

# Is There Life After Facebook? Geopolitics of Technology and Other Foreign Policy Essays

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Book Review by Murray Hunter



“For one thing, major world and European powers are often reluctant to engage less prominent stakeholders (nationality, class or generation). Their academic circles tend to follow about the same pattern: What matters – far too often – is WHO, not WHAT is to be published. This discouraging climate makes it increasingly difficult to generate or balance new ideas, to even participate or to steam up new visions, as well as to forge common approaches, and to secure broad consensus over the vital issues of our shared concern.” – was stated in the cover letter I recently got along with a book manuscript...

I first met Professor Anis Bajrektarevic at a conference in Bangkok years ago and was truly captivated by his speech there. Bajrektarevic’s style is unique and humbling to all listening as he displayed total authority over the subject, making everybody think deeply about the message he delivered. Over the last few years of our personal and professional relationship we have been able to share many ideas and snippets of knowledge and concepts, which have all been invaluable insights.

One of the things that I have always encouraged Bajrektarevic to do is to publish book on the subjects of his interest and passion. The world indeed should have access to what he has to say on the topics of geopolitics, law, foreign policy, ethics, sustainability, technology, energy, political economy, philosophy and the arts. Bajrektarevic has the knack of being able to integrate all these fields of natural and human science together as they really appear to exist within our human domain, through novel paradigmatic approaches.

Bajrektarevic is able to simultaneously take a holistic interpretative view while at the same time select and analyze specific events of meaning in a wonderful blend of syntax and semantics. He conveniently uses the metaphor of language to view the world by being reflective, instructive and predictive. Firm and forthcoming in his sharp analysis of international affairs and diplomacy, or of technology in relation to geo-economic, energy security or to liberties and freedoms, he easily walks the edge into the first class political philosophy. In this way, he is able to explain deep socio-political

interlinkages (ranging from en mass wonders like Lady Gaga and Paris Hilton to ancient times of Plato, or from the “Matrix” and “Truman Show” movies to a subtle analysis of security structures in the world politics) at a level of skill, unmatched in the field, and for this reason I consider him one of today’s great thinkers.

I’m so happy that this collection of his writings has been assembled into a single book showing the evolution of his thinking about events upon the world stage over the past years. This was not so easy. Tireless and passionate, he is not only a research professor but also a teaching one as well as a devoted practitioner who organizes many events and runs innovative projects including a valuable transcontinental study trips for his students. In his words: ‘to contribute to the horizontalization of the grand ideas, that of the EU and of the ASEAN’.

To me the very title of Bajrektarevic’s book *Is There Life After Facebook?* is a provocative challenge to the reader to think about what is happening. He questions our accepted norms before the cover is opened. Then in part one “Cyber space, Energy Charge, Quantum Field – Less Explored Geopolitical Aspects and Other Foreign Policy Essays” he opens the paradigms looking at issues in ways we usually don’t consider:

In his first essay “Climate Change – Humans Remain the Same”, Bajrektarevic pulls the carpet of complacency from under us and delivers a stern warning about survival of the human race and our institutions set up to deal (poorly he says) on the matter of climate change. He points out that we do not even have any common view about the “realities of the planet and how to address them”. While stressing out that the over-polluted public sphere (social media networks) and contaminated biosphere are results of the “synchronized attack”, the current situation he accurately describes as: “cognitive deficit crisis”, which we eagerly spend in a limbo of denial – all on a brink of self-imposed “environmental holocaust”.

In his second article, Bajrektarevic describes the off- and on-line fields of freedoms and their illusions, while the mankind twists between the Kantian and Hobbesian world. He has masterfully merged many paradigms and themes into this unique article: Ancient philosophy, popular culture and literature classics, contemporary security and history of diplomacy, Newtonian way of life and our institutions, the EU crisis and abandoned youth, OWS movement and Arab Spring, as well as our own perceptions of reality (and/or delusion) are all there. Bajrektarevic introduces the term McFB (a synthesis of McDonalds and Facebook) to install upon us the sheet of US imperial culture that has descended upon the world and now the backdrop of most societies. Here he is hinting at our obedience and false notions of convenience: “...neither globalization nor the McFB way of life is a shortcut to development; the social media networks are only a communication tool, not a replacement for independent critical thinking”. Finally in the article, he introduces Buddhist Dharma and the quantumrelativity paradigm (possibilities, manifestations and probabilities). This article truly displays the intellectual complexity of the man.

In his last text of the so-called “Mc-Facebook” trilogy, “Go Home Occupy Movement,” Bajrektarevic extends the metaphors he developed taking a novel approach at organized societal dynamics, security quest, and institutional control over our lives – be it a fast-food chain, administration or social media networks. Author then quotes both Frank Zappa (“Robespierre of the modern US music scene” – he says) and the US President Obama to make his point, before turning back to classics. Rejuvenating Weberian views, he innovatively revisits and rethinks the very existence of contemporary organization and their real reason for existence. Bajrektarevic clearly challenges an established view that we are living the world of “decentralized but unified intelligence”, revealing very intriguing argumentation to claim that “unless operationalized by the system, both intellectualism (human autonomy, mastery and purpose), and technological breakthroughs were traditionally perceived as a threat”. This article is indeed a scary warning about what our society is becoming.

“From Lisbon to Barcelona – all the forgotten EU instruments” looks at how global structural changes are threatening Europe’s competitiveness (obsessively focusing on financial capital on the expenses of human, environmental and social capital). Bajrektarevic notes how the dream of a knowledge based economy has been eroded along with Europe’s manufacturing base with great consequences (and in absence of coherent demographic policy), while institutions are passively looking on. Bajrektarevic also observes that the Union has lost the influence of its left, is plagued with a disinterested youth, and institutions intent on punishing members who fall into crisis through debt.

With the Euro-debt crisis, Europe is set of decline unless the Lisbon strategy is restaged, foreign policy priorities re-examined, and cross-generational solidarity reaffirmed, he warns.

Next, Bajrektarevic takes an exceptionally sharp and forthcoming view on the strategic triangle: energy, technology, geopolitics. In the “Geopolitics of Technology and the Hydrocarbon Status Quo” he considers the (lost) moment of contingency, the shock waves when people are prepared to consider alternatives to the status quo. Bajrektarevic further examines the notion of deeper psychologization of our energy dependence, especially on the side of the OECD world. For their own very specific reasons, which Anis reiterates, each of the world’s major military and economic powers has little motivation to alter its energy mix or consuming patterns by embracing alternatives to hydrocarbons.

In one of professor’s more recent pieces the “Geopolitics of Quantum Buddhism: Our Pre-Hydrocarbon Tao Future” looks at economics, debt and Greece. Bajrektarevic then poses one of the most critical questions of our existence “where did we select hydrocarbons as our energy source?” “How did we get things so wrong?” posing are we in the cosmos or chaos? We exist within a cycle of survival, or is this just an illusion – as author contemplates through the rest of this article, ‘walking’ between geopolitics and biology, physics and philosophy, anthropology and astronomy. Our scarcity obsessed culture can be easily overcome – he concludes – as there is no crisis in the deeper layers of reality.

In the last essay of his “geopolitics of technology” trilogy: “Energy of Geopolitics and Technology of Geo-economics”, professor continues on the theme of energy and widens the discussion to incorporate all the major theatres of Asia, Europe, Middle East or American continent (including the eloquent commentaries on the Arab Spring, the Thai elections, North Korea, Russia, China, Syria, Israel, Iran, the EU and US policy). He intertwines the complex politico-military constellations between these nations in relationship to the factors pushing for “defensive modernization”, democracy (e.g. middle class and its direction), and change. He highlights the structural issues that must be addressed if these inner or interstate conflicts are ever going to be resolved, interweaving geopolitics, social cohesion, modernization, (ideologisation of) religion, security, and detente. This is all related back to the international forums and instruments that are in place to solve these issues. Again the descriptive language Bajrektarevic uses through the article has been designed no doubt to jolt thoughts and ideas from the readers.

The next text turns to author’s specialty, the law. International law is developing around us and Anis is one of the very few who have actually quantified this ongoing by mapping it out. “The Justice–Home Affairs Diplomacy: The Palermo Convention, Ten Years After – Towards the Universal Criminal Justice” is an eye-witness account that looks at the concept of universal criminal justice. It also postulates several important definitions of author himself, such as his memorable definition of corruption: “Seemingly victimless, hidden trade-off between influence and gain”. Bajrektarevic examines the political commitment, legal basis and conventions that are steadily building this international legal regime, exploring issues concerning illegal migration, organized crime, corruption, and terrorism. Within this analysis is an extremely detail chronology of international legal instruments and intergovernmental institutions that act as the structure to this emerging international legal framework.

Part II “Edges of the planet, Unconstrained Five and the space in between” opens with a superb analysis of the Caspian Basin in “The Caspian basin and Arctic – Critical Similarities”. Bajrektarevic argues that the Caspian – due to the meltdown of the Soviet Union – has opened up new legal and security dilemmas along the vast economic opportunities for its riparian states and beyond. Bajrektarevic screens the dynamics of the region with the allegedly vast untapped oil and gas reserves from the geopolitical, legal, geo-morphological and historical point of view and examining the arguments about whether the Caspian “water plateau” is indeed a sea or lake.

Bajrektarevic continues to apply the holistic paradigm to the geopolitics of the Arctic and Antarctic, a frontier often ignored in political and legal commentaries. “Arctic and Antarctic: Two Poles – Different Scores. Similarities and Differences in Security Structures Surrounding the Two Polar Caps” is a prolific analysis and full authority on the matter. Author considers the impact of global warming on the polar caps, existing legal system governing the regions, maritime zones, continental shelf,

shipping lanes, natural resources, economic development, and security challenges. He elaborates on the Arctic diplomacy, geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics of littoral states, as well as the overall relationship between the Arctic Five: Russia, the United States, Canada, Denmark, and Norway, and issues such as territorial claims and disputed areas, before considering the Antarctic scenery, and its treaty system.

Bajrektarevic in this monograph of essays has skillfully blended history, evolutionary biology, geopolitics, international law and foreign policies, technology, philosophy, quantum mechanics, informatics, astrophysics and cognitive science, and analysis all together with a complex uptake and digestion of the contemporary issues within the world today. He is one of the few that can undertake this complex analysis successfully and this is the hallmark of his fabulously novel perspectives that he is able to put into any subject. If the “world is flat” today, it is mostly in the field of ideas, with the single (over-) dominant narrative. However, Bajrektarevic’s writings are more than just a counter-narrative. This monograph is a tribute to transdisciplinary thinking the future of intellectual thought in geopolitical discipline of which Bajrektarevic is in the vanguard. Bajrektarevic’s approach to geopolitics and style is one that will be emulated by many others in the future, if we only wish to reverse the ruling trend of compartmentalizing and alienating the science.

Finally, I welcome you to a journey through Anis's book into unexplored and under-elaborated, to the author's own “quantum field” of numerous possibilities, and dense web of meanings.