

The geo-theo-politics of land and sea and the  
metaphysics of the *Großraum*. Schmitt and the  
multipolar thinking  
PALOMA PUENTE LOZANO<sup>58</sup>

Contemporary geopolitical thinking has showed over the last decades a persistent interest in German legal scholar Carl Schmitt as a key figure in providing critical insights and tools for questioning the contemporary “global” U.S.-led geopolitical order (Odysseos and Petito, 2007; Hooker, 2009). Political geographers, political philosophers and IR scholars alike have contributed to these ongoing debates aiming at “adjusting” Schmittian categories and diagnosis to critical traditions, approaches and their accompanying goals (Legg, 2011; Minca and Rowan, 2016). As part of these contemporary reworkings, serious doubts have also been cast on the feasibility of such a project, with some critical scholars even expressing bold rejection against it (Elden, 2010; Teschke, 2011a, 2011b). In that sense, the inherently politically “compromised” nature of Schmitt’s work and, more significantly, the conceptual flaws and overall theoretical orientation of his anti-liberal thinking have been claimed to be hardly compatible with ontologies underwriting contemporary critical approaches.

In spite of this growing interest on Schmitt, much less detailed conceptual work has been done in order to provide, on the one

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<sup>58</sup> University Carlos III of Madrid (Spain).

hand, historical and philosophical grounding to Schmitt's geopolitical thinking as to resituate him in the land vs. sea geopolitical debates on his time (Connery, 2001; Derman, 2011; Koskenniemi, 2004, as exception to this) and to uncover, on the other hand, the theological and metaphysical core of his understanding on land and sea as geopolitical realms. Accordingly, this presentation aims to further extent this later path of inquiry in order to deal with the Schmittian geopolitical thought as a well-established source of inspiration in current multipolar thinking and debates with the goal of coming to terms with Schmittian conceptions of land and sea and the ensuing implications of that understanding for any project aimed at producing multipolar understanding of world politics. Along the lines of the topic "Historical geographies and geopolitics of land and sea" that is part of the session "Southern thinking. Heritage, migration and Mediterranean cultures", this presentation will expose the geo-theo-political nature inherent to certain categories in Schmitt's work (such as *Großraum*, *pluriversum*, *nomos* or *Land und Meer*). To do so, we will proceed in three steps. First, we will draw on recent scholarship having highlighted the centrality of theological elements in Schmitt political thought (Meier, 2006 or Hohendahl, 2008). Second, we will analyze the meaning and function of certain telluric elements that are central to Schmitt geopolitical thinking and how the *opposition* between land and sea is built in his work. Third, we will attempt to assess the geopolitical implications of the underlying *oppositional* theological and metaphysical meaning that land and sea are given in Schmitt thinking (i. e., how these geographical realms are connected to Schmitt's idea of *nomos* and philosophy of "concrete orders"). By doing so, we intend to expose some of the tensions and limits that such a geo-theo-political system poses to current attempts at conceiving in a pluralist, decolonized and relational form sea-

based geopolitical realms as part of a wider multipolar geopolitical structure.

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