, who ask for their national integration through the annexation of Crete (too) to Greece), he subordinates the Cretan question to the geopolitical necessity of that period, i.e. the control of the island by the great powers of that period of time.

Finally, Ratzel considers state – which is expressed through its political and intellectual elite – as the only responsible to draw and implement foreign policy and as absolutely capable of analysing and taking decisions. Considering (in his work presented here and in other works as well [103]) that people are not at all capable of planning foreign policy, he attempts a clear distinction between people – elite / authorities.

4.5. Economic – cultural parameters

Attributing great importance to economic activity, Ratzel approves England’s policy in Mediterranean, which, as everywhere, is based on powerful economic interests that concern citizens and enjoy their understanding. This gives to English policy an air of brutal health and determination. Contrary to England, which trades in the Mediterranean sea products having value more than 5 billion Marks annually, he notes – mentioning economic elements – a general lag of France concerning the economic activity in the area, [104] which he attrib-

103 Ratzel9.
104 Ratzel12, p. 356 “…external trade with Turkey falls short comparing with that of England, however its is a little bit greater comparing with Austria, while French ships which traversed Suez in 1895 were 8 times fewer that the English ones, and the number of the under German flag ships was greater than the French ones. Even in the countries paying tribute to Turkey, Bulgaria and Egypt, France falls much short comparing with

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utes to the fact that its Mediterranean policy vacillates between religious, political and economic motivations and does not have duration: this is the biggest error of France against England and Russia.

The German geographer makes a distinction between English economism and French cultural expansion and detects a difference in the motivations of exercising international policy between these two countries: The Mediterranean policy of France is not dominated by the vigorousness of economic interests. However, these continue to be important, but its commercial relations and investments are not so developed as the English ones, the German ones and partly the Austrian ones.

He characterises reasonable the irritation caused in France when it became known that the French trade in Crete falls short of the Austrian, German, English, Turkish, Greek and Italian, according to extracts of the annual report of Canea’s Consul General, published in Figaro, which brought to light that France has lost important ground in this field too. He notes that in 1895 the exports of France and Austria were almost at the same level (while the exports of Germany towards this area were sextupled during the period 1890 – 1895 and tripled towards Greece) and he criticises – as too optimistic due to the powerful English competition – the former ambassador Neumann’s prediction, in the book Modern Egypt (Das Moderne Ägypten, 1893), that time passing Germany will occupy the first position in the main Egyptian markets.

Having evaluated, already since 1878, [105] the economic parameter as condition for a people’s general progress capable to drag along other fields of activity too, this time he refers to it as prerequisite of power and control on seas from coasts and islands, and he gives the example of England, which gets on its feet with difficulty because it possesses economic omnipotence and still tries to obtain more land. As anti–example he refers to the fall of ancient Athens, which collapsed due to its limited geographical base, trying to become world power, and he foresees the same fortune for the policies of the Great Idea, due to the lack of an organised expansion of Greek people.

Apart from the economic parameters, which inarguably play dominant role, he analyses cultural parameters making clear a priori that cultural issues (Kulturfragen) must be separated from political events. Perceiving any political arrangements often as superficial balancing and reassurance, he indicates that via cultural work (which must be ceaseless either during wars or during diplomatic negotiations) they can change absolutely tacitly so many things, so that in the

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105 Ratzel9, p.187.

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next conflict will be brought to the fore totally different powers, either new or older ones, which earlier had demonstrated no activity.

He considers that the position of Turks and Greeks in the Mediterranean is not going to be definitely judged neither by the war successes of the former ones nor by the defeats of the latter ones, since for the peoples of the East is usual phenomenon a defeated in war people to be compensated by the triumphs of its peaceful attainments. He finally concludes that in Asia Greeks has no other choice but to culturally dominate, because no people has ever achieved to impose its domination for a long period of time on culturally advanced peoples.

4.5. Greece

In a particularly extensive report on Greece, Ratzel analyses in an impressive way almost all aspects of the juncture: economy, culture, army, education, regional development. From his analytic view does not escape even the (diachronic) problem of corruption.

Greece has made progress in all fields, in which its miserable government has not interfered, [106] Ratzel supports with a really aggressive tone, and then he mentions the economic developments of Greeks, among which he places its merchant fleet with 312000 tones (162 steamships), one of the biggest in Mediterranean. Despite the national bankruptcy and the fall in the price of raisins, its external trade is greater than that of Serbia and Bulgaria. He observes that agricultural methods are improved, giving as example Greek wine and the reduction of cereal imports, while he refers to the internationally known success of Greek merchants abroad.

In intellectual level, he considers that Greece has preserved something of its old teachers’ aptitudes. He evaluates basic education as more than necessary good, in comparison to the rest state structures. Athens remains intellectual centre not only of the whole Greece, but of Hellenism in general, while splendid institutions and eminent academics contribute as well to the uppermost – but politically insecure – position of Athens. Calling it small Paris, he notes that it has no relation with the simplicity of province, where, apart from primary schools, there is a lack of good secondary schools and he reaches the pathetic conclusion that an educational proletariat paves the way in contemporary Greece, as in the past, for political corruption. Not contenting himself with the newspaper reporters’ impressions, he goes back to old books of Fallmerayer, Ritter, Roß, Steub, in order to compare the impressions of a decisively philhellenic generation with the ones of his generation. It is strange, according to Ratzel, that the efficiency

106 Ratzel2, p. 366.

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of the – hard working and receiving low wages – Greek man is very high, but it becomes lower and lower, as social class rises.

After that, he distinguishes a cultural difference between Greeks of water-side towns and habitants of the hard-scrabble mountains and inland. He considers the latter ones so oriental, that, with only few exceptions, they do not accept culture: Greeks of inland are not Europeans and do not want to be. Impulsively they are afraid of Western influence, which will be dangerous for their simple, isolated life, the geographer notes, considering that the highlander farmers consciously destroyed roads, made by politicians, in an effort (with roads accessible only by animals) to reduce transport, which blends nations and smoothes differences. He predicts, at the same time, that western spirit will overpower their infantile views and superstitions and he observes that the convergence between Europe and Athens, Patras, etc is as quick as the political progress, electoral falsifications, lies of newspapers, briberies, flatteries. Within this frame, he perceives that a Greece of European spirit was created, making the faults of a debutante in a culture, living in cities and gradually lacking understanding for the old, truly working inland Greece. This gap is not new. It was decisive for international history, when it separated Athens from Boeotia and Corinth from Achaia.

He detects the same situation in the army: capable soldiers badly trained and led. He considers as advantage of Eastern nations – mainly Turks – their valour, but at the same time he speaks negatively about Levantines, [107] semi-European concerning blood and training. He considers them as the worst among the innumerable national and religious types of the East, characteristics which, along with the causing splits national and religious jealousy, are the keystone on which Turkish power is firmly based for the present.

He completely sets aside the old discussions about miscegenation, stressing that old and modern Greeks are not a pure race, since nobody denies anymore their Albanian, Slavic and Roman elements. He also notes as main subject the fact that the 2.2 billion habitants of the kingdom consider themselves Greek and that, apart from its habitants, other 4 million people in Turkey (6 million according to Greek sources) consider Greece as their spiritual centre. This is for Ratzel a great advantage of Greece against Turkey, and mainly against its unhesitating rivals, Armenians. Therefore he considers as absolutely understandable political plan the effort of Greeks from Asia Minor to enjoy Greek influence as protection against Turkish oppression.

Further, Ratzel examines Greek ambitions for territorial expansion, foreseeing that next aim of Greece should be the annexation of those areas of Epirus and Macedonia populated with Greeks. Concerning Macedonia, he considers 107 Habitants of the Mediterranean countries eastern of Italy.
that only the area of Bistritsa can be included in Greece, as Thessalonica presents no analogy with the contested against Koutsovlachs areas of Epirus. He refers of course to the Turkish reaction too, noting that Albania is so important for Turks in Europe as is Asia Minor. Therefore, they are going neither to quit Giannena, nor to allow Greece to expand up to the gates of Thessalonica. These are, after the loss of East Romilia, Turks’ best positions in Europe.

He estimates that in Istanbul and Asia Minor the position of the now dominating race of Greeks has significantly changed over the last years, but domination on Armenians is not going to bring any political benefits for them due to their economic development, as the temptation for Greeks will be greater to be promoted in positions which Armenians possessed until now as politically weak-minded servants of Turkish domination, a process from which Greeks may only morally loose. The lack of home-country renders them politically suspect, as Armenian people for which no great European power was really interested. Co-estimating the massive adherence in Islam which ensures for Turkey ceaseless influx of new powers, and the arrival of Syrians, Levantines and Europeans – mainly Germans – in order to cover possible deficiencies, he concludes that in Asia too Greeks have no other choice but to continue peaceful work, in which they are more skilful, and to forget any political utopias.

Co-estimating also that Greeks’ hopes for possible Hellenization of Bulgarians in the South of Balkans went up in smoke, he concludes that Greece should quit any effort of territorial expansion and be consoled by the cases of Switzerland and Belgium, which became great without needing square kilometres of land, but with internal work.

Referring, finally, to its ecclesiastic issues, he motivates Greeks to quit their ecclesiastic policy, so that the hatred of Slav coreligionists does not some day overflow. Their future is in tranquil work, says the German geographer, estimating that in this way they will finally surpass Turkey, since no nation has ever achieved to impose its domination for a long period of time on culturally advanced nations. Turks seem that they are not going to progress. On this ground Greeks coincide with the other cultural powers, for which they constitute – due to their position and structure of their country – connection with the East. In the international perception of history, ancient Greece was the linchpin between ancient civilizations of the East and modern nations of the West. The same role, although not so important – time passing – modern Greece, which has oriental characteristics, has to play.
4.6. Cyprus
Contrary to the current geopolitical reality, it seems that Cyprus was not – according to the Ratzel’s view – nodal geopolitical point at about the end of 19th century.

He characterizes its occupation multiply difficult, from economic and administrative scope, with 4 million Marks incomings, from which 1.8 million are paid to Sultan. England has to pay 5-6.000.000 Marks for administrative expenses, while at the same time population protests for high taxation and very few money is expended for infrastructure (improvement of water system, roads and ports). Furthermore, Ratzel estimates that the island presents too small economic development under English administration, so that old Gladstone would possibly dare to propose either the concession of the island to Greece or the establishment of an independent state, excluding in any case possible return of it to the intolerable Turks.

Evoking other administration officers too, who talked about the small value of Cyprus, he refers to Hartcourt, who (on 5/2/1895) had characterised as mistake possible acquisition of Cyprus. The always repeated self-praising argument about the ostensible liberation of the island from Sultan’s tyranny, but also that possible return would be a mistake, seems to be addressed to Englishmen’s feeling, but it practically aims to gain the sympathy of Greeks, as formerly of Italians, comments Ratzel, considering this sympathy as one of great political value, especially in areas where peoples have not yet politically matured. In Cyprus, however, he does not detect such sympathies, since Englishmen face there hatred, which diminishes the value of the island. Principal factor of this diminished value is considered, however, by Ratzel Cyprus’ position in front of the Syrian- Cilician corner, away from the big European–Indian international road, which is always of maximum importance for England. Its wild coasts do not render it ideal neither as a coal station, he insists, evoking again English officers, among which Dilke, who had characterised Cyprus a while after its acquisition as an island without any military value. Finally, he does not either foresee the possibility of a long-term development, with the Gulf of Alexandretta serving as terminus of the Indo–Syrian railway, appreciating that this cannot be ascertained even nowadays – due to its position next to Crete.

4.7. Syria
Syria used to be always, according to Ratzel, one of the most important countries of passage between Europe and Asia for all trading peoples and he predicts that the growth of railway networks will give back to terrestrial commercial roads their lost – due to sea transports – value.
The lack of big ports in Syria downgrades it in comparison to Crete. However, the development of Beirut with the doubling of population and with the imports and exports fluctuating around 60 millions Marks, show the potency of Syria, which is gradually coming in the spotlight as supplier of silk. Furthermore, he attributes great economic virtues to the 2 millions of its – actually Semitic – population, 5% of which are Turks. Contrary, he evaluates negatively Syrians’ political and human virtues, the internal controversies of which (such as the conflicts between Maronites and Druzes, both Christian populations) facilitates Turks’ domination.

Acting according to the theorem that our traditions is our power in the East, France gives great importance in gaining the sympathy of Christians in Syria, of which only Druzes cause to England a constant, but attempered with gifts, insecurity. French have preceded silently through their cultural attainments, the most important of which are the port and the water network of Beirut, while they may undertake the greatest part of Syrian railway network expansion.

Ratzel considers that a connection with Jerusalem, Haifa and Dead Sea in the South and with Adana in the North will give back to Syria its old international position between Europe and India, not of course monopolistically, but as one of the sea arteries into which the old streams of movement to the East are split. Adding to Syria’s current value the value of holy places and its good future international position, he evaluates it as equal to Egypt.

Finally, Ratzel refers to the colonial suitability of Syria and shows the way in which he perceives colonialism: not as a violent displacement of indigenous populations but as a process of occupying free space. So, after noting that there is no other free space, he does propose (in disappointment of many of his critics) military solutions, but – what else? – economic and commercial expansion: The most practical and most possible solution is in this case too only the participation in trade and economic life of the country, i.e. competition initially with France and then with England.

4.8. Psychology of peoples – The role of Press
Extremely important are Ratzel’s remarks referring to the formation of public opinion and to the role of Press. Evoking the applied psychology of peoples, he considers as political duty the careful observation of a people’s behaviour during a conflict, since this gives us elements about its sympathies and antipathies, as well as about the degree of political consciousness.

First of all, he detects quite a lot of noticeable elements concerning Germans’ attitude vis-à-vis to the Greek-Turkish collision and he discovers philhellenic
feelings only among some classic philologists and fanatic Christians, who almost never express themselves publicly. Referring – about the same subject – to the attitude of press, he describes how the press of Munich hurried to admonish the well-known unpredictable politician Sepp, when in one of his speeches he included some cordial words about Greeks, with the argument that it is not proper to defend people contemning international law. Among the big newspapers, only the independent of Frankfurt occasionally dedicated some words about Greece, having the courage to blame Germans for their tactlesness against Greeks. Furthermore, he criticizes big newspapers – which supposedly fight for throne and religion – for their attitude, as they seem to have forgotten religion in this case, since this is a conflict between Islam and Christianity. He appreciates that centrist newspapers showed greater sympathy for this aspect of the battle than protestant Press, although without special ardour. He also refers to independent magazines, such as «Grenzboten», [108] which have published articles aiming to temper disapprobation against Greeks, without being heard though: It seems that not many people perceived that this is not about just matters of international law or bankruptcies, but great cultural issues, which we conceive purely humanistically, continues German geographer his unexpected critique, blaming newspapers, which talk about German international policy, for scornful attitude towards serious cultural issues of the East as if their news editors were minor police officers, who only dreamt of law violations and penalties.

From the position of a passionate patriot he discovers that against Greece there was something like bureaucratic rage, plenty, aimless and superficial scoff, with no understanding for the gentle motivations of a rich in victims national rebellion, no glimmer of sympathy for casualties and frustrations. Wearing, however, the mantle of Realpolitik, he subordinates the above remark to German ambitions and purposes, noting that international policy is not fulfilled with bungles, and a nation unreasonably provoking hatred against itself does not act in a clever way. Farther, he makes an inspired distinction, between official diplomacy and relations between countries: Our diplomacy may have million reasons that bring it by the side of Turkey, and our nation may approve of this policy, even if it does not thoroughly understand it. This, however, does not mean that the whole public opinion should share this view.

Noting that the continuous coincidence of a people’s views with its diplomacy is a risk, Ratzel blames the attempt of newspapers to become attractive to their readership, popularizing a realistic policy (Realpolitik), for which even the most tough diplomat would be ashamed and he warns that popularity of violence is a dangerous sign of the times. Consequently, he believes that this policy

108 A magazine, main contributor of which was Ratzel.
of German and Austrian Press is ineffective and short-sighted, considering that the Centro-European powers have no reason to be anti-Greek as they wait for the great economic expeditions in the East. He concludes with an admirable realism in the ideal analogy: *In order to pick the fruits of our diplomats’ policy e.g. in Asia Minor, friendship with Turks and non-enmity with Greeks are equally important.*

Concerning the policy vis-à-vis to other peoples, he detects a major lag of Germany comparing to England and France, which do everything in order to gain the sympathy of small and weak countries. He considers as planned and intentional action the aid offered to Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, Serbians and Rumanians, which appeared as a spontaneous burst of ruthless humanity and Christian feelings. He apprehends that *high policy goes against this sentimental policy of newspapers and public assemblies.* Especially in England he detects much greater connection and understanding between those who speak, write and act politically, so that, in all big issues different public statements are actuated by the same instinct of England’s real interests, clearly implying an agreement between editors and state in big issues.

Furthermore, he finds out an organized communicative policy from the part of England and France, as they proceed in philhellenic statements of low intensity, which offer them the ability of total tutelage of Greece. *What is left, however, is the grateful friendship of Greek people, which would be offered twice as much, if this people became one day master of itself, seeking protection from these friends,* notes Ratzel, appreciating that, if most of these statements are proved insincere or totally ineffective as time passes, then there will be left widespread the view about English and French politeness. He also considers as an advantage of Italians the fact that they were not involved with all their powers in the battle, as they were not in the unpleasant position to joust or change gunshots with their friends Greeks.

*How unreasonable are peoples!* will he exclaim. Drawing in fact a separating line between folk and elite, he will add that they are so unreasonable, that everyone who does not co-estimate this absurdity does not follow right policy. We want to shout at every people: Leave the state trace its policy and trace yours. If you follow the right way, you will finally meet each other at the same destination.

Contrary to Germany, Ratzel finally considers France unrivalled in gaining the sympathy of masses and in expanding, due to this sympathy, to Latin peoples. So it is seeking (not without success) for new investments in the – not ancestrally but psychically – relatives, Slavs and Greeks, politically and self-consciously based on its treasures of art and literature, on Catholicism and the

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enchantment of Paris. Contrary, he considers the attracting power of England apolitical but not at all negligible, since *Anglo-Saxons have all over the world a great number of supporters and people who are willing to believe in them*. He also underlines, evoking Goethe’s similar critique, that Anglo-mania among high German circles exercised from time to time great political influence and he attacks Englishmen for the brute cruelty of official England’s political exploitation, which misleads with a veil, with which a plethora of religious and charitable speeches of official England wrap up this policy. To support the above statements he mentions the case of fighting off slave trade, due to which England gained great sympathy and at the same time economic and political influence.

5. Conclusions
According to what was mentioned above, it becomes clear that Ratzel defines Eastern question with geographical broadness (i.e. extending to Far East and Australia), as a conflict between great powers on an economically virgin and politically unripe land.

Without focusing on the description of physical-geographical parameters, the German geographer demonstrates an inter-scientific approach in his analysis, as he highlights economic, cultural, demographic, historical facts, massive psychology, even the role of Press, in an effort to define the other – apart from the self-evident territorial one – Poles of International Power [109]. These poles compose the *wider geographical view*, [110] as precondition for the redistribution of state power in international level.

Ratzel neither classifies these parameters univocally according to their importance, nor does he define as most mighty the historical subject which is the most potent factor of power. He, contrary, tries to investigate all the factors of power in a relation of interdependence, even if this is realized without systematic and clear way. However, from the above presented texts, as well as from his other works, we reach the safe conclusion, that a “primacy of economy” dominates his thought, expressed through Verkehr and trade (which are considered, under certain conditions, as self-existent sources of power [111]), the expansive intensity of which creates conditions for state expansion. *Trade and Verkehr very much precede politics* [112], he will note in 1896, underlining that there are no clear limits in distinguishing politics from the first two factors of

109 See Mazis1, p. 145.
110 Ratzel1: p.112.
111 Ratzel4: p.45.
112 The same classification is also met in the geopolitical analysis system of the – under pr. Ioannis Mazis – Greek geopolitical school.
power, and he expresses at the same time his opinion that peaceful Verkehr constitutes precondition for states’ expansion. [113] All these should, however, be conceived under two parameters, which demonstrate the – epistemologically – dominant role of the economic-geographical analytic tool:

- the conditions of terrestrial and sea expansion differ radically, since, in the case of sea, trade and flag necessarily go together, due to the increased need for armed protection [114]
- the common economic interests are confined in the homogenization of areas, without having abilities of further expansion, which only consistent national subjects can achieve [115]

Important factor for a people’s domination and expansion is also culture [116], which can cause deep cuts in its abilities and in the alteration of power realignments in a conflict, while politics follow, imposing mainly incidental and superficial arrangements. Economic vigour and cultural level of a people (or state) are indissolubly interrelated. So, the German geographer gives culture (due to his age-long occupation with Anthropogeography and Ethnology) a central position in the system of his beliefs. In this system, technological de-


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113 Ratzel8, p.101.
114 Ratzel3, p. 45.
115 Op.cit., p. 44. He characteristically refers to the example of German Customs Union, which contributed to the creation of a unified state, but did not manage to expand it with colonies.
116 Distinction between economy and culture is indistinguishable in Ratzel’s work, as these two concepts occasionally keep up with or overlap each other. According to F. Braudel, [Grammar of civilizations, p.p. 54 - 55] the use of term “civilization” not with the sense of intellectual, but with the sense of material development is the later on predominating sense of the term “civilization” in Germany, which meant a total of technical and practical knowledge and skills, which allow human to act on nature, while the term “culture” referred to normative principles, values, ideals, i.e. spirit. [64] We should, certainly, underline that a few years earlier, trying to define “nature-oriented peoples” (Naturvolk) Ratzel [1882, p. 5, 6] defines culture in two dimensions: “It must be underlined with the most outright way that the term Naturvölker does not include anything anthropological, anything anatomic-physiological, but it is a clearly ethnographic, cultural term. Nature-oriented peoples (Naturvölker) are culturally poor peoples; they may be of any race (Rasse) and have any degree of natural equipment”. He relates cultural differences with each nation’s qualities, but also from an incidental factor (!) and he explicitly opines that “race (Rasse) is not related to cultural achievements”. He considers language, religion, political and economic institutions as four natural categories, in which “all activities and material goods (Dinge) which are carriers or results of culture may be grouped”. However, due to religious faithfulness, he notes that “Base of all is mainly Reason (Vernunft) and they constitute together humanity’s common intellectual possession (Allgemeingut), with no difference between superior and inferior”.

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Development is an important factor of evaluation, as well as an element of medium/long-term imposition on technologically poorer peoples. Within this frame we can interpret the particularly discreet report (with the occasion of Greek-Turkish war) about the parameter of Christian-Islamic conflict, which shows that the German geographer takes into consideration the cultural difference between East-West, but he does not in any case consider it as cause, only means (tool) of carrying out any warfare.

Although Ratzel’s view about culture is a wide, self-inclusive and often contradictorily interpreted subject-matter of discussion, it is worth noticing the characterization of the Suez Canal as a cultural event. Through this Ratzel interprets culture [117] as an ability to surpass the difficulties caused by the earth’s terrain (island spaces, mountains, etc), which is up to a point decisive for a people’s or a nation’s activity. Surpassing of these natural obstacles, development of navigation and railways that reduce distances [118] are new geographical facts of that period of time, which produce a new cosmopolitism [119], absolutely compatible with mature Ratzel’s philosophical background, who defined as Verkehr’s high mission, neither transportation of commodities nor reduction of distances, but the transformation of humanity, in the sense of rapprochement (not coincidence, since differences are necessary) of all its members. [120]

In the atmosphere of that age and based on the mentioned above primacy of economy, he adopts the theory of an economically unified Mitteleuropa, which he considers as almost the only solution. He also appreciates as possible (after the turbulence of continuous wars which tormented Europe during the whole 19th century) the perspective of change in European borders, because there the adjacencies as well as the borders were almost everywhere in a condition of rigidity, which hinders changes. [121] Within this frame, he supports the creation of a free – under the domination of central powers – economic space, which he places in the area of Balkans-Mediterranean-Asia Minor.

Furthermore, he openly supports the continental descent of Germany to the hot seas and the perspective of terrestrial connection between Hamburg and Persian Gulf, as a vehicle promoting pan-Germanic interests in the wider area. Within this frame he emphatically notes the commercial and transport value of

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117 Ratzel3.
118 Ratzel3.
119 The term “cosmopolitism” was used at that period of time corresponding to nowadays’ globalization.
120 Ratzel7, p. 403.
121 Ratzell, p. 232.
the Balkan countries, as areas of passage of the renowned Bagdadbahn. Recognising, however, that great powers have more historical rights in the area of Near East, he looks more to an economic competition and a final arrangement of the influence zones, than to a war. Despite the fact that he considers as dangerous the climate of warfare of that period of time, he clearly supports the perspective of a German-Russian continental alliance as counterbalance to the English sea expansionism.

The administration, however, of the – mainly continental – space between Asia Minor and India – the sea ways of access to which are under total English control – demands terrestrial means of space organising, which is no other than railway. He predicts that the growth of railways will render the continental areas important and that the Eastern Mediterranean will gain in value with every step of progress in the Far East. So, with the pretext of change in ownership of Suez Canal, he motivates Germans, [122] to find a terrestrial access to India. Of course, he does not content himself with supporting the construction of the Bagdadbahn, but he also analyses the existent situation in the area, indicating the need to construct many and qualitative transport arteries, vehicular, railway, even telegraphic, as preconditions of space management.

The perception about systematic development in terrestrial means (with railway as peak) will be expressed more completed a little bit later (1900). Then he will refute the – for four centuries –dominant political view about the predominance of sea powers, considering that new great powers should be forceful in the sea, as well as on land. This is because the strong contrast between sea and continental powers decreases, since continental powers have admitted that armies by themselves cannot respond to the duties of a great power. The new sea powers are all powerful on land. [123] Within this frame, he will try to substantiate as advantage of terrestrial powers against the sea ones the control of capable continental space, which will serve as points of departure and arrival of ships, [124] but also as points of control on seas, particularly on narrow sea ways. [125]

Apart from the above, in an obvious effort to give reasons for the pro-Turkish attitude (of the official German policy as well as his), he distinguishes the diplomatic actions of the state machinery from the cultural sympathies or anti-sympathies between peoples and he considers as main priority the national in-

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122 The Suez Canal was financed by Egyptians (44%) and French, but English controlled it since 1895, as the regent of Egypt Ishmael had been forced in 1895, due to economic crisis, to sell his percentages to English for the extremely small amount of 4 million sterling pounds from Rothschild bank.

123 Ratzel3.

124 Ratzel6, p. 512.

125 Ratzel4, p. 31.
terest, which indicates certain policies, even against the “rights” of minor powers. Obviously influenced by Bismarck’s foreign policy, he describes a complicated mosaic of possible alliances and relations, able – according to his opinion – to create capable space of growth for Germany and Austria in the area of Balkans, as well as in the wider Asiatic space.

At the same time he underlines (with an obvious – also typical of ultranationalists’ of that period of time – tone of elitism) the inability of masses to contribute to the planning of national policy. This view dominates his thought since 1878, when, commenting on the ability of influence of intellectual personalities on a nation, he slightingly notes that the rays of intellectual sun barely reach the masses. Only a slight layer follows its example, perceives its adventures. Below there is a layer which only perceives the important periods of time and which is intellectually one generation behind. Apart from these, everything is dark and empty. [126]

In conclusion, we find out an absolute concurrence between Ratzel’s views and the ultra-national but internationally popular views of his age, concerning the need for active participation of Germany in the international race of power (re)distribution having the East as geographical background. It is, however, obvious that he believed in the version of economic and cultural penetration, contrary to the militaristic expansionist views of his age, which supported violent and radical solutions.

Finally, we must note that Ratzel’s early death (1904) came in the rise of an era which radically altered the parameters of geopolitical game: in the era of oil (oil energy competition and the evolving energy dependence of industrial countries on black gold), which caused a – maintaining till our days – dramatic increase of rivalry between economically mighty powers on the territory of Middle East. Although Ratzel did not, unfortunately, manage to co-estimate in his analyses the new facts, daring (but not temerarious, according to what mentioned above and the rest of his work) would be the prediction of a possible Ratzel doctrine, based on the oil energy dependence of 20th century: Flag follows oil…

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126 Ratzel, p. 186

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