

Disciplinary Boundaries and Methodological Issues of Teaching Geopolitics in Turkey

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Abstract

This study aims to present a critical portrayal of teaching geopolitics at Turkish universities by assessing both undergraduate and graduate levels of Political Science and International Relations (IR) curricula. Geopolitical analysis has gone through several phases and traditions by conceiving space as a crucial element for representing world politics. In addition to interstate rivalries, geopolitics also refers to many conflicts and rivalries within an intrastate framework in the context of multiple territorial scales. While geopolitics seems to be falsely perceived as something equal to a state-centric and hard realist academic subfield under a strong military tutelage in Turkey, it lacks a broad multi-level analysis, as well as geographical and historical reasoning. In this study, I propose to consider cartography, territoriality, and geopolitical representations, which form the basis of contemporary geopolitical analysis. The article evaluates weekly schedules, learning outcomes, content, and objectives of the courses available on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) information packages on university websites. Based on a qualitative case study, it eventually aims to improve the methodological character of geopolitics teaching, indirectly influencing the level and quality of geopolitics in Turkey.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Political Science and International Relations (IR) Curricula, Teaching, Methodology, Turkey.

1. Introduction

Geopolitics has become a very popular, fuzzy, and even clichéd concept in some ways as we talk about the “geopolitics of taste,” “geopolitics of gastronomy,” or “geopolitics of football” in our daily lives.¹ Primarily, geopolitics is concerned with issues of influence and authority over geographical areas. It employs geographical structures to make sense of global events. Therefore, it studies the relationship between geography and politics, and it reflects geographical frames to make sense of world affairs.² As a field of study, geopolitics has no agreed “home” field as it is located somewhere between geography, IR, and other social sciences such as sociology and economy. In geopolitics, we study international politics but keep a geographical vision, and a territorial approach, which is the main difference between IR and geopolitics.

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¹ Yves Lacoste, *Géopolitique. La longue histoire d'aujourd'hui* [Geopolitics. Today's long story] (Paris: Larousse, 2009), 9.

² Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics. A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

When using the word “geopolitics,” we usually discuss IR-related issues. However, geopolitics also represents a method of context analysis based on a geographical and historical approach. In this paper, I approach geopolitics as a reliable comprehensive method of analyzing international relations. Geographical reasoning shows itself at different levels of analysis and on the intersections of multiple spatial assemblies, while historical reasoning integrates the past and the present.³ According to French geographer Yves Lacoste, geopolitics is especially concerned with the “*study of power rivalries over a territory (...); and the capacity of a power to project itself outside this territory.*”⁴ Congruently, this study aims to present a critical portrayal of teaching geopolitics at Turkish universities by assessing both undergraduate and graduate levels of Political Science and IR curricula. As a main research question, geopolitics remains, above all, a method. More specifically, the paper deals with how the teaching of geopolitics in Turkey represents an exemplary case in which geopolitics is not apprehended from a methodological point of view at all.

This paper relies on the *case study methodology*, which is one of the verification strategies in social sciences based on an empirical research strategy.⁵ The case study further promotes the use of document analysis for data collection.⁶ Even if the case study does not make it possible to generalize easily, it promotes a more in-depth analysis of a given phenomenon.⁷ It also represents one of the techniques of qualitative analysis in the social sciences.⁸ It is the most widely used data-gathering instrument and verification strategy.⁹ This study collected and classified the data of ECTS packages and online documents listed on the websites of Turkish universities. From ECTS data as objective measurement instruments, I argue that they represent a certain reliability since they have an exemplary capacity to faithfully measure a phenomenon.¹⁰ As a researcher, I consulted these documents, from which I extracted factual information or opinions that will be used to support my argument in this work.¹¹

In the following section, I first assess how and in which contexts the conceptual framework of geopolitics has developed as a distinct field of study. Then, in the third section, I analyze geopolitics as a critical method in terms of representations, spatial levels of analysis, and cartography. In the final section, I depict the current situation of geopolitics teaching in Turkey by evaluating the courses available on the ECTS information packages on Turkish university websites. In this context, the article examines the qualitative ECTS data (course name, purpose and content, and 14-week program information, if any) including the courses related to geopolitics in many “Political Science and IR/IR” departments in Turkey.

2. Geopolitics as a disciplinary framework: Main elements and distinctions

As a mainstream approach, geopolitics is concerned with how geographical factors such as territories, people, location, and natural resources influence political outcomes. As Colin

³ Barbara Loyer, *Géopolitique. Méthodes et Concepts* [Geopolitics. Methods and Concepts] (Paris: Armand Colin, 2019), 19.

⁴ Lacoste, *Géopolitique* [Geopolitics], 9.

⁵ Jarol B. Manheim and Richard C. Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis, Research Methods in Political Science*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).

⁶ Gordon Mace and François Petry, “Cinquième étape. Choisir la stratégie de vérification [Fifth step. Choose the verification strategy],” in *Guide d'élaboration d'un projet de recherche* [Guide to developing a research project] (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000), 80.

⁷ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1989).

⁸ Jean-Pierre Deslauriers, *Recherche qualitative. Guide pratique* [Qualitative research. Practical Guide] (Montréal: McGraw-Hill, 1991), 59-78.

⁹ Mace and Petry, *Guide d'élaboration*, [Guide to developing], 90.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

Gray outlines, one can refer to the central idea of *inescapable geography*.¹² Geography seems to be *out there*, physically, as environment or terrain. Geopolitics refers to the study of power over space and territory relationships in the past, present, and future. Besides that, it studies the relationship among politics, geography, demography, and economics. A realist and mainstream understanding of geopolitics reflects a study of geopolitics with a different perspective that is concerned with how geographical factors, such as territory, population, strategic location, and natural resource endowments, as modified by economics and technology, affect state relations and the struggle for global dominance. As a result, geopolitics as a profession only demonstrates the state's ability to control space and territory, as well as the importance of individual states' foreign policies and international political ties.

However, contemporary power analysis can no longer be limited to inter-state relations. A conceptual analysis casts doubt on the one-dimensional approach of geopolitics, which offers only a narrow articulation of power analysis solely at the international level.¹³ An interdisciplinary framework that focuses on IR, geography, and history, and that represents a comprehensive and rather inclusive interpretation of geopolitics seems to be an alternative to the above-mentioned classical vision of geopolitics focused on realist/neorealist accounts of IR.¹⁴ If geography seems to be *out there*, it is also *within us*, as an imagined spatial relationship for critical geographers such as Yves Lacoste gathered in the French Institute of Geopolitics (Paris VIII University) and *Hérodote* Review, founded in 1976. This intellectual stance on geopolitics was mainly developed in France, where geopolitical reasoning was considered something equal to Nazi expansionism, totalitarianism, and political extremism after the Second World War.¹⁵ If geopolitics was perceived by many as a Hitlerian concept,¹⁶ its successful re-appearance seems to be parallel with the development of democratic regimes, the idea of self-determination for peoples, and the influence of modern media.¹⁷

The idea of the French school of geopolitics emerges from the necessity to defend a new conception of geopolitics and distinguish it from geography.¹⁸ While geopolitics consists of all aspects of political life, both internal and external, it also deals with all of the power rivalries in the territories.¹⁹ Also, geography represents a unique and major tool to analyze these rivalries. So, everything is geopolitical in the sense that the term "geopolitics" gains quite a different and even radical meaning for Lacoste.²⁰ As political analysis should be found on geographical reasoning, geopolitics represents the "spatial analysis of political phenomena,"²¹ and there are rivalries not only between states, but also between political movements or secret armed groups.²² Regarding the control and domination of large or small areas, Lacoste and his colleagues were among the first to realize that geopolitics is above all

¹² See Colin S. Gray, "Inescapable geography." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 22: 2-3 (1999): 161-177.

¹³ See further information: Saul B. Cohen, *Geopolitics, The Geography of International Relations* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Colin Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁴ Øyvind Østerud, "The Uses and Abuses of Geopolitics." *Journal of Peace Research* 25 2 (1988): 191-199.

¹⁵ See further information: Paul Claval, "Hérodote and the French Left," in *Geopolitical Traditions. A century of geopolitical thought*, ed. Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson (New York: Routledge, 2000), 239; Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson, preface to *Geopolitical Traditions. A century of geopolitical thought*, ed. Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson (New York: Routledge, 2000), xiv.

¹⁶ Yves Lacoste, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique* [Dictionary of Geopolitics] (Paris: Flammarion, 1993), 7.

¹⁷ Claval, "Hérodote and," 242.

¹⁸ Yves Lacoste, *La géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* [Geography is used, first of all, to wage war] (Paris: La Découverte, 2012 [1976]), 46.

¹⁹ See Béatrice Giblin, "La géopolitique: un raisonnement géographique d'avant-garde," [Geopolitics: avant-garde geographical reasoning] *Hérodote* 146-147 (2012): 3-13.

²⁰ V. D. Mamadouh, "Geopolitics in the nineties: one flag, many meanings." *GeoJournal* 46 4 (1998): 239.

²¹ Østerud, "The Uses and," 197.

²² Lacoste, *Géopolitique. La longue histoire* [Geopolitics. Today's long], 8.

a political and strategic kind of knowledge.²³

Accordingly, one can especially highlight the complexity of geopolitical cases. This represents a situation depending on the diversity of our complex representation of a geopolitical phenomenon.²⁴ It would be crucial to analyze multiple spatial linguistic, political, religious, and demographic ensembles together with their subjective characteristics. Hence, to better understand geopolitical complexity, one must accept that we live in a subjective environment and that the majority of the geopolitical conflicts are internal; that is, within states, rather than *out there* in interstate relations.²⁵ The contemporary idea of “Internal Geopolitics” formulated by Béatrice Giblin is closely linked to the methodology of “geopolitical representations,” and it can be perceived as a tool to understand interactions and perceptions between social actors at both internal and external levels of analysis.²⁶

The concept of “Internal Geopolitics” developed in this respect has redefined the boundaries of geopolitical conflicts and power rivalries in the context of subnational and local perspectives.²⁷ Here, one may investigate multiple links between geopolitics and democracy.²⁸ It was at the end of the USSR (1991) that the use of the word “geopolitics” began to spread. Where there is a decline in authoritarianism, multiple situations can be more and more subject to geopolitical analysis. Democracy is a term that covers contradictory representations based on a given territory.²⁹ For this, democracy reflects an ideal, and it is, therefore, a geopolitical representation and an *idea*. It would be crucial to understand why some people, groups, and parties impose their ideas in some places and times while others are discarded.³⁰

In addition, the term “geopolitics” has resurfaced to designate “antagonisms less ideological than territorial” over time.³¹ At this point, Lacoste points out: “*The term geopolitics came out of the shadows at the time of the Vietnam-Cambodia war in 1979. This conflict stunned public opinion which does not understand how two ‘communist brothers’, united against American imperialism, could go to war only for one territory.*”³² Therefore, the war started between these two communist neighbors due to the desire of each of the two countries to control part of the Mekong Delta. In other words, the scope of geopolitical issues, shadowed by the ideological conflicts between the two blocs during the Cold War, expanded in terms of both the subject and the actors with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain and the disintegration of the Soviet Union.³³

Lacoste began to emphasize that politics and geography affect each other mutually.³⁴ From this, we can think about the relationship between geopolitics and geostrategy, which seem to be used *interchangeably*. The strategy uses battles by determining the location and the most appropriate time to affect the result. Put in a mainstream fashion, geostrategy is to

²³ Dodds, *Geopolitics. A Very*, 48.

²⁴ Lacoste, *Géopolitique. La longue histoire* [Geopolitics. Today’s long], 3.

²⁵ Béatrice Giblin, “Géopolitique interne et analyse électorale,” [Internal geopolitics and electoral analysis] *Hérodote* 146-147 (2012): 71-89.

²⁶ Lacoste, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique* [Dictionary of Geopolitics], 3.

²⁷ See Philippe Subra, “La géopolitique, une ou plurielle? Place, enjeux et outils d’une géopolitique locale,” [Geopolitics, one or plural? Place, issues and tools of local geopolitics] *Hérodote* 146-147 (2012): 45-70.

²⁸ Béatrice Giblin, “Editorial,” *Hérodote* 3 130 (2008): 13.

²⁹ Lacoste, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique* [Dictionary of Geopolitics], 23.

³⁰ Loyer, *Géopolitique. Méthodes* [Geopolitics. Methods].

³¹ Lacoste, *La géographie, ça sert*. [Geography is used].

³² *Ibid.*, 43-44.

³³ Pascal Boniface, *La Géopolitique* [Geopolitics] (Paris: Eyrolles, 2017), 31.

³⁴ Frédéric Encel, *Comprendre la géopolitique* [Understanding geopolitics] (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2011), 62-63.

create a strategy based on geographical data.³⁵ Both physical and human geography have an impact on the political realm; so, we may conceive political geography as the combination of these two “primary geographies.” At the same time, one should be aware of *geographical determinism*: the geographical environment has an impact on geopolitics and cartography because geography presents threats together with opportunities to countries. To be clear, when making foreign policy and security decisions, geographical criteria should not be the *only* consideration.

Before we go on to analyze geopolitics as a “method” in the following section, it will be necessary here to briefly focus on the distinctions between political geography, geopolitics, and geostrategy. These concepts are often defined in contradictory ways. We can think about how we consider “space” to establish an operational distinction between these concepts. Space can be successively considered as a *framework*, *issue*, or *theater*. Space, nevertheless, seems to be a good avenue for reflection to determine the specificity and the links existing between these disciplines.³⁶ Here, one can identify the contours existing between *geopolitics* (1), *political geography* (2), and *strategy* (3) by depending on physical factors.

For Lacoste, political geography is only a simple step in the formulation of geopolitics.³⁷ While the former focuses on geographical events and provides political explanations for them, the latter focuses on political events, provides them with a geographical explanation, and examines the geographical aspects of these events.³⁸ Political geography considers space as a *framework*; geopolitics considers space as an *issue*; and geostrategy considers space as a *theater*.³⁹ First, space as a framework designates that political geography is based on the description of the global political framework. This framework or setting has been formed with territories, lines, and poles. The most classic political territories are the states. The other political territories are of three types: sub-state territories, formed by regions or other types of administrative entities; supra-state territories, made up of meetings of states in international governmental organizations (IGOs) with a global or regional vocation; and finally, transnational territories. This final category can include linguistic and religious territories, and homogeneous territories in terms of the level of development.⁴⁰ The political poles *par excellence* are the capitals (state or regional), the decision-making centers such as permanent headquarters of IGOs, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or companies that organize and manage space. However, the study of territories, lines, and political poles is not an *end* in itself. Rather, we can say that it constitutes a first step in bringing together the geographical elements necessary for geopolitical analysis.

Secondly, considering space as an issue, the dynamic approach to political territories is the primary element of any geopolitical investigation. However, it must also include, as implied by the notion of stake, the existence of identifiable actors, each developing territorial representations and strategies. If political geography describes the political framework at a given point in time, geopolitics is first concerned with describing the spatial evolution of this framework. Indeed, geopolitics is a part of political geography. It represents an

³⁵ Gray, “Inescapable geography”.

³⁶ Stéphane Rosière, “Géographie politique, géopolitique et géostratégie: distinctions opératoires,” [Political geography, geopolitics and geostrategy: operational distinctions] *L'information géographique* 65 1 (2001): 35.

³⁷ Lacoste, *La géographie, ça sert*. [Geography is used].

³⁸ Ladis K. D. Kristof, “The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 49 3 (1959): 269-282.

³⁹ Rosière, “Géographie politique,” [Political geography], 36.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

eminently psychological part in its broader sense, especially about the particular question of the reciprocal images that political units maintain with each other.⁴¹ The main reason why the actors must be put in the center is to think of power not only as an instrument of domination, but also as a complex phenomenon made of rivalries and supervision of the population.⁴² Hence, actors who fight and clash for domination or control of the territory play key geopolitical roles.⁴³ Among these actors, the most classical one is undoubtedly the state (which can therefore be considered both an object of political geography and a subject of geopolitics), but we should also consider the “peoples” (a general concept bringing together all forms of organized and differentiated human groups, from the tribe to the nation), as well as the “political, economic and military structures.”

On this basis, each actor develops its territorial representations. This is a conception of space and its political framework. Territorial representation can be akin to land claims. Each actor in a hierarchy of territories can distinguish a central, fundamental space and less important peripheries. To achieve its objectives, an actor deploys a strategy. The notion of strategy is understood here as the means to achieve its ends and not as a specific military development. The notion of strategy has long been developed almost exclusively in the military sphere.⁴⁴ Any actor in a geopolitical situation develops a strategy; this can be not only a civil or political strategy, but also an economic and/or military one.⁴⁵

Finally comes the idea of space as a theater, which is the place of confrontation between the armed forces.⁴⁶ Strategists use the term “theater of operations” to more precisely signify the space where military confrontation takes place; the place where a tactic is implemented. The military distinguishes between strategy, which considers military problems on a local, regional, or global scale, and tactics, which envisage them on a large scale (tactics being the local application of a strategy). Thus, as Rosière states, space considered as a theater should therefore be the object of “Geotactics.”⁴⁷ Geostrategy could also be defined as the study of the geographical parameters of the strategy, emphasizing the spatial dimension. Furthermore, geostrategy is, like geopolitics, a dynamic description in which one can highlight territories, lines, and strategic poles. Strategy cannot be limited to the military domain, but it also integrates economics or politics into the analysis.⁴⁸

3. Geopolitics as a *method*: Representations, maps, and spatial levels of analysis

While geopolitics seems to be a concept that naturally intertwines with IR, it also appears as a broad method based on a historical and geographical approach. In this respect, geopolitics aims to examine contemporary power conflicts and rivalries over regions.⁴⁹ Specifically, it can be conceived as a method that contributes to the discipline of IR within the scope of foreign policy studies and regional studies. Most importantly, it refers to geographical knowledge, which itself is a method indeed. This method is a geographical know-how that

⁴¹ Thierry de Montbrial, *Géographie politique* [Political geography] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), 20.

⁴² Lacoste, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique* [Dictionary of Geopolitics], 2.

⁴³ Rosière, “Géographie politique,” [Political geography], 37-38.

⁴⁴ Montbrial de, *Géographie politique* [Political geography], 21.

⁴⁵ Rosière, “Géographie politique,” [Political geography], 39-40.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Alix Desforges, Barbara Loyer, Jérémie Rocques, Joséphine Boucher, Julie Mathelin and Pierre Verluise. “Existe-t-il une méthode géopolitique?” [Is there a geopolitical method?] *Diploweb.com: la revue géopolitique* (2019, 19 October), accessed March 30, 2022.

aims to know how to think and represent spatial configurations. Hence, geopolitics reflects a test method of reality, based on a geographical and historical approach to understanding how power, peace, prosperity, and freedom, are exerted in concrete territories in precise temporal conjunctures.⁵⁰ If geopolitics is knowledge derived from geography, this reasoning is based first on a spatialized approach to phenomena.⁵¹

Geopolitics remains a method of analysis capable of considering the complexity based on multidisciplinary analyses in several scales, spaces, and times.⁵² The geopolitical method depends on the combination of an ensemble of political, economic, geographical, demographic, ethnological, or sociological factors. Accordingly, geopolitical situations are different from one issue to another, from one case study to another. Elsewhere, geopolitics presents a broad field of study ranging from local and national to regional and international scales.⁵³ In addition to the interstate rivalries, geopolitics also indicates some issues that take place within an intrastate framework. Thus, the aim of geopolitics is the conflicts and rivalries of contemporary power enrolled in territories.

Representation as the primary conceptual and methodological tool in geopolitical thinking stands at the center of any geopolitical analysis trying to answer the following question: *who speaks?* According to Lacoste, geographical representations have a huge impact on the analysis of rivalries for territory.⁵⁴ As each player in the territory has a more or less subjective meaning of the territory for itself, any geopolitical analysis should decrypt both geographical and historical reasoning. Therefore, as stated by Giblin, there is no geopolitics without geography, which is a motto for *Lacostian geopolitics*.⁵⁵ In this sense, the geopolitical is grounded in the geographical.⁵⁶ At this point, Lacoste defines representation as “*the set of ideas and collective perceptions of a political, religious or other nature which animate social groups, and which structure their vision of the World.*”⁵⁷ The geopolitical method is based on the idea that the contradictory representations are systematically described, and that the rationality and logic of the different actors are explained. On this ground, geopolitics is interested in the causes of conflict and power rivalries based on the territories.⁵⁸

Moreover, the representational perspective of geopolitics aims to understand spatial ensembles formed by diverse social and historical categories, from which symbols and slogans of a given political project follow, such as icons, maps, and “major goals.”⁵⁹ From this perspective, geopolitics indicates a global method of analysis for concrete social and political situations covering local, national, and international levels, along with political discourses and their cartographical representations. Additionally, Michel Foucher states that geopolitics is “*a comprehensive method of analyzing geographically concrete socio-political situations viewed in terms of their location and the usual representations which describe them.*”⁶⁰ According to Lacoste, who comprehends geopolitics as a method above all in the

⁵⁰ Loyer, *Géopolitique. Méthodes* [Geopolitics. Methods].

⁵¹ Giblin, “La géopolitique: un raisonnement géographique,” [Geopolitics: avant-garde geographical reasoning].

⁵² Loyer, *Géopolitique. Méthodes* [Geopolitics. Methods], 29.

⁵³ Lacoste, *Géopolitique. La longue histoire* [Geopolitics. Today's long], 26.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Giblin, “Editorial,” 4.

⁵⁶ Claval, “Hérodote and,” 249.

⁵⁷ Lacoste, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique* [Dictionary of Geopolitics], 3.

⁵⁸ Loyer, *Géopolitique. Méthodes* [Geopolitics. Methods].

⁵⁹ Giblin, “La géopolitique: un raisonnement géographique,” [Geopolitics: avant-garde geographical reasoning].

⁶⁰ Michel Foucher, *Fronts et frontières. Un tour du monde géopolitique* [Fronts and borders. A geopolitical world tour] (Paris: Fayard, 1991).

context of different levels of geographical analysis (cities, regions, or nations), it is a concept that examines the competition for power and exerts influence at both the regional and social level within the framework of the control of large or small territories.⁶¹

In this direction, geopolitics, which can be conceived as a kind of methodology that studies power rivalries in different parts of the world, also represents an approach that goes beyond the states.⁶² Contrary to the widely conceived one-dimensional and deductive version of geopolitics (especially related to realist/neorealist accounts of IR), representational geopolitics involves a rather broad study of power rivalries on territories that may contain an interstate conflict for sovereignty by diverse actors or a geographical influence in a given zone, or even internal and regional situations within a state.⁶³ The concept of representation is a collective perception based on a geographical-historical identity that occurs as a result of long periods (usually centuries) and in a specific region, and it is all about the ideas that shape different social groups and their visions of the world.⁶⁴ This representational approach is not only a reference for social construction over the diverse identities in a given geography (i.e., a city, a province, a state, or a region or union), but also an analytical tool to understand interactions and perceptions between social actors composed of states, political parties, armies or rebel armed forces, diverse social groups, individuals, researchers, and so on. Similarly, the French school of geopolitics differentiates itself from post-structuralist and critical geopolitics mainly based on discourse analysis, deconstruction of discourses, and critical investigation of the meaning of space and politics influenced by French philosophers Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault.⁶⁵

Representational geopolitics designates a way of seeing, conceiving, and judging events as a whole, positioning oneself in terms of geopolitical postures and helping to make decisions. All these actions have, therefore, a foundation that interests ideological and religious expressions while going beyond them to be inspired by the collective imaginations that are the essence of the notion of representation in this geopolitical setting. Hence, the representational approach is “*a selective combination of images used in diverse categories of social and historical area*,” as asserted by Foucher.⁶⁶ Therefore, geopolitical actors and social imaginations are inseparable; a geopolitical representation does not only mean territorial issues and objects of rivalry, but also collective cognitive perceptions and imaginations over territories.⁶⁷ Representations emerge over time and may encompass cultural, historical, ethnic, and geographical attributes among the actors concerning these territorial issues. The study of the actors, the understanding of power relations in societies or institutions, is at the heart of geopolitical reasoning, and the description of the actors’ strategies is to be placed in their geopolitical contexts.⁶⁸

From this point of view, one may also ask the following questions: *Are borders important in the context of globalization? Is there a world beyond borders? Or can there be a sort of*

⁶¹ Yves Lacoste, *Géopolitique de la Méditerranée* [Geopolitics of the Mediterranean] (Paris: Armand Colin, 2009), 5.

⁶² Lacoste, *Géopolitique. La longue histoire* [Geopolitics. Today’s long], 25.

⁶³ Barbara Loyer, “Retour sur les publications de l’équipe d’Hérodote et l’analyse des problèmes géopolitiques en France, une ambition citoyenne,” [Return to the publications of Hérodote’s team and the analysis of geopolitical problems in France, a civic ambition] *Hérodote* 4 135 (2009): 198-204.

⁶⁴ Encel, *Comprendre la géopolitique* [Understanding geopolitics], 65-66.

⁶⁵ See further information: Mamadouh, “Geopolitics in the nineties”; Alexander B. Murphy et al, “Is there a politics to geopolitics?” *Progress in Human Geography* 28 5 (2004): 619-640.

⁶⁶ Foucher, *Fronts et frontières*, [Fronts and borders], 4.

⁶⁷ Lacoste, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique* [Dictionary of Geopolitics], 4.

⁶⁸ Giblin, “La géopolitique: un raisonnement géographique,” [Geopolitics: avant-garde geographical reasoning].

“return of borders”?⁶⁹ It would be crucial to be aware of a world without borders developed by the discourse on globalization. The “obsession with borders” becomes even more evident and important.⁷⁰ For French geopoliticians such as Pascal Boniface and Yves Lacoste, borders never actually disappeared.⁷¹ At this point, Alexandre Defay asks whether borders necessarily have to be *material*.⁷² Boundaries can also be intellectual. Or do they not matter in geopolitics? With this in mind, there is room for the analysis of *intangible borders*. As Foucher outlines, borders form the front’s most extreme and thinnest line.

A map is a *means* and an *area*. The idea of the map is also based on a representation. It is also an idea, and there is a ruling thought behind it.⁷³ Mapping, or cartography, remains a tool for marking a territory or all the representations of this territory. Essentially, mapping remains very subjective.⁷⁴ Each country has its map that shows an “objective truth.” The maps of France or Germany seem to have existed for “centuries,” and they look like the *truth*. At this level, one can note a certain fluctuation between objectivity and subjectivity. For this reason, maps are not at all neutral.⁷⁵ They are only a picture of reality and not an objective truth, so they are largely subjective. Maps are not frozen things; instead, they are dynamic. Therefore, they impact political decisions and leaders’ choices.⁷⁶ In this context, maps are rich and valuable elements in the geopolitical imagination. On a map, it is possible to guess and understand the choices of the mapmaker: *What is he/she talking about? What is at stake with this map?*

Power rivalries in territories affect not only the territory itself, but also the populations living there. Lacoste puts forth that these rivalries can be explained not only by the stake represented by this territory, but also by the representations of the protagonists.⁷⁷ Therefore, territories do have double meanings. First, they refer to physical space with relief, climate, cities, and countries. But territories also represent mentally-constructed spaces.⁷⁸ In this sense, there is neither *geopolitical law*, nor *geopolitical theorization*. Instead, geopolitical case studies or monographs are much more valuable to grasp a specific geopolitical situation. In short, geopolitics, whatever the pretext, is not a tool in the service of colonialism, imperialism, or expansionism. On the contrary, it is knowledge and, more importantly, a method. A geopolitical study seeks to establish how many distinct perspectives exist rather than what the *true position* is. Therefore, a representation is not only a reflection on a territory or a phenomenon that takes place there, but also the result of a certain reasoning that associates the elements of the *real* to build what appears as a *truth* to be defended. This is how Lacoste apprehends geopolitics, as “*a way of thinking about terrestrial space and the struggles that take place there.*”⁷⁹ In other words, geopolitics is not a *scientific theory*, nor a *theoretical approach*, but it denotes, above all, a set of concepts related to methodology.⁸⁰

As geographical reasoning with different spatial levels of analysis (intersection of multiple

⁶⁹ Michel Foucher, *Le Retour des Frontières* [The Return of Borders] (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2020).

⁷⁰ Michel Foucher, *L’Obsession des frontières* [Obsession with borders] (Paris: Perrin, 2012).

⁷¹ Boniface, *La Géopolitique* [Geopolitics]; Lacoste, *Géopolitique. La longue histoire* [Geopolitics. Today’s long].

⁷² Alexandre Defay, *Jeopolitik* [Geopolitics] (Ankara: Dost Yayinevi, 2005), 50.

⁷³ Foucher, *Fronts et frontières* [Fronts and borders].

⁷⁴ Defay, *Jeopolitik* [Geopolitics].

⁷⁵ Lacoste, *Géopolitique. La longue histoire* [Geopolitics. Today’s long].

⁷⁶ Giblin, “La géopolitique: un raisonnement géographique,” [Geopolitics: avant-garde geographical reasoning].

⁷⁷ Lacoste, *Dictionnaire de Géopolitique* [Dictionary of Geopolitics], 25-26.

⁷⁸ Loyer, *Géopolitique. Méthodes* [Geopolitics. Methods], 45.

⁷⁹ Lacoste, *Géopolitique. La longue histoire* [Geopolitics. Today’s long], 8.

⁸⁰ Estelle Menard, Léa Gobin and Selma Mihoubi, “Entretien avec Yves Lacoste: Qu’est-ce que la géopolitique?” [Interview with Yves Lacoste: What is geopolitics?] *Diploweb.com: la revue géopolitique*, (2018, October 4), accessed March 20, 2022.

ensembles of space) is needed for a comprehensive geopolitical framework, historical reasoning is also crucial in that analysts should integrate different periods (both past and present) affecting geopolitical representations of different protagonists in a given territory.⁸¹ In addition, Foucher indicates that geopolitics refers to schools of thought, discourses, and constructions generally accompanied by cartographical images.⁸² Time and space association will then be fundamental, because as Giblin suggests, historical reasoning is central to the geopolitical research agenda.⁸³ Besides, geopolitical reasoning has several spatial levels of analysis depending on the geographical framework. Much attention is paid to the precise intersections of spatial sets, whether physical or human, as well as changes in levels of analysis, to understand how a local situation is also influenced by phenomena perceptible at broader levels of analysis: regional, national, international, and, in some cases, global.

4. To teach or not to teach geopolitics? Findings from Turkey

In this final section, I present a comprehensive portrayal of teaching geopolitics in Turkish universities by assessing Political Science and IR curricula at both undergraduate and graduate levels. For this, I analyzed the available qualitative ECTS data (course name, objective and content, sources, and if any, 14-week detailed program information in the Bologna Information System), including the courses related to geopolitics in the “Political Science and IR/IR” departments in Turkey. Regarding the teaching of geopolitics in Turkey, ECTS contents were analyzed qualitatively as a practical tool in this study as part of the classification and processing of data.⁸⁴ From this point, the qualitative analysis represented a structured exercise in logically relating categories of data. ECTS stands as the only relevant source to study the current situation on teaching of geopolitics in Turkey, though the course names related to geopolitics only represent a *clue* as to the approach taken in the courses. It should also be noted here that the ECTS information packages of many universities are still not up-to-date, and there are recurrent problems with accessing updated course catalogs, which constitutes the main limitation of this research at this level.

We can state that “Geopolitics”/“Political Geography” courses are offered at various levels in more than 120 undergraduate and graduate programs entitled “Political Science and IR” and/or “IR” at the 80 universities in Turkey. Overall, “Political Science and IR” and IR departments in 52 universities deal with the conceptual and theoretical aspects of geopolitics. Table 1 below shows the courses that can be grouped into this first type. Courses given in Turkish are presented with their English equivalents in parentheses, and also with “/” for some courses taught both in Turkish and English. Here, it should be underlined that there are multiple ways to refer to the concept of geopolitics in Turkish, as can be noticed in the variety of course names such as “Jeopolitike/Jeopolitiğe giriş” (Introduction to Geopolitics), “Uluslararası Politikada Jeopolitika” (Geopolitics in International Politics) or “Jeopolitika Esasları” (Fundamentals of Geopolitics). The widely inconsistent use of both “Jeopolitik” and “Jeopolitika” in Turkish, illustrates the *linguistic cacophony* of Turkish terminology regarding the field.

⁸¹ Lacoste, *Géopolitique. La longue histoire* [Geopolitics. Today's long].

⁸² Foucher, *Fronts et frontières* [Fronts and borders].

⁸³ Giblin, “La géopolitique: un raisonnement géographique,” [Geopolitics: avant-garde geographical reasoning].

⁸⁴ Jean-Louis Loubet Del Bayle, *Introduction aux méthodes en sciences sociales* [Introduction to social science methods] (Toulouse: Privat, 1986), 124-157; Manheim and Rich, *Empirical Political Analysis*, 245-270.

Table 1 – Geopolitics courses taught from a conceptual approach

University	Course Name	Degree
Işık	“Jeopolitik ve Jeostratejinin Dinamikleri” [Geopolitics and Dynamics of Geostrategy]	Undergraduate
Süleyman Demirel	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics] “Jeopolitik ve Strateji” [Geopolitics and Geostrategy] “Kimlik, İletişim ve Jeopolitik” [Identity, Communication and Geopolitics]	Undergraduate Master Doctorate
Tekirdağ Namık Kemal	“Siyasi Coğrafya [Jeopolitik]” [Political Geography-Geopolitics] “Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate Graduate
Trakya	“Çağdaş Jeopolitika” [Contemporary Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Mersin	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli	“Jeopolitika”/ “Geopolitics”	Undergraduate
Osmaniye Korkut Ata	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	“Political Geography”	Undergraduate
Sakarya	“Political Geography”	Undergraduate
Kastamonu	“Jeopolitik-Jeostrateji” [Geopolitics-Geostrategy]	Undergraduate
Kırıkkale	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Kırklareli	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
İstanbul Medeniyet	“Jeopolitik ve Uluslararası Siyaset”/ “Geopolitics and International Politics”	Undergraduate
İstanbul (İktisat fak.)	“Jeopolitik teoriler ve analizi” [Geopolitical Theories and their analysis] “Eleştirel jeopolitik” [Critical Geopolitics]	Master Doctorate
Marmara (SBF)	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Doctorate
Muğla Sıtkı Koçman	“Jeopolitik teoriler ve analizi” [Geopolitical Theories and their analysis]	Master
Başkent	“Jeopolitik ve Strateji” [Geopolitics and Strategy]	Master
İstanbul Gelişim	“Jeopolitik Yaklaşımlar”/“Geopolitical Approaches”	Undergraduate
İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate and Master
Üsküdar	“Küresel Siyasette Jeopolitik yaklaşımlar” [Geopolitical approaches in Global Politics]	Master
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Gümüşhane	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam	“Siyasi Coğrafya” [Political Geography]	Master
Boğaziçi	Political Geography	Undergraduate
Hakkari	“Siyasi Coğrafya” [Political Geography]	Undergraduate
Yeditepe	“Géopolitique du monde contemporain” [Geopolitics on the contemporary world] “Géopolitique” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate Master
Atılım	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Yalova	“Geopolitics”/“Jeopolitik”	Undergraduate
Karabük	“Siyasi Coğrafya ve Jeopolitik” [Political Geography and Geopolitics]; “Political Geography and Geopolitics”	Undergraduate
Çukurova	“Jeopolitika” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Antalya Bilim	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Çankaya	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Kafkas	“Uluslararası İlişkilerde Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics in International Relations]	Undergraduate
Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal	“Geopolitical Theories”	Undergraduate
Erciyes	“Jeopolitika” [Geopolitics] “Siyasal Coğrafya” [Political Geography]	Undergraduate Undergraduate and Master

Eskişehir Osmangazi	“Geopolitics”	Undergraduate
Altınbaş	“Siyasi Coğrafya” [Political Geography]	Undergraduate
Avrasya	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Çağ	“Klasik ve Modern Jeopolitik Kuramlar” [Classical and Modern Geopolitical Theories]	Master
İstanbul Gedik	“Political Geography”	Master
İstanbul	“Siyasal Coğrafya” [Political Geography]	Undergraduate
Batman	“Jeopolitiğe giriş” [Introduction to Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
İstanbul Rumeli	“Jeopolitik ve Jeostrateji” [Geopolitics and Geostrategy]	Undergraduate
Özyeğin	“Political Geography”	Undergraduate
Bitlis Eren	“Jeopolitika Esasları” [Fundamentals of Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
İstinye	Introduction to Geopolitics	Undergraduate
TOBB	“Jeopolitik Düşüncenin Evrimi” [Evolution of the Geopolitical Thought]	Master
Akdeniz	“Jeopolitik” [Geopolitics]	Master
İnönü	“Jeopolitik ve Güvenlik” [Geopolitics and Security]	Undergraduate
Ibn Haldun	“Grand Strategy and Geopolitics”	Undergraduate
Çankırı Karatekin	“Uluslararası Politikada Jeopolitika” [Geopolitics in International Politics]	Undergraduate
İstanbul Bilgi	“Siyasi Coğrafya” [Political Geography]	Undergraduate

Considering the ECTS contents of most of these conceptual courses, it can be said that they do not reflect a contemporary and pluralistic understanding of geopolitics based on the analysis of representations in the previous section. Most of the above-mentioned courses lack a broad multi-level analysis consisting of geographical and historical reasoning. What geopolitics means methodologically in these conceptual courses is a matter that is completely denied. For this reason, the lack of methodological background for the majority of the courses causes conceptual confusion. In this framework, the content of a given geopolitics course based on a geographical and historical method is often replaced with course content shaped by “geopolitical theories.” At this point, the title of “theory” in some geopolitics courses is notable. Although not in the title, most of the conceptual courses on geopolitics in Turkey have a large share of “geopolitical theories” in the 14-week course plan. The main reason for this can be expressed as the confusion between method and theory in IR education in Turkey.

Another key reason why the teaching of geopolitics does not generally include a methodological perspective is that the courses cannot go beyond the *state-centered* dimension mainly characterized by national/international power analysis or foreign policy issues. For instance, geopolitics as a concept descriptively points to many perceptions in the context of sovereignty, border, homeland, security, and national/international strategy. In geopolitics courses taught from a conceptual approach, geopolitics is represented rather as a “sub-branch of international politics,” and is widely discussed in this respect. In this framework, some of the courses resemble “diplomatic history” or “history of IR” courses more in terms of content. The main reason for this is that the *state-centered* perspective dominates the teaching process and does not enable a methodological examination of geopolitics based on various levels of analysis.

From a conceptual point of view, when the syllabi of these 63 courses are classified, it can be stated that there is *conceptual confusion* in the field of IR, where the concepts of geopolitics and political geography are used in an interchangeable way in Turkey. There are such amalgamated relations between security and strategy studies, foreign policy, and

geopolitical approaches in the Turkish IR domain. Furthermore, the main disciplinary boundaries between geopolitics, political geography, and security studies seem to be largely blurred in the context of geopolitics teaching in Turkey. The majority of these “conceptual” courses mostly reflect the one-dimensional and deductive version of geopolitics based on *international* power analysis, neglecting the other spatial levels of analysis in geopolitics.

Accordingly, while regional/international security themes may be dominant in some of these conceptual courses, geopolitics is treated as an equivalent field to security, foreign policy, and strategy. The reason for this is that, with the effect of the realist/neorealist perspective that dominates the IR field, Turkey’s geopolitical situation and geographical location affect the courses and almost narrow the field of study of geopolitics. Contrary to these problematic tendencies in conceptual courses dominated by “geopolitical theories” and/or security and foreign policy-based understandings, geopolitics is handled as a *method* at only 6 universities, including courses with mostly methodological elements. These courses are offered at Özyeğin, Çukurova, Yeditepe, İstanbul Gelişim, Başkent, and Sakarya universities.

Another important point that should be emphasized here is that the map and cartography methods, which are important in geopolitical studies, are explained to the students in very few of the courses listed above. The concepts such as “representation,” “methodology,” “map/mapping,” or “cartography” do not generally appear throughout the long list of geopolitics courses offered in Turkey. Representations, maps, and spatial levels of analysis do not generally constitute relevant methodological references in the teaching of geopolitics in Turkey. Though so many courses appear to be conceptual or even theoretical, they seem to lack a broad methodological background. This explains the growing importance of the representational perspective of geopolitics for Turkish IR. For instance, it should be noted that except for a few examples such as Yeditepe University (“Cartography for Social Sciences I-II”), cartography methods in the social sciences, and thus Political Science and IR, are not covered in geopolitics teaching at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

On the other hand, it can be seen that some of the courses related to geopolitics focus on various regions (Eurasia, the Mediterranean, Black Sea, Latin America, the Middle East, Caucasia, Africa, or Asia-Pacific) and some specific countries or demographic areas (Russia, China, Turkey/Turkish world, or Iran) on the axis of regional studies and foreign policy. In Turkey, 27 universities offer courses on geopolitics that will fall into this category (see Table 2). Parallel to the main issues in the conceptual courses, one can note that an approach in the context of regional/international politics and great powers is emphasized instead of the methodological dimension of geopolitics. Nevertheless, the existence of special geopolitics courses on Russia, Iran, and China is noteworthy. At this point, the lack of courses such as European or North American geopolitics, or more specifically, “*US Geopolitics*,” “*The Geopolitics of Germany*,” “*The Geopolitics of the UK*,” or “*The Geopolitics of France*” within the framework of Western and Transatlantic relations is a point to be considered. Within the scope of the courses in this second category, *Eurasian region* and *Eurasianism* come to the forefront rather than Europe and America, with a perspective centered around Turkey and its neighbors. Nine of the 33 courses in this category are related to Eurasia.

Table 2 – Geopolitics courses taught from a regional perspective

University	Course Name	Degree
Kadir Has	“Avrasya’nın güvenliği ve jeopolitiği” [Security and Geopolitics of Eurasia] “Avrasya’nın jeopolitiği” [Geopolitics of Eurasia]	Undergraduate Doctorate
Yalova	“Eurasian Geopolitics”/“Avrasya Jeopolitiği”	Doctorate
Karabük	“İran ve bölge jeopolitiği”/“Iran and regional geopolitics”	Undergraduate
Kırklareli	“Avrasya Jeopolitiği” [Eurasian Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Maltepe	“Ortadoğu’nun jeopolitiği ve Jeokültürü” [Middle East Geopolitics and Geoculture]	Master
Ankara	“Geopolitics of Turkish World”	Undergraduate
Bandırma 17 Eylül	“Akdeniz’de jeopolitik ve güvenlik” [Geopolitics and Security in the Mediterranean]	Master
Bitlis Eren	“Ortadoğu Jeopolitiği” [Middle East Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
Giresun	“Güncel Karadeniz jeopolitiği” [Current Black Sea Geopolitics]; “Akdeniz Jeopolitiği ve güvenliği” [Mediterranean Geopolitics and Security]	Undergraduate
Bursa Uludağ	“Asya-Pasifik Jeopolitiği ve Çin” [Asia-Pacific Geopolitics and China]	Doctorate
Çanakkale 18 Mart	Mediterranean Geopolitics “Akdeniz Havzası Jeopolitiği ve Türkiye” [Mediterranean Basin Geopolitics and Turkey]	Undergraduate Master and Doctorate
Düzce	“Rusya’nın Jeopolitiği” [Geopolitics of Russia]	Undergraduate
Karadeniz Teknik	“Geopolitics of the Black Sea region”	Undergraduate
Galatasaray	“Latin Amerika Jeopolitiği” [Geopolitics of Latin America]	Master
Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey	“Avrasya Jeopolitiği” [Geopolitics of Eurasia]	Undergraduate and Master
İstanbul Yeni Yüzyıl	“Rusya Jeopolitiği ve Kafkasya Çalışmaları” [Geopolitics of Russia and Caucasian Studies]	Undergraduate
İstanbul Arel	“Dünya Jeopolitiğinde Türkiye” [Turkey in World Geopolitics]	Doctorate
İstanbul Gedik	“Political Geography: Africa and Middle East”; “Political Geography: Asia and America”	Undergraduate
Necmettin Erbakan	“Dünya Bölgeler Coğrafyası” [World Regions Geography]	Undergraduate
Yıldız Teknik	“Türkiye coğrafya ve jeopolitiği” [Geography and Geopolitics of Turkey]	Undergraduate
MEF	“Geopolitics of Eurasia”	Undergraduate
İstanbul Beykent	“Çin Dış Politikası ve Avrasya Jeopolitiği” [Chinese Foreign Policy and Geopolitics of Eurasia]	Doctorate
İstanbul Nişantaşı	“Türkiye ve Yakın Coğrafyası” [Turkey and Its Near Geography]	Master
İstinye	Modern Geopolitics and Eurasia	Undergraduate
Yozgat Bozok	“Siyasi Coğrafya [Jeopolitik]” [Political Geography-Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
TOBB	“Ortadoğu Üzerine Jeopolitik Okumalar” [Geopolitical Readings on Middle East]	Master
Bursa Teknik	“Asya-Pasifik Jeopolitiği ve Çin” [Asia-Pacific Geopolitics and China]	Doctorate

While mapping as a key geographical method is not encountered in these courses, an analysis based on geopolitical representations is not even used. From a general point of view, it is very difficult to establish a link between the content of the course and the name given to the course, since a course that can be described as a “regional study” or a “foreign policy of a country” is called “geopolitics.” The most important reason for this can be seen as the denial of the geographical and methodological features of geopolitics, which are seen as the “equivalent” of security, foreign policy, or strategy, in parallel with the conceptual courses. In this framework, the conceptual blurring of geopolitics continues in regional courses as well.

Furthermore, one can state that another part of the geopolitics courses given is handled on a thematic level. In this context, geopolitics emerges within a different spectrum such as “space and power analysis,” “energy security” (mainly centered on oil and gas), “postcolonial geopolitics,” “geopolitics and religion,” or even “Shiite geopolitics.” Although different thematic subjects affect geopolitics courses, it would not be wrong to say that energy-related issues, especially, have a serious impact here. Table 3, shown below, lists the courses that may fall into this category, bringing together 14 universities.

Table 3 – Geopolitics courses taught in a thematic fashion

University	Course Name	Degree
Atılım	“Enerji Jeopolitiği” [Energy Geopolitics]	Master
Niğde Ömer Halisdemir	“21. Yüzyılda Şii Jeopolitiği” [Shiite Geopolitics in 21 st Century]	Master
Ibn Haldun	“Energy and geopolitics”	Master
İstanbul Aydın	“Enerji Jeopolitiği” [Energy Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
İstanbul Ticaret	“Enerji ve Jeopolitik” [Energy and Geopolitics]	Undergraduate
İzmir Ekonomi	“Enerji Jeopolitiği ve Politikaları” [Energy Geopolitics and Politics]	Doctorate
TOBB	“Enerji Jeopolitiği” [Energy Geopolitics]	Master
Hacettepe	“Space, Power and Geopolitics”	Master
Bursa Uludağ	“Postcolonial Criticism and Geopolitics of Religion”	Undergraduate
İstanbul Topkapı	“Enerji Jeopolitiği” [Energy Geopolitics]	Master
Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey	“Enerji Jeopolitiği ve Çevre” [Energy Geopolitics and Environment]	Master
Ege	“Jeopolitik Risk Analizi” [Geopolitical Risk Analysis]	Doctorate
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent	“Geopolitics of Oil and Natural Gas” “Advanced Topics in Energy Geopolitics”	Master and Doctorate
Bursa Teknik	“Enerji Politikaları ve Jeopolitik” [Energy Politics and Geopolitics]	Doctorate

While the geopolitical method is included in the sources of some courses such as “Shiite Geopolitics in the 21st Century” in this category, the methodological dimension is generally lacking in the course contents, objectives, and 14-week course plans, as seen in the conceptual and regional courses. Additionally, addressing geoeconomics in courses such as “Geopolitical risk analysis,” which deals with *risk analysis* and *geopolitics* together, remains important in terms of diversifying geopolitical education in Turkish universities, although it does not contribute directly to the scope of the geopolitical method. Furthermore, it would be appropriate to briefly mention the language in which these courses are offered. While most of the geopolitics courses given in conceptual, regional, and thematic contexts in Turkey are in Turkish, 20 departments where English is used as a medium of instruction stand out (see Table 4).

Overall, while 81 of all the geopolitics courses given in Turkey are taught in Turkish, 32 of them are taught in a foreign language. In 20 departments, geopolitics courses are taught in English, as can be seen in the table above, while French is the language of instruction in geopolitics in only one francophone department (Political Science and IR, Yeditepe University) offering French as the foreign language of instruction for geopolitics and related courses such as Cartography in Social Sciences 1-2. If we analyze the geopolitics courses given in Turkey in the context of conceptual, regional, and thematic elements, we find that at Özyeğin (English-instructed), Yeditepe (French-instructed), Istanbul Gelişim (Turkish/English-instructed), Çukurova (Turkish-instructed), Başkent (Turkish-instructed), and

Sakarya (Turkish-instructed), there are more or less consistent and comprehensive courses on geopolitics in terms of geopolitical method.

Table 4 – Universities offering geopolitics courses in English

Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal	Boğaziçi
Eskişehir Osmangazi	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
İstanbul Gedik	Ibn Haldun
Ankara	Hacettepe
Yalova	Bursa Uludağ
Karadeniz Teknik	İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent
MEF	İstinye
Karabük	Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli
İstanbul Medeniyet	İstanbul Gelişim
Sakarya	Çanakkale 18 Mart

The fact that almost half of the geopolitics courses in these six universities/departments are taught in a foreign language emphasizes the importance of foreign languages such as English and French, and the sources (books, articles, etc.) written in these languages. The role of Turkish as the language of instruction in geopolitics courses is also undeniable, even if methodological issues are not usually covered in these courses. However, there are 35 Political Science and IR/IR departments in Turkey that do not offer any geopolitics courses (see Table 5).

Table 5 – Political Science and IR/IR Departments with no geopolitics courses

Abdullah Gül	Ufuk	Kırşehir Ahi Evran
İstanbul Esenyurt	Adana Alparslan Türkeş Bilim ve Teknoloji	Kocaeli
Kütahya Dumlupınar	Aksaray	Yaşar
Manisa Celal Bayar	Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt	Selçuk
Mardin Artuklu	Aydın Adnan Menderes	Van Yüzüncü Yıl
Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa	Dokuz Eylül	Doğuş
Türk-Alman	Hatay Mustafa Kemal	İstanbul Kültür
Ankara Medipol	Hitit	İstanbul Okan
Bahçeşehir	İzmir Demokrasi	ODTÜ
Beykoz	İzmir Katip Çelebi	Koç
Fenerbahçe	Haliç	Hasan Kalyoncu
İstanbul Medipol		İstanbul 29 Mayıs

5. Conclusion

In this study, I analyzed the conceptual framework of geopolitics and its methodology as a distinct field of study from a critical perspective. I elucidated current geopolitics teaching in Turkey by evaluating the courses available on the ECTS information packages on university websites. I considered geopolitics as a critical method based on cartography, territoriality, and geopolitical representations. Together with interstate rivalries, it refers to diverse conflicts and rivalries taking place within an intrastate framework in the context of multiple territorial

scales. The significance of geopolitics as a complex method of analysis has been reflected in the critical background developed especially by Yves Lacoste and his colleagues in the context of geopolitical representations, which refer to a *collective perception* based on a geographical-historical context.

Focusing on our findings, the methodological aspects we examined were either completely ignored or treated as background components in the ECTS information on the university websites. Most importantly, geopolitics teaching in Turkey does not prioritize the level of methodological inquiry. Similarly, on theoretical ground, while geopolitics in Turkey seems to be falsely perceived as something equal to a *hard realist* and *state-centric* academic subfield representing even a strong military tutelage, it lacks a broad multi-level analysis, as well as geographical and historical reasoning, which constitute two crucial sources of contemporary geopolitical thinking.

Considering the lack of representation in the overall teaching of geopolitics in Turkey, understanding geopolitics as a representational method is a marginal tendency today. The evocation of new actors as sources of “collective representation” other than the state is lacking in the teaching of geopolitics as well. The teaching of geopolitics reflects rather a state-centric approach that still dominates the discipline, and this can be seen in diverse geopolitics courses taught in many universities. From another point of view, when the courses are examined in general, it should be emphasized that unlike “geopolitical methods,” the understanding of “geopolitical theories” is heavily entrenched in Turkey. In this sense, historical and geographical reasoning should be added in the Political Science and IR curricula on geopolitics in Turkey.

Finally, while the use of maps remains crucial in geopolitical practice and thinking, I argue that the cartographical deficiency of geopolitics teaching in Turkey indicates a relatively underdeveloped conceptualization of the field. Eventually, courses on cartography might not be generalized in Political Science and IR teaching in Turkey in terms of academic linkages between IR, geopolitics, and geography. Only at a few universities is it possible to find courses based on cartography, spatiality, and geographical background of geopolitics. Establishing a *method* based on notions such as geographical and historical representation remains one of the main challenges for geopolitics teaching in Turkey. If there is room for methodology at this point, one could only consider to what extent a specialization called geopolitics can be developed in Political Science and IR departments, or the idea of creating a master’s program in geopolitics.

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