

**The World “Shattering”:
What’s In Store for the Geopolitical System to Come?**
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University of Belgrade – Faculty of Security Studies

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Mihajlo Kopanja and Nuno Morgado
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Table of contents

The System, The Region, The Actor

– First Panel –

Chair: Zoran Jeftić

Discussant: Nuno Morgado

Where the World ‘shatters’?

Some reflections on geopolitics of mobilities in the contemporary world 1

Maria Lois

The “Long 2020”:

The Unfolding Geopolitical Transition of the World Oer 17

Mihajlo Kopanja

A “Shattered” World

– Second Panel –

Chair: Maria Lois

Discussant: Mihajlo Kopanja

The Unlikely Bridge:

Could the Middle East become the next gateway region? 33

Vladimir Ajzenhamer

The Modern Shatterbelts:

Testing the Teory of Borders in Global “Regional System” 49

Marta Zorko and Andrea Bilandžija

Geopolitizing the Intermediate Spaces of the World-System: Semi-Cores and Semi-Peripheries, Geostrategies of Subordination and Autonomy (Cases in Latin America and Southern Europe after the Cold War) 71

Heriberto Cairo

The Changing Structure of the Contemporary Orthodox World 105

Liubov Shmatkova

Reacting to the “Shattered” World

– Third Panel –

Chair: Vladimir Ajzenhamer

Discussant: Marta Zorko

Sun Tzu “visits” the European Union: Geopolitical subordination and functional specialization in the Strategic Compass	119
Carlos Gonzalez-Villa and Branislav Radeljić	

Earthquakes and tectonic shifts in the regional order	139
Tunc Aybak	

Societal Implications of the “World Shattering”: Collective trauma and the social psychological theory of group behavior during systemic changes.....	151
Boris Kordić	

Virtual Panel
– Fourth Panel –
Chair: Sharyl Cross
Discussant: Mihajlo Kopanja

The perception of government in remote ethnic communities in East Siberia	167
Arseniy Fartyshev and Julia Razmakhnina	

From Religion to Ethnonationalism: Civil Society-Based Prevention Programming in Bosnia and Herzegovina .	179
Laura Welty	

Near-home bias, territorial stigmatization and Eurocentrism in country-risk assessments for FDI allocation.....	203
Aleksy Domanov	

Adoption of the Nordic Balance Model as a Security Regime in Ukraine.....	213
Arie Geronik	

Geopolitical Methods and Analyses
– Fifth Panel –
Chair: Heriberto Cairo
Discussant: Igor Okunev

Olavo de Carvalho`s concepts and methods.....	225
Nuno Morgado	

Spatial Autoregression as a Means of Measuring Neighbourhood Effect in Latvian Parliamentary Elections	233
Lidia Zhirnova	

Integrating Olavo de Carvalho's concepts and method in Geopolitical Studies

Nuno Morgado¹

Abstract

This chapter analyzes the contribution of the Brazilian philosopher Olavo de Carvalho to political science, integrating that contribution within geopolitical studies. In a time in which the Global South is slowly challenging the Anglo-Saxon hegemony by entering the academic debate, the exam of Carvalho's ideas and their pertinence to an innovative theoretic-methodological framework becomes relevant.

The aim of the paper is twofold: (1) it defines some of Carvalho's main concepts, such as political action, political and historial agent, consciousness horizon, revolutionary mentality, potential and power, intellectual hegemony, intentions and objectives, political network; and (2) it integrates these concepts into a quite innovative, probabilistic, dialectic, and phenomenological approach. In this context, some of Carvalho's received influences are mentioned, and his disregard for *grand* theories – in detriment of case studies – is explained.

Apart from the introduction to Carvalho's approach in the English language, the chapter also incorporates his conceptual and methodological framework into foreign policy and geopolitical studies developing, therefore, these research agendas.

Keywords

Geopolitical studies, State, Power, Agents, Concepts, Methods, Science

¹ CIAS, Corvinus University of Budapest. The author may be reached at nuno.morgado@uni-corvinus.hu
A.M.D.G.

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to abstractly verify whether Olavo de Carvalho's selected concepts and approach have relevance to geopolitical studies in its explanatory causal chain. To achieve that objective, the chapter (1) revises and explains some concepts of that author, and (2) analyzes his methodological approach. Books, articles, courses and seminars authored by Carvalho constitute the body of sources analyzed in this research piece.

The epistemological assumptions include a Christian setting in which a "relative scientific certainty" is possible, and that an objective-descriptive political science, is chosen in detriment of a normative-prescriptive one.

Carvalho's selected concepts with relevance to geopolitical studies

Located *a priori* the scientific method itself, metatheoretical aspects are, however, crucial for the scientific method, as metatheoretical aspects constitutes the ground in which the building of the scientific method is instituted. Principles – initial assumptions that forms any basis – constitute benchmarks within the mentioned metatheoretical aspects. I could systematize three principles in Carvalho's approach (some of which, carry methodological consequences *ab initio*).

First, the rejection of "any aims toward a perfect society" (Carvalho 2016a), which implies the detachment from any ideological commitments. Carvalho recovers the old Aristotelian distinction between the "discourse of the agent" and the "discourse of the scientist". The first one aims to produce effects, whereas the second aims to understand and to explain phenomena. Some of the problems at the Academia today come from the fact that this dualism has been forgotten and, thus, many academics became more political activists than researchers.

Second, the rejection of "any ethnocentric and chronocentric prejudices" (Carvalho 2016a). Whereas the former is relatively overcome, the latter is very much rooted in our societies, namely through the belief that our time is "the best" in human history. The recipe to overcome both these prejudices is to absorb the largest number of perspectives – from historical time and civilizational spaces – in order to broaden the consciousness horizon, a concept that will be subject of analysis in a posterior sub-section. In addition, deculturation (Carvalho, 2016b), meaning a process in which one leaves his own culture, is necessary to be able to observe that culture and other cultures from different angles with more freedom.

A third principle would be that "there is no action without an agent". This notion brings the research to the problem of identifying agents in politics and in history.

Political Agent and Historical Agent

Carvalho defined *human action* as “a deliberate intervention in a certain state of things” – either to change (action) or to stop a change (reaction) (Carvalho 2019). A *political action* is a human action that “impacts entire societies”. Finally, a *historical action* is (usually a political action) which “effects can be observed beyond the limits of the lifetime of the agent” (Carvalho 2016a). The historical action is irreversible (Carvalho 2016b). To stretch the effects of an action for such long-term, the continuity and unity of the agent are critical. For that reason, the agents owning those characteristics are only a few. Dynasties or influential families, the Catholic Church (with its apostolic succession) and similarly dominant religious organizations, esoteric societies (e.g., Freemasonry, Tariqas), or an uninterrupted political party or movement (e.g., the International Communist Movement) are acknowledged as historical agents, thus capable of historical action.

In this context, the state cannot be, therefore, considered an agent but rather an instrument, in the sense that the state is the *subject* of a royal dynasty, an esoteric society – even a terrorist organization – groups that are able to capture the state and rule through its structure of power, including its armed forces and all its remaining repressive apparatus.

Consciousness Horizon of the Political Agent

If to stand as an *agent* (either political or historical) unity is required, then that unity must be methodologically identified. The consciousness horizon – i.e., the mental nucleus that crystalizes what the agent knows and does not know – determines the direction of any *political action*. Hence, in the *consciousness horizon*, Carvalho identified the concept-source that, once being studied, unveils the centripetal unity that is required to identify an *agent*. To Carvalho, “conscious” is a “permanent integration effort, the search for unity beyond the immediate chaos. It is the unification of the diverse, and the resolution of contradictions” (Carvalho 2013, 178).

How to study the concept of consciousness horizon? A methodological necessity imposes itself before anything else – the researcher must necessarily have a broader consciousness horizon than the agent he is studying. Otherwise, he will not be able to grasp and make sense of his study object. Carvalho called this “intellectual hegemony” elsewhere (2016b). While examining the action of the agent – both in the timeline of history and also while observing the context of that action – the researcher is able to point out what fundamental elements the agent ignored, in case there were any. “The map of ignorance delimits the consciousness horizon” (Carvalho 2016a). The following deduction becomes unavoidable – in the situations which the agent does not understand or which elements he ignores, the agent will either possibly not take action at all or will act in an eminently fragmented way. This argument comes in line with the concept of *geomisguidance* that I coined earlier (Morgado 2016). Therefore, *geomisguidance* can be converted into one of the categories to determine the type of consciousness horizon of the agent.

In spite of the singular used form of *agent* – and as mentioned in the previous subsection – the agent can very well be a group of people. In that case, in order to reach the aimed conclusions, the methodological steps for investigation must be adapted from the study of a single person to the internal discussions inside those groups.

Lastly, two remaining ideas about the consciousness horizon. (1) The consciousness horizon appears as the mediator between the facts and the interpretation of those facts. (2) Like it happens with the means of action, also the consciousness horizon helps the researcher formulating scenarios about the real possibilities of political success.

Revolutionary Mentality

One of the types of mentality that Carvalho conceptualized to assist in the investigation of the consciousness horizon was the “revolutionary mentality”. He contended that the origins of the Revolutionary Movement, can be traced into a certain type of mentality or “structure of perception” that has been enduring on the path of History. He designated that structure of perception as “the Revolutionary Mentality”. The revolutionary mentality, Carvalho explained, is “a spiritual and psychological phenomenon, which, however, shows its most prominent expression in politics”. This revolutionary mentality is characterized by (a) a radical belief that an ideal better world is possible; (b) “a mechanism of retroactive justification”, meaning, “what I do now in my political actions – namely the concentration of power – I will unlikely justify in the uncertain future that no one knows about”; and finally (c) duplicity or multiplicity of justifications and tactics, i.e. doing something and its opposite at the same time. Both (b) and (c) are then ways to get to (a), the “better world” (Carvalho 2013, 228-236).

The revolutionary mentality, as a distortion of the notions of time and political limited action, created a brutal and irrational field for political action throughout History. Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, Pol Pot, Mao Zedong could easily illustrate the previous characterization of the revolutionary mentality. In this way, the revolutionary mentality can be identified in the line of time. What can be designated as a “revolutionary movement” was strengthened from the 16th century onwards, in successive steps gushing from the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution to the October Revolution, Fascist, Anarchist movements, Nazi party, May 68, communist *guerillas* and communist regimes, São Paulo Forum, etc. Therefore, it is crucial to clarify that the revolutionary movement is constituted by a unitary structure of perception, i.e., the mentioned revolutionary mentality, a “self-conscious continuous phenomenon with a unitary character” as Carvalho stated, rather than by any ideological rigid and unique nature. In fact, the ideological flexibility is a key characteristic of the revolutionary movement, flowing from the revolutionary mentality. Knowing this gives a great help in assessing the relations, objectives, modalities of action of the revolutionary movement. Consequently, the

revolutionary movement is primarily defined by a specific *Weltanschauung* that produces political results.

Potential and Power

The means of action are indeed a predictive element as no *agent* is able to take an *action*, when he does not have the *means of action* to take that action. This assumption conveys the concepts of *potential* and *power* defined elsewhere (Morgado 2023). I have defined *potential* as *capabilities* or “*resources*”, which fits in the concept of Carvalho’s *means of action*. As for my and Carvalho’s definitions of *power*, they also align with the standard definition of power by political science, as a specific *ability* for action (i.e., an ability that produces effects and holds certain objectives). In a sentence: there is no *power* (ability) without *potential* (capabilities).

According to Carvalho, the difference of power (and potential, consequently) should be considered as one of the main problems of political science, as this problem might have not received all the attention it deserves. From all the animal kingdom, only human societies can have an abyssal difference of power (Carvalho 2016a). Two tigers, two camels, or two bulls would never differ much in their strength, while comparing the *power* of, for example, a gulag prisoner and a KGB general. This invincible fact on *difference of power* boils down to the difference of the *capabilities*, as mentioned. Yet, recapturing the concept of *political action*, Carvalho asserted that “politics is a power phenomenon, but it takes place within human societies only” (Carvalho 2019).

How to explain the origins of such variation in the capabilities? Carvalho (2016a) asserts that (a) the chronological factor and (b) the knowledge factor can help in explaining that difference. Regarding the former, the oldest and long-lasting agent will tend to have more power than a younger and less continuous one. This aspect links to the concept of geopolitical continuities (Morgado 2023, 14). Concerning the latter, the more information (namely intelligence) and technology an agent has, the more powerful he will be. This latter assumption is, logically, connected to the concept of consciousness horizon as well, contribution to make this theoretical approach even more solid.

The object of political science is, at last, delimited within the frame of the study of the means to conquer, maintain, and exercise *power* – which is the same to state “real connections between people”, characterized by the crucial concept of obedience (Carvalho 2019).

This *political power* (“ability”) may be categorized through three diverse types of operation. Firstly, the use of physical force, i.e., the capacity to either assassinate or cause physical damage (to torture, to maul, to threaten to do that, etc.). Secondly, to offer or to suppress advantages, such as money, or any sort of privileges. Thirdly, the mental and intellectual influence through ideas and cultural impact. The third one seems to be the most effective, but it works above all on the long-term,

consequently, the agent will not be around to collect the benefits of its achievements. The use of the physical force, by opposition, is the most immediate (Carvalho 2019).

Carvalho's phenomenological method

A central conundrum in Carvalho's method is attached to the features of the researcher himself (Carvalho 2016a). He raised two questions at this level. (1) Who can dedicate himself to study political science in a useful way? (2) What kind of cognitive, moral, and psychological qualities must one have to study political science?

Both questions emerge from the differences among natural sciences and social sciences. While in natural sciences, the collection of data happens through the five senses, as data is external to the researcher, in social sciences (and the same goes for humanities or liberal arts), however, all the data that the researcher has at his disposal was produced by the same means with which the researcher is also studying. In other words, the *data* and the *mental procedures* share the same source. It is certain that replication may eliminate the risks of too much phantasy and too little science. Nevertheless, that sharing directly requires (a) an openness to all the facts, and (b) an identification of the researcher with the agent under study. Again, ideology turns out to be an obstacle, as a highly ideological individual will be unable to identify himself with an ideology that he despises, therefore, failing in matching these requirements.

In this line, Carvalho added that (i) imagination, (ii) morality, and (iii) exclusion are necessary to conduct studies in political science. (i) Imagination for the necessary background in literature and arts, the cultural sphere (Carvalho 2016b), that must exist before science. (ii) Morality for the necessary compassion (until its limits) for the agent under study (compassion does not mean agreement and support). And (iii) exclusion as an imitation of Jesus Christ, excluded by the Jewish authorities. In spite of that exclusion, no resentment is to be shown and, therefore, a position located on the *outside* is created, an indispensable position with distance to observe those inside (Carvalho 2016a).

A specific method is always chosen to answer certain questions. To Carvalho, who is the agent? what are his objectives? what is his consciousness horizon? what are his means of action (potential)? therefore what can he do, and what can't he at all do? – should be the central questions to tailored the type of the method used and, in addition, to answer these question in real-world case studies – and not by general theories (Carvalho 2016a). To fill in the shell of a concept with real-life conditions that allow the reasoning of a concrete phenomenon, i.e., a much needed “materialization of an idea” is a permanent feature in the Brazilian philosopher's approach (Carvalho 2016a). Thus, to Carvalho, the material aspects are always more important than the discourse, as the material aspects directly produce results (Carvalho 2016b).

Carvalho's approach integrates his concepts (some of them defined in the previous section) into a quite innovative, probabilistic, dialectic, and phenomenological approach. To him, the accumulation of evidence to favor a particular hypothesis is not a scientific procedure. It is rather a rhetoric one to persuade an audience of something. Instead of that, a scientific procedure is to distinguish the possible from the impossible, exclude the latter and hierarchize the former (Carvalho 2008 2019).

In fact, forecasting is a major piece in Carvalho's approach. The joint investigation of the *consciousness horizon* and the *means of action* constitutes two essential methodological tasks for prediction in politics. In addition, the prediction will be as accurate as the researcher's precise capability in arranging the scenarios into a hierarchy of probabilities, as mentioned.

Finally, even if subsists in politics a quotient of unpredictability that must be borne in mind, as Carvalho – inspired by the classic political science author, Georg Jellinek – emphasized that the methods in political science require the distinction between (a) what is a result of a fortuitous accumulation of causes, and (b) what is the result of a plan and deliberation (Carvalho 2016a 2019) – and consequently the importance of identification and characterization of the *agent* in the making of such distinction returns – Carvalho asserted indeed that “the accurate forecast in social sciences resembles the certainty of the experimental tests in natural sciences” (Carvalho 2019).

Conclusion

To Olavo de Carvalho, political science is the application of the concepts of *agent*, *consciousness horizon of the agent*, *means of action* and its potentials, to make predictions according to a certain degree of possibility. In order words, the joint investigation of the *consciousness horizon* and the *means of action* constitutes two essential methodological tasks for prediction in politics, under the principle that “there is no action without an agent”.

As a matter of fact, Carvalho's methodological apparatus has been able to offer accurate predictions. Consequently, it has been going beyond being merely a conceptual body of limited empirical relevance. Future research will address his correct predictions.

According to Carvalho, for a successful activity in political science and geopolitical studies, the researcher must possess certain characteristics, namely, the researcher must necessarily have a broaden consciousness horizon than the agent he is studying. Among other aspects, the revolutionary mentality was brought up. The revolutionary mentality, a radical structure of perception committed to “creating a better world”, favors concentration of political power and duplicity or multiplicity of justifications and tactics, in order to achieve that goal. The concept of revolutionary mentality is an instrument to study a political agent's consciousness horizon.

As for bridges and converging of knowledge, Carvalho's concepts are useful to geopolitical reasoning in terms of the concepts of *potential* and *geopolitical agent's perceptions and capacities* as causal variables of political action.

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