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GEOPOLITICAL LITERACY

Jeopolitik Okuryazarlık

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Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı iki yönlüdür: birincisi, 'jeopolitik okuryazarlık' kavramını ulusal literatüre kazandırmak, ikincisi ise coğrafya ve sosyal bilgiler öğretmen adaylarının jeopolitik ve jeopolitik okuryazarlık algılarını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Çalışmada, öğretmen adaylarının algılarını aydınlatmak için fenomenolojik yöntem ve jeopolitik okuryazarlık için bir temel oluşturmak adına doküman analizi kullanılarak nitel bir yaklaşım benimsenmiştir. Veriler, 18 sosyal bilgiler ve coğrafya öğretmen adayının jeopolitik kavramı ve jeopolitik okuryazarlığa ilişkin algılarını, deneyimlerini ve çıkarımlarını ortaya çıkarmak için yapılan görüşmeler yoluyla ve doküman inceleme ile elde edilmiştir. Çalışmada, jeopolitik bağlamında öğretmen adaylarıyla yapılan görüşmelerden yararlanılarak nitel bir yaklaşım kullanılmıştır. Bu nedenle, öğretmen adaylarının çoğunluğunun jeopolitik kavramını konum, siyaset ve Türkiye bağlamında aktarmaya çalıştıkları sonucuna varılmıştır. Buna karşılık, jeopolitik okuryazarlık kavramı ise harita bilgisi, ülkeler ve bir dizi çıkarım açısından ifade edilmiştir. Bu noktada, öğretmen adayları tarafından öne sürülen açıklamaların ağırlıklı olarak harita bilgisine ve konuma dayandığı görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Jeopolitik Okuryazarlık, Jeopolitik, Siyasi Coğrafya, Coğrafya

Abstract

The aim of this study is twofold: first, to introduce the concept of 'geopolitical literacy' to the national literature, and second, to reveal the geopolitics and geopolitical literacy perceptions of prospective geography and social studies teachers. This study adopted a qualitative approach using phenomenological methods to elucidate pre-service teachers' perceptions and document analysis to provide a basis for geopolitical literacy. The data were obtained through interviews and document analysis to reveal the perceptions, experiences, and inferences of 18 pre-service social studies and geography teachers about the concept of geopolitics and geopolitical literacy. As a result of the interviews, it was concluded that most pre-service teachers tried to convey the concept of geopolitics in the context of location, politics, and Turkey. On the other hand, the concept of geopolitical literacy was expressed using map knowledge, countries and a series of inferences. At this point, it was seen that the explanations put forward by prospective teachers were mainly based on map knowledge and location.

Keywords: Geopolitical Literacy, Geopolitics, Political Geography, Geography

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1. INTRODUCTION

In line with the needs of the 21st century, understanding education requires the formation of flexible and creative individuals who can gain the potential to evaluate developments from different perspectives, think critically about the information they have acquired, and establish contextual relationships between events and phenomena (Ateş & Aşçı, 2021). When considered in this context, literacy is understood to be the key to understanding education. Although the concept of literacy is defined as “the state of being literate” according to the TDK [Türk Dil Kurumu], it is known that it does not include such a limited definition in terms of literature. Literacy introduces a rich variety of skills by including many sub-skills. Priority for functionalizing acquired knowledge and applying it to real life constitutes the basic step of sub-skills (Posos Devrani, 2021). Indeed, Malmelin defines literacy as “the ability to understand and interpret different sign and symbol systems and to create new sign and symbol systems” (Malmelin, 2010).

While it is known that the globalizing age has brought new literacy and created different skill areas, basic disciplinary fields can also acquire literacy skills from different perspectives. Geography is one of these various disciplines. Geography is “a science that examines the natural environment and the interaction between humans and the natural environment by adhering to the principles of distribution, causality, relationship and comparison and presents the results obtained in synthesis” (Gökçe & Kaya, 2009). In other words, the science of geography can be considered to have two opposite values in a mathematically established equation that focuses on the interaction between humans and space (Özgen, 2010). According to Doğanay and Sever, geography is “a science that examines natural, human and economic events on the geographical earth by establishing a relationship with people.” In this sense, geography is a science that deals with natural environment features and human activities in a multidimensional way (Doğanay & Sever, 2024). Since the 19th century, the struggle for global leadership, the race for colonialism, and the desire to protect existing colonies have caused the field of geography to be viewed from different angles (İşcan, 2004). Geopolitics, an important sub-branch of this discipline, has become a complementary science of geography in spatial and political terms. In this sense, it can be said that geographical location offers advantages and disadvantages by imposing certain responsibilities on the people living in it. Geopolitics, which is a complementary element of geography, has an important contribution to individuals: to know the existing space in the best way and to produce international policy accordingly (Sarı, 2019).

According to Lacoste, the foundations of geography are fundamentally similar to the meaning of a power struggle within a territory, also called “geopolitics” in France. This includes not only the influence of natural factors that determine the balance of power, also the regionalization of competition and the localization of existing global powers. In this sense, geopolitics also includes the forms of power adopted by the people living in a region, the historical events they believe to be right or wrong, their causes, and the representations they form for the future. Lacoste based his method of analyzing power rivalries over regions on his questioning of Herodotus, which he considered the beginning of geographical reasoning, which would later become the French school (Lacoste, 2012). In this context, Lacoste published *Hérodote*, a geopolitical journal, despite the hatred of geopolitics after World War II, where it was seen as a “Nazi science.” For this reason, he was given the title of “father of modern French geopolitics” (Gülersoy, 2024).

Geopolitics as a form of power emerged during the imperialist period between 1870 and 1945, when imperial conflicts unfolded at the highest level, with frequent shifts in the balance of power on maps (Tuathail, 1998). In studies where different definitions are proposed, the most inclusive expression is “the science that evaluates the power of a nation, a community of nations or a region on the current geographical platform, taking into account the unchanging elements (location on the supply, geographical character, land structure) and changing elements (socio-cultural structure, economy and military situation), examining, evaluating, researching the power centers on the world and regional scale and determining the conditions that make it possible to achieve the goals” (Sarı, 2019). In the 21st century’s globalized new world order, the first step to determine the center of power and to become a regional and global leader with an awareness of internal resources in an increasingly competitive environment is to correctly understand the concept of geopolitics. In this context, the advantages and disadvantages of geopolitical factors in decision-making need to be identified (Kaya, 2017).

As with every concept, geopolitics is also based on the past and (natural and artificial) space. In this context, periodic developments and the fact that geopolitics' structure is also subject to change in the evolving world order have made it difficult to put forward a generally valid definition of the concept of geopolitics (Tuathail, 1998). For this reason, it would be more accurate to consider geopolitics within the scope of its historical development and position in discourse. The concept was first introduced to the literature in 1899 by the Swedish professor and politician Rudolf Kjellen in his book "The State as a Living Form". According to Kjellen, geopolitics, the most important part of political science, expresses a general interest in geography and politics far beyond its original meaning as "the science of the state as a field in space." After Kjellen defined geopolitics, Friedrich Ratzel, inspired by his ideas, introduced the word into German literature and conducted various studies. The concept was especially embraced by German nationalist Karl Haushofer, and his ideas were influential in the development of the concept. In 1942, it was translated into the American language and became a subject for study by geographers, soldiers, and strategists. The word geopolitics has two meanings; the first is a branch of geographical and social studies that originated in Germany and was coined by Karl Haushofer. The second is "applied political geography," defined as the study of political power and roles based on geographical knowledge applied to the foundations of international relations in general (Chubb, 1954). As a matter of fact, geographers have made significant contributions to the development of contemporary geopolitics in terms of revitalizing and reshaping the concept (Tarakçı, 2015). While Prance attributes this reshaping to the solidarity of geopolitical actors, another view argues that it is due to the anti-imperialist approach developed in some countries (Mamadouh, 1999).

The significance of geopolitics and the position of literacy skills in line with 21st-century educational needs make the context of these two concepts crucial. A review of the literature reveals that there is a limited number of studies on geopolitical literacy. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to contribute to the definition and understanding of the concept of geopolitical literacy.

This research seeks to answer the question: "What does the concept of geopolitical literacy mean and why is it important?" Therefore, the following questions were addressed.

1. What is the emergence and development of geopolitics as a science?
2. How have nation-based geopolitical schools¹ influenced the concept of geopolitics?
3. What is geopolitical literacy?
4. What distinguishes geopolitical literacy from other forms of literacy?
5. Why is the concept of geopolitical literacy important?
6. What are prospective social studies and geography teachers' perceptions of geopolitics?
7. What are social studies and geography teachers' views on geopolitical literacy?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research design

In the study, which was designed on the basis of a qualitative approach to define the concept of geopolitical literacy and to reveal the geopolitical perceptions of geography and social studies teacher candidates, phenomenological research methodology was used, data triangulation was preferred, and document analysis was included to reveal in-depth research on geopolitics. The qualitative approach is a research method that is characterized as an umbrella concept that is universally accepted and has no general definition (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2000). Document analysis is a qualitative approach that involves identifying, reading, taking notes, and evaluating sources for specific purposes (Karasar, 2023). In this context, the data for the research

1 "Geopolitical views have been interpreted in various countries within the framework of various opinion leaders, leading to the emergence of geopolitical schools or, in other words, *ecoles*. For this reason, it is essential to use terms such as "school" or "ecole" to fundamentally address geopolitics from different perspectives."

were obtained by searching the concepts of “geopolitics,” “jeopolitik,” “geopolitical literacy,” “jeopolitik okuryazarlık” through Google Scholar, Dergipark, Academia, Researchgate, and Taylor & Francis. The data obtained in the light of the research comprise articles, theses, dissertations, graduation theses, books, and book chapters. In the phenomenological research method preferred in this study, Dokuz Eylül University geography and social studies fourth-year pre-service teachers were preferred as data sources. Phenomenological research design is a study method based on discovering the common meaning of the experiences of several people about a particular phenomenon or concept (Creswell, 2016; Tekindal & Arsu, 2020). The data collection process incorporates the perspectives of fourth-year pre-service social studies and geography teachers who have been exposed to the discipline of geopolitics and who have been selected through purposive sampling. Within the framework of the concept of “geopolitics” that pre-service teachers acquired through the discipline of geography, their personal descriptions of issues evaluated in the context of various variables were considered.

Within the scope of phenomenological research types, interpretative phenomenology was preferred, and descriptions were made to understand the concept of geopolitical literacy based on the experiences and definitions of geography and social studies teacher candidates who provided data for the interview part of the research. In this context, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 18 pre-service teachers, nine geography and nine social study pre-service teachers through purposive sampling. The 18 pre-service teachers were enabled to think deeply about the concept of “geopolitics” on the basis of their experiences and to make various comments about “geopolitical literacy” on the basis of interpretative phenomenology, one of the types of phenomenological research, taking into account the scope of the courses they took in the geopolitical framework.

2.2. Working group

The research group consists of fourth-year pre-service teachers of social studies and geography at the Department of Turkish and Social Science Education, Buca Faculty of Education, Dokuz Eylül University for the academic year 2023-2024. The group of pre-service teachers identified in the study was determined through purposive sampling, and because the number of fourth-year students in the geography teaching program at Dokuz Eylül University was nine, a total of 18 students, nine social studies and nine geography were included in the study to ensure equality of numbers. In order to conceal the identity of the pre-service teachers while reporting the research findings, each pre-service teacher was given a code name ranging from Participant 1 to Participant 18 (Table 1).

Table 1: Gender and department of the participants

Participant	Gender	Department
Participant-1	Woman	Social study teacher education
Participant-2	Woman	Geography teacher education
Participant-3	Woman	Geography teacher education
Participant-4	Male	Geography teacher education
Participant-5	Male	Geography teacher education
Participant-6	Woman	Geography teacher education
Participant-7	Male	Geography teacher education
Participant-8	Woman	Geography teacher education
Participant-9	Woman	Social study teacher education
Participant-10	Male	Social study teacher education
Participant-11	Male	Social study teacher education
Participant-12	Woman	Social study teacher education
Participant-13	Male	Social study teacher education
Participant-14	Woman	Geography teacher education
Participant-15	Woman	Geography teacher education
Participant-16	Woman	Social study teacher education
Participant-17	Woman	Social study teacher education
Participant-18	Male	Social study teacher education

2.3. Data collection and analysis

Within the scope of the interview, 18 pre-service social studies and geography teachers were asked open-ended questions to reveal the concept of “geopolitical literacy” based on their geopolitical perceptions with drilling questions proposed in light of their answers asked in the light of the answers. The interviews were conducted and recorded in accordance with the ethics committee and permission obtained from the prospective teachers.

A phenomenological study, unlike other qualitative research designs, has a unique analysis process (Karasar, 2023). In this context, interviews were first conducted with pre-service social studies and geography teachers, followed by the transcription of the interview audio recordings that constitute the research data for later analysis. After this process, each interview text was read in detail to gain a holistic perspective. The interview texts were then analyzed to determine the structure and level of geopolitical perspectives of the prospective teachers. After the collection of data, the following stage consisted of data coding and analysis. In the first stage, the data were coded, re-read, and categorized by identifying the most frequently used words and phrases. In this way, the categories on how geopolitics, which are determined as a phenomenon, can be experienced, understood, and defined are given with examples. Finally, the concept of “geopolitical literacy” is emphasized and significant explanations, quotations, and themes are provided in the appropriate sections.

The role of the researcher in interviews conducted within the scope of the research is that of an observer. During the interviews, the researcher did not provide any guidance, explanation, interpretation, or direction to the participants regarding the questions. The researcher conducted the data collection process by ensuring that the process progressed according to its natural flow.

2.4. Ethical consent

Prior to conducting interviews with pre-service teachers within the scope of the study, ethics committee approval, dated 29.12.2023 (number E-87347630.659.844675), was approved by the Dean’s Office of the Dokuz Eylül University Buca Faculty of Education.

2.5. Liminality

The number of pre-service teachers was unintentionally limited because there were nine fourth-year geography teacher education students at Dokuz Eylül University. To ensure equality of numbers, 9 social science pre-service students were also included in the study, and the study was conducted with a total of 18 pre-service teachers.

3. FINDINGS

In this section, the findings related to the subproblems are presented.

What is the emergence and development of geopolitics as a science?

Founded in the 19th century, the concept of geopolitics, as a branch of science that examines the relationship between the geographical characteristics of nations and their policies, has been accepted since ancient times. At the end of the 19th century, the struggles of countries to establish colonies for world domination led to the need to examine geography from different perspectives. The idea that geographical location is a crucial factor determining nations’ foreign policies has gradually come to the forefront (İşcan, 2004), and tactical moves applied in battlefields have transformed various intellectual practices involving state borders, leading to the emergence of geopolitics and geostrategy (Tarakçı, 2015).

The emergence of geopolitics as a discipline has been heavily influenced by external factors, such as the rapid expansion of European powers over time, the emergence of a global market, rivalries between great powers and the gradual spread of the

capitalist mode of production. These developments essentially coincide with John Agnew's conditions for modern geopolitics. According to Agnew, a geopolitical perspective requires a global approach and the ability to see the world from a holistic perspective (Mäkinen, 2014).

Geopolitics, a young and dynamic science, is still under the influence of changes in the structure of political thought around the world (Hasanov, 2012). In order to make sense of the concept that has been subjected to various changes and transformations, a chronological perspective prove to be more accurate. For this reason, it is possible to classify the emergence and development of the concept of geopolitics within pragmatic periodization. These classifications encompass the periods of Ancient Greece and Rome, Ancient China and India, and Eastern Arabia. More recently, they have been considered in light of the ideas of thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, Humboldt and especially Ritter, who is considered the founder of geographical determinism (Makinen, 2014). In the 19th century, Ritter, Spencer, and Ratzel took their place in history as scientists who made important evaluations in the field of geographical determinism and natural geopolitics by linking economic development and location to natural conditions and resources (Pavlovich Getman et al., 2023). However, it should not be ignored that the idea of geographical determinism, which is one of the cornerstones of geopolitics and natural geography, was first addressed in the 14th century with the *Muqaddime* written by Ibn Khaldun, and a methodological geographical analysis was conducted about five centuries before modern geography (Şahin & Belge, 2016).

Although periods and representations have contributed to geopolitical thought from different perspectives in the conceptual process of geopolitics as a science, it is accepted that geopolitical thought has not been fully systematized periodically (Makinen, 2014). For this reason, even today, the emergence of geopolitics as a science even today, which does not have universally recognized definition for both classical and modern geopoliticians and is still in the process of being shaped, is handled with a wide time frame within the framework of specific dates dating back to the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. However, the 1950s, under the influence of various political geography are interventions, considered to be the period when geopolitics was largely recognized as a scientific field (Hasanov, 2012).

Based on elusive definitions of the concept of geopolitics, which do not have a generally accepted definition. These words are known as the basic building blocks of geopolitics (İşcan, 2004). According to other definitions in the literature, geopolitics is a discourse that defines ways of seeing how and in what ways regional powers are formed (Kearns, 1997). Kjellen, who sees the existence of the state in the power of the state, defines geopolitics as the study of the state as a phenomenon in space or a geographical organism (Bilge, 1961). According to Haushofer, geopolitics is a branch of science that examines the relations of political life, which are formed in line with the various effects of natural conditions and historical developments, in accordance to the location of one's residence. Ratzel greatly contributed to the formation of various geopolitical ideas that would greatly influence those who came after him (İşcan, 2004).

The field of geopolitics has gained considerable momentum, especially during global wars. It is argued that the strong influence of theories based on world domination over World Wars I and II was decisive in gaining this momentum (İşcan, 2004). Although theories based on dominance and self-assertion are believed to have emerged in the late 19th century, their development was not sudden. It is argued that various views that have paved the way for the formation of these theories date back to the early years of humanity and the scientific world (Tarakçı, 2015). These theories, which are listed as land, air, marginal zone, and maritime dominance, emphasize the importance of space-oriented relations in light of the changing geopolitical understanding after the Cold War (İşcan, 2004). These theories of dominance—in other words, geopolitical theories—were shaped on the basis of “Social and Darwinism,” the first theories of classical geopoliticians who proposed such theories before World War I (Varlık, 2022).

3.2. How have national schools and geopolitics schools influenced the concept of geopolitics?

In the late 19th century, the entire world outside the polar regions was divided among the great powers, creating a national consciousness, and the competition between these powers led to the emergence of geopolitical premises and schools of

thought (Costachie, 2011). The first stage of geopolitical schools of thought is the German geopolitical school, where the concept of geopolitics was born (Mangır, 2020). Focusing on the journal “Zeitschrift für Geopolitik”, the school attempted to spread field understanding by taking advantage of changing world politics (Tarakçı, 2015). The German school of geopolitics contributed to the development of geopolitical concepts in direct relation to German history, land, language and identity. Geopolitics was seen as an output of German goals and philosophy and was considered a German science. This view was the main reason that the concept was not used after the World War II and was avoided in its discourse (Mangır, 2020). The most prominent and well-known feature of the school is undoubtedly determinism. Ratzel and his student Kjellen are considered the most significant extensions of determinism. Ratzel, who is also seen as a natural scientist and the founder of the long debated subject of determinism geopolitics, established a direct relationship with the essence of determinism by arguing that people are completely dependent on the land in which they live and derive almost all their characteristics from it. Blending this view with a quasi-biological state view, he made various generalizations and his views became the basis for various geopolitical ideas. Although Rudolf Kjellen and Karl Haushofer, who were influenced by Ratzel in the following period, prepared many books and articles with the intention for Germany to become a world power (Chubb, 1954), these studies were the main targets of heavy criticism by the French School of Human Geography during the interwar period (Defay, 2005).

Another important geopolitical school is the French geopolitical school. Although it has been argued that the school was essentially born as a reaction to the German geopolitical school, it is irrefutable that its roots stem from Ratzel's theories. However, with Vidal de la Blache's strong moves, the school managed to separate its basic views from Ratzel's influence (Tarakçı, 2015). The most important feature of the school is that the students view the state as a “cultural and national entity”. Its proponents, i.e., those who rejected the determinist approach, include Fernand Braudel, Albert Demangeon, and Paul Vidal de la Blache. Many proponents of the French school of geopolitics, such as Demangeon, have specifically rejected Haushofer's theses. Proponents of geopolitics have emphasized the political rather than geographical (Defay, 2005).

It is widely accepted that the American school of geopolitics emerged from relations between military and political elites such as Henry and Brooks Adams, Henry Cabot Lodge, Alfred Thayer Mahan, John Hay, and Theodore Roosevelt. Not content with advocating overseas expansionism, these elites developed a fundamentally imperialist worldview and based their starting point on the ongoing rivalry between maritime nations called “maritime states” and land states (Tarakçı, 2015). The theory of maritime dominance advocated by Mahan within the framework of the American school examined factors such as geographical location, territorial extent, population size, administrative characteristics, and physical structure while analyzing sea power (Sumida, 1999).

3.3. What is geopolitical literacy?

Geopolitics is the study of how states seek to achieve their political goals by dominating their geographical features. Geopolitical literacy, therefore, is a valuable tool for nations, enabling them to realise their potential, question their imaginary maps and analyse the universal language of geopolitics. Geopolitical literacy thus provides a framework through which the intricate geopolitical maps that surround us can be made sense of. In this context, the strategies and projects of global powers and multinational corporations, along with their respective moves, the aims and consequences of struggles in various regions of the world, the basis and function of nation-state concepts, the importance of national and international policies, and so forth, can be enumerated as the principal topics that can be examined within the scope of geopolitical literacy. (Flint, 2006).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, geopolitical thought, which had hitherto concentrated on the natural environment and political contacts among states, began to examine the effects of the natural environment on politics. This situation has resulted in a divergence of opinion, with the view emerging that an analysis of the natural environment and geographical data alone is insufficient. It has been proposed that a more accurate examination of geopolitics would encompass all relevant aspects. In light of this perspective, it can be posited that the scope and significance of geopolitics have undergone a process of diversification. In order to gain an accurate understanding of geopolitics, it is essential to have a comprehensive grasp of its

three constituent domains. The term ‘geopolitics’ is used to describe a design space, a set of nomenclature, and a methodology (Defay, 2005). As Brunet observes, individual and social thoughts are significantly shaped by the surrounding environment. The environment in which we live, the locations and spaces we visit, observe, and learn about are imprinted on the mind, forming intricate patterns. Therefore, the attribution of historical meaning to space at an early age results in the ingraining of places that are perceived as friendly or hostile to territories attributed as homelands in the mind. This in turn gives rise to the formation of initial beliefs and stereotypes, along with the deepest thoughts. This is the manner in which a nation’s geopolitical role and strategies may be shaped. Schools are an active participant in this process. Schools have historically played an active role in the formation of geographical understanding, the attribution of value to territories, and the generation of ideas. This is achieved through the teaching of history, geography, and the use of books and maps (Kearns, 1997). It is also significant to understand the rationale behind the preference for names such as country, city, sea, gulf, and so forth. These reasons were created through the design of imaginary maps and the implementation of geopolitical tactics, which have shaped perceptions both nationally and internationally. To illustrate, the Persian Gulf is associated with Iran, while the Arabian Gulf is linked to the Arab world. These locations are designated as gulfs, yet geopolitical maneuvers are executed by incorporating specific attributes or definitions. In conclusion, geopolitics is based on a multitude of factors, including political, economic, spiritual, historical, sociological, geographical, and others, which collectively enable the formation of various strategies (Tuathail, 1998). In order to make sense of these strategies, define them, and generate ideas, it is necessary to acquire geopolitical literacy skills.

In the field of literacy, the development of vocabulary knowledge is contingent upon a multitude of factors, including one’s attitude, proficiency in listening, speaking, and writing. In this context, literacy is defined not only in terms of the ability to read and write a given text, but also in terms of the capacity to apply that knowledge in specific contexts and for specific purposes (Moje, 2009). When these literacy factors are considered in the context of geopolitical literacy, it becomes evident that religion, gender, race, culture and political actors form a community in response to their strategies. In this way, an understanding of geopolitical literacy is recognised as an effective tool for analysing the potential for formation and transformation, as expressed by individuals’ understanding of themselves, their countries, and the world (Masny, 2011).

As a result, the concept of geopolitical literacy can be defined as the ability to create critical mind maps and make inferences by interpreting the values and conditions that countries have within the framework of their location and their social, cultural, political, economic, etc. characteristics in domestic or foreign policy, on the basis of political geography and taking into account geopolitical elements.

Based on this definition, mind maps can be created to enhance geopolitical literacy skills. It is possible to make points from a critical perspective, analyze and synthesize data, interpret spaces, and generate meaningful ideas using the created mind maps. A sample mind map of the concept of geopolitical literacy is presented in Figure 1. Figure 1 presents the main topics constituting geopolitical literacy and other factors affecting these topics. In this case, the main factors constituting geopolitical literacy can be considered as a whole as concept representatives, geopolitical elements, supporting sciences and skills.

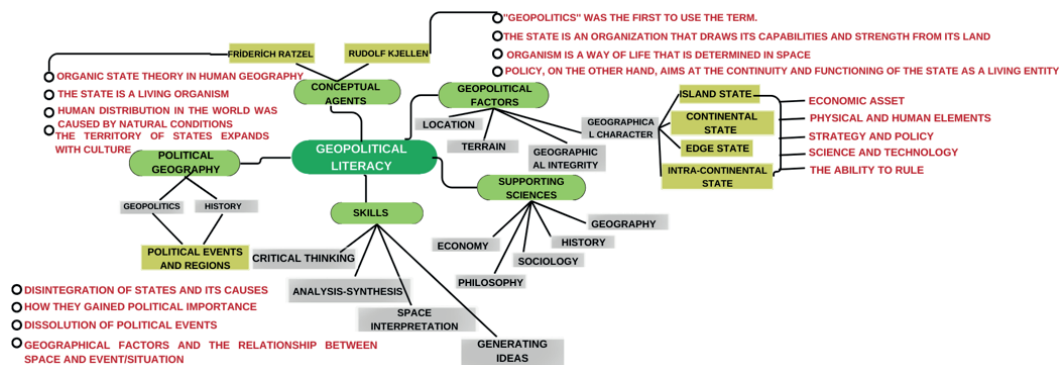


Figure 1: Geopolitical literacy mind map

3.4. What distinguishes geopolitical literacy from other forms of literacy?

The concept of geopolitics is basically defined as “the relationship between international political power and the geographical environment.” In this regard, some literacy thought to be related to geopolitical concepts may come to mind. Literacy includes political, economic, and geographical literacy. Geopolitical literacy has both coherent and divergent aspects with these types of literacy (Gray, 1988).

The discipline of geography, which has changed with modern times, has developed by being influenced by digitalization and globalization on the basis of inquiry and has led to the emergence of the paradox of geographical (Sever, 2022). From this perspective, geographic literacy can be defined as “the ability to use geographic understanding and geographic reasoning to make broad and comprehensive decisions” (Demirkaya & Çal Pektaş, 2022). In addition, an article published on the *National Geographic* (*National Geographic*, n.d.) website argued that people need geography literacy even in their daily lives and that this literacy is effective in making various decisions. To express the impact of geography on these decisions, they used examples such as a company’s failure to create the expected impact due to the wrong choice of location, inefficient transportation systems, or damage to fisheries due to rainwater runoff. In summary, there are aspects that distinguish geographical literacy from geopolitical literacy. As a matter of fact, geographical literacy can be considered within the scope of geographical literacy as it is compatible with geopolitics in the social and political sense in that it enables each member of society to make more meaningful, accurate and comprehensive decisions on all the issues that they may need in their daily lives, and it can meet the planning and decision-making needs of the 21st century world and the state.

Another type of literacy that is compatible with geopolitical literacy is political literacy. The generally accepted definition of political literacy was proposed by British political scientist Bernard Crick (İnan, 2021). Crick defined political literacy as the practical understanding of certain political concepts and discussions in ongoing life (Crick & Porter, 1978). In this way, a large proportion of people, especially young people, will be able to use information to influence politics in the context of political literacy (İnan, 2021). Political literacy is also a type of literacy that is considered necessary for a better understanding of the factors and influences that determine young people’s political views and their preferences to be involved or not (Dudley & Gitelson, 2002).

Political literacy is the type of literacy that develops the ability to use political issues effectively by acquiring the skills, confidence, and authority required for the development and implementation of personal political values and judgments (Dağ & Koçer, 2019). Wormald defined political literacy as the ability to govern oneself, develop political understanding, and comprehend the purpose of voting (Wormald, 1988). Zaller explained it as “political awareness” (Zaller, 1992). As a result of the definitions and evaluations made, political literacy and political literacy are literacies that progress in the same direction in terms of knowledge and skills, sensitization in the context of citizenship, political consciousness, and finally political participation. So much so that İnan (2021), in his book “Political Literacy”, handled the concepts of politics and policy with the same content, except for the distinction of linguistics.

3.5. Why is the concept of geopolitical literacy important?

Geopolitical literacy is one of the most appropriate types of literacy to be addressed in the context of multifunctional literacy in the globalizing world order; thus, it is important to understand its concepts and subjects. Multifunctional literacy can be defined as the use of previously acquired knowledge/skills in the context of literacy with full capacity for individual, social, social, cultural, and economic issues and the use of acquired experiences more efficiently in individuals’ lives by being at the highest level among literacy levels (Güneş, 2019). In this context, when the subjects and scope of geopolitics are considered, it is important that they take their place among literacy and are included in curricula (Sumida, 1999).

As of the current century, the strengthening of globally oriented structures has caused international relations to become more complex. In this context, material/spiritual values and spaces have left the mono-centric control of states. Space, which

is evaluated within the scope of geopolitical literacy, refers not only to the land on which one lives, but also to the spiritual values that promote national development as a national space and keep patriotic feelings alive. However, in the process, technology, which is one of the outputs of globalization and which Generation X fully identifies with, shakes geopolitical balances with new language and cultural norms and produces actors in its favor in different fields. These actors are presented as indispensable requirements of the age and serve as means to maintain control. Geopolitical literacy skills, on the other hand, raise individuals who define, question, and interpret these concepts and instill in them the awareness that they should be careful about controlling and power balances. In this way, students are expected to comprehend global power forms and balance strategies, potentials, and political and policy implications at an early stage. They are also expected to be able to comprehend geostrategic position/power, nation-geopolitical balance elements, ways of having a say in the international arena, and state-nation relations, which are frequently mentioned in international discourses, in a more meaningful way and to have the potential to become conscious citizens in the future (Defay, 2005; Hasanov, 2012).

The institutionalisation of territories within an actor or purpose, coupled with an important geographical component, gives rise to the development of diverse policies at the state level. These policies and strategies afford the ability to govern groups with specific identities and undertake a range of actions. In this context, the impact-response situations of geopolitics, which are of great consequence, play an important role in defining individuals' identities. This is achieved by affording them the capacity to engage in analytical criticism based on observation and to draw inferences from the intersection of geography and politics that have become embedded in the ideological landscape. In the context of the contemporary globalising world order, it is evident that socio-cultural values and structures, which are among the evolving elements of geopolitics, continue to grapple with the challenge of identity in the face of globalisation. The social structure, which is undergoing significant changes in the context of the globalising world order, has an impact on geopolitical balances through its management of diverse populations in a range of areas, including culture, language, space, food, agricultural production and technological development. This influence is not limited to structural considerations. In this context, it is crucial to comprehend and delineate the tenets of geopolitics through the lens of geopolitical literacy (Flint, 2006).

3.6 What are prospective social studies and geography teachers' perceptions of geopolitics?

The perceptions of geography and social studies 4th grade preservice teachers about the concept of geopolitics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Interview Data on Geopolitics

Categories	Codes	Number of Code Repetitions	Examples
Policy – Location Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . The impact of the Earth's chelae on politics . The relationship between settlement and politics . Political situation in the country 	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . "I think geopolitics is both the power of location and the pros and cons of a 'country's potential." (P3) . "Reflection of Landforms on Politics" (P5) . "Political situations arising from geographical locations of countries" (P11) . "It is a location – and policy-based concept" (P17)
Location Strength-Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Geographical location . Effective country location . Impact of special location 	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . "It is a concept that represents power arising from the country's own position." (P18) . "It represents geographical elements and power" (P1) . "Today it is a concept that proves the effectiveness of countries in their regions." (P13)
Political Influence of Countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Political interactions between countries . Reflections of the physical and human elements of countries' domestic and foreign policy 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . "Geopolitics is the reflection of a country's physical and human elements on its internal and external politics" (P14) . "Geopolitics is the politics of place, a blend of geopolitics and politics" (P15)

Advantages/Disadvantages of Countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Identification of issues in the interest of countries and those that are not . Utilization of the country's potential compared to other states 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . "Geopolitics is a concept that shows the advantage and disadvantage potential of countries compared to their environment according to location." (P8) . "This concept reveals the useful and useless potentials of countries" (P2)
Word Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Geopolitics as the Politics of Place 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . "In terms of the origin of the word, I think geo: means geology and the word political already means politics" (P12)

Table 2: Themes and explanations of prospective geography and social study teachers' geopolitics concepts

As shown in Table 2, geography and social studies preservice teachers' perceptions of the concept of geopolitics are presented. The pre-service teachers in both groups perceived the concept of geopolitics as being shaped by power, location, politics, advantage/disadvantage, and geographical and human elements. Some pre-service teachers answered the question directly by separating the word into its roots and defining it as a concept.

3.6. What are the views of prospective social studies and geography teachers regarding geopolitical literacy?

Table 3: Interview Data on the Concept of Geopolitical Literacy

Categories	Codes	Number of Code Repetitions	Examples
Map Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Analyzing maps together with geographical conditions . To interpret the politics of place using various map skills 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . "Interpretation based on a map with geographical conditions" (P15) . "Analyzing the current situation of countries based on maps" (P14)
Conceptual Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Acquiring geopolitical concepts and skills 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . "I think geopolitical literacy is the acquisition of geopolitical concepts and skills" (P1)
From Turkey's Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Analyze the advantages and disadvantages for Turkey . Predicting the future of the country by analyzing physical and human factors 	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . "To be able to see and interpret the opportunities, risks, and valuable aspects of our position in terms of Turkey" (P8) . "From the point of view of Turkey, the country we live in now, it can be called the ability to derive interpretations based on geography and a specific location" (P10) . "If an evaluation is made in the context of Turkey, is it possible to interpret the ongoing wars on the basis of politics and geography?" (P12)
Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . To evaluate political events in geographical contexts . Making geographical and political inferences about a place 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . "With geopolitical literacy, one can easily make inferences about which policies should be used to manage an area or location" (P4) . "To be able to evaluate political events in a geographical context" (P5) . "To be able to draw political conclusions about a place or country" (P9)
In terms of Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . To be able to comment on policies that countries can manage according to their location . To be able to relate country locations and policies . Identifying the advantages and disadvantages of countries 	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . "Having the ability to make predictions about the course of countries in geopolitical terms is called geopolitical literacy" (P2) . "To be able to evaluate reflections on the political positions of countries" (P6) . "To be able to look at a country and comment on its effectiveness in its region" (7)

Table 3: Themes and Explanations of Prospective Geography and Social Studies Teachers' Concepts of Geopolitical Literacy

In this section, the definitions and inferences of prospective geography and social study teachers' perspectives on geopolitical literacy are given.

In Table 3, the answers of pre-service teachers about geopolitical literacy shaped in line with their explanations are coded and given together with sample answers. When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that pre-service teachers evaluate geopolitical literacy in terms of "Map knowledge, Turkey, Countries, Inferences and Conceptual dimensions".

4. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The concept of geopolitics, which does not have a generally accepted definition, has been expressed in different dimensions over time and discussed in many ways. However, it is known that it includes some fundamentally accepted concepts, which can be expressed as state, politics, geography, etc. Understanding and analyzing these concepts are considered necessary for understanding geopolitical literacy. In this context, geopolitical literacy can be defined as "the ability to create critical mind maps and make inferences by considering and interpreting the values and conditions that countries have in domestic or foreign policy within the framework of their location and their social, cultural, political, economic, etc. characteristics on the basis of political geography and geopolitical elements".

The concept of geopolitics is basically defined as "the relationship between international political power and the geographical environment" (Gray, 1988). In this respect, geopolitical literacy can be explained as "the ability to interpret the political power that countries have achieved, the military, strategic, economic, political, political, cultural moves that they implement in the world order, taking into account the geographical environment". Understanding geopolitical literacy is important for individuals, countries, and geography. In the study developed on the basis of this importance, when the literature is examined, it is noticeable that the majority of the studies deal with the concept of geopolitics on the basis of various variables and in the form of a geopolitical approach. As a result, it is noteworthy that the literature mainly addresses geopolitics either conceptually or as an approach (Erman, 2017; İşcan, 2004; Yılmaz, 2012).

A review of the relevant literature on geopolitical literacy reveals a paucity of studies on the subject, with the existing research failing to fully align with the established definition of geopolitical literacy. The most prominent study on this topic is that of Demirkaya and Çal Pektaş. In their book chapter, Demirkaya and Çal Pektaş discussed geopolitical literacy in the context of political geography and geopolitics. Despite including geopolitical literacy in the subtitle, no definition was provided and the importance of globalisation and education was emphasised. In their view, the establishment of an open and democratic discourse within the international arena, founded upon geopolitical literacy, is inextricably linked to the capacity of education (Demirkaya & Çal Pektaş, 2022).

The general framework of the study, which was developed based on a qualitative approach, was constructed using the phenomenological research method. The study was conducted with the objective of elucidating the geopolitical perceptions of prospective teachers of geography and social studies by contributing to the definition of geopolitical literacy. In this context, the study sought to answer the following research question: What is the meaning of the concept of geopolitical literacy and why is it important? In order to ascertain responses to the aforementioned questions, it was necessary to investigate the emergence and evolution of geopolitics as a discipline, the influence of nation-based geopolitical schools on the concept of geopolitics, the definition of geopolitical literacy, and the characteristics that differentiate geopolitical literacy from other forms of literacy. What are the reasons for the importance of the concept of geopolitical literacy? What are the perceptions of prospective social studies and geography teachers regarding geopolitics? What are the perspectives of prospective social studies and geography teachers on the subject of geopolitical literacy? In the context of this research, the initial five findings are of particular importance in order to gain insight into the position of the concept of geopolitics within the existing literature

and to establish a foundation for defining the concept of geopolitical literacy. In this context, an examination of the conceptual process of geopolitics reveals that, despite the idea that geopolitics has been fully shaped as of the 19th century and the periods and representations that have contributed to geopolitical thought in different ways, geopolitics is a concept that has been used until today, with periods when its intellectual existence was known but not fully systematised. For this reason, the emergence of the concept as a science, which lacks a generally valid definition among both classical and modern geopoliticians, is addressed with a wide temporal framework, dating back to the late 19th century and early 20th century. The concept of geopolitical literacy can be defined as “the ability to make inferences by interpreting the location of countries and their social, cultural, political, economic values and conditions, domestic or foreign policy on the basis of political geography and to create critical mind maps by considering geopolitical elements”. The concept of geopolitical literacy facilitates the capacity to analyse not only the country of residence but also the global context from a broader perspective. Furthermore, it is a skill that encompasses the capacity to construct conceptual frameworks through the analysis and synthesis of factors such as geographical location, domestic and foreign policy, cultural context, geographical structure, and a holistic approach.

The ways in which people comprehend the space or environment in which they live vary according to the variables involved. From this perspective, mind maps can be conceptualised as a set of signs that are left by the spaces and environments that individuals inhabit mentally (Akengin, 2011). In other words, it is the process of acquiring and retaining knowledge about one’s own environment or the world, which involves understanding and updating this information when necessary. From this perspective, the capacity to construct mind maps represents a crucial element of geopolitical literacy. An individual’s capacity to spatially comprehend, analyse and draw meaningful inferences about their environment and the wider world is contingent upon their experience of this process. With experience, individuals are expected to provide meaningful interpretations of both the country and the world, develop analyses, syntheses, critical perspectives and generate ideas from new perspectives, thus acquiring geopolitical literacy skills. For example, individuals who have different learning experiences about the Blue Homeland Doctrine (Arıkan & Baysan, 2024) which has political, historical, legal, economic, military, geographical, diplomatic, etc. dynamics, will prioritise the importance of national maritime sovereignty.

Some of the findings of the research were attempted to reveal how pre-service teachers expressed the concept of geopolitics and how they defined the concept of geopolitical literacy in the interviews with fourth year pre-service teachers of social studies and geography education. The pre-service teachers’ definitions of the concept of geopolitics can be coded as politics, place, Turkey and other countries by going back to the origin of the word. The pre-service teachers tried to express geopolitics mostly on the basis of “place, politics and Turkey.”

The pre-service teachers tried to express geopolitical literacy on the basis of “map knowledge, countries and various inferences.” At this point, pre-service teachers mostly made explanations based on map knowledge and place. Social studies and geography pre-service teachers approached both the concept of geopolitics and geopolitical literacy from the perspective of “place.”

4.2. SUGGESTIONS

The main purpose of this study is to contribute to the definition and understanding of the concept of geopolitical literacy. In the light of the literature review conducted within the scope of the study and the data obtained from the student interviews, the following suggestions can be taken into consideration:

- Map usage: In order to facilitate more meaningful development of geopolitical literacy skills within the curriculum, it is recommended that a map-based learning environment characterised by a diverse range of maps be established.
- Curriculum update: In light of the necessity for heightened geopolitical awareness, it would be beneficial to conduct further research with the aim of enhancing the sub-skills of geopolitical literacy by revising the content of geography and social studies courses.

- The creation of an interactive lesson: In the context of geopolitical literacy, a variety of activities can be carried out in order to facilitate more active participation in the learning process, including field trips, the creation of virtual environments with augmented reality, material development, and so forth.
- Teacher training: The efficacy of in-service training programmes for teachers can be evaluated in order to enhance awareness of geopolitical literacy.

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