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Geography and Strategy: Their Interrelationship

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GEOGRAPHY AND STRATEGY: THEIR INTER-RELATIONSHIP

A lecture delivered
at the Naval War College
on 17 September 1957 by
Professor Saul B. Cohen

The topic of my discussion today is *Geography and Strategy: Their Interrelationship*. Let me say at the outset that this is one of those topics that suffers as much in its being oversold as in its being undersold. The oversellers have a rigid, almost deterministic approach. They proclaim that geography determines strategy because it dictates state policies.

The Nature of Geography

In actuality, geography does not determine strategy. Indeed, geography, *per se*, does not even influence or condition strategy. What is the case is that man's *knowledge* of geography and the ideas that he derives from this knowledge influence and condition strategy.

This may sound like hairsplitting to some of you, but I submit that the difference is one of concept not of semantics, and hope to demonstrate this during the course of the lecture.

Why have analysts taken the approach that "geography conditions or influences strategy?" Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that all too many who have written on this theme have only a hazy idea of what geography is. No less an authority than the late Professor Nicholas Spykman at times fell into the trap of assuming that geography meant the factors of size, shape, location, typography and climate, and nothing more. He therefore was guilty of stating, "Because the geographic characteristics of states are relatively unchanging and unchangeable, the

geographic demands of these states will remain the same for centuries.”¹ Others, too numerous to mention, really talk only about topography when they discuss geography; that is, they only concern themselves with descriptions of slopes. Harold and Margaret Sprout, themselves primarily political scientists, state the problem frankly in a recent monograph. I quote: “Political scientists who specialize in international relations do not seem to be acquainted in the main with the methodical literature of geographic science. They are much more likely, in our judgment, to have derived their ideas about geography from the writings of Spykman, Wright, and other non-geographers.”²

If we know what geography is not, then we must proceed to ask ourselves what it is. Only if we are clear as to the substance and methods of this discipline can we successfully relate it to strategy. A simplified definition is that *geography is the study of man in reciprocal relation to the stage that is this earth of ours*. The essence of its methodology is to map, analyze and interpret the areal significance of this interrelationship — to show how and why man-earth relationships differ from place to place on the earth’s surface.

A surveyor tells us that Canada has 3,846,000 square miles. A geographer tells us that 80% of Canada is climatically unsuited to mass settlement; that, in reality, the Canada that can support a settled people on a vast scale is 750,000 square miles in area.

It is important to know the “wheres” and “whys” of physical elements like climate, soils, vegetation and rock structure (especially as it relates to mineral distribution). But geography does not stop with the physical environment. It maps and analyzes cultural differences as related to this physical environment. During the Middle East’s Khamsin periods (the hot, dusty, desert-

¹Spykman, N. “Geography and Foreign Policy,” *American Political Science Review*, Feb., 1938.

²Sprout, Harold and Margaret, *Man-Milieu Relationship Hypothesis in the Context of International Politics*, Center of International Studies, Princeton University, 1956, p. 37.

born winds), human energy and productivity decreases. Knowing that humid coastal areas are even more adversely affected by such winds than higher plateaus helps us understand people's actions during that period.

Differences among peoples within a country may have developed, or become accentuated, because of isolation imposed by the terrain. Thus, the Basques developed a separate language and way of life from the people of the Spanish Meseta because of the isolating effects of the Pyrenees. The Kurds, in northern Iraq, are a mountaineering grazing people, who differ racially, linguistically and culturally from the Arabs of Mesopotamia. They constitute a separatist element in modern Iraq. Often, such differences make it difficult for a state to achieve strong, centralized control.

These and other examples can be cited, but the essence can be summed up thus: people and their activities differ from place to place. Often, although certainly not always, these differences can be explained in cause-effect terms that stem from the study of geographic relationships. In examining the cause-effect relationships between the earth and man, many have been tempted to overinflate the influences of the environment in this relationship. Perhaps some of you are acquainted with an old story designed to point up man's relative insignificance in relation to nature. As the story goes, were it possible to pack all mankind into a box, as with sardines, such a box would be small enough to fit into the Grand Canyon. And the story heightens man's insignificance by suggesting that if the box could teeter on a knife's edge at the lip of the canyon, the wagging of a dog's tail could push the box and all mankind with it into oblivion.

Now this story tries to illustrate the role of physical geography in relation to man — but in a distorted manner. Certainly we will agree that geography is not simply a recognition of the existence of that deep chasm on the earth's surface that we call

the Grand Canyon. Were we to state that the Grand Canyon is a feature of the broken Colorado Plateau that has been cut by weathering and stream erosion to a depth of 6,000 feet and a width of 5 to 15 miles, that resistant limestone and sandstone strata cause steep cliffs on each side of the Canyon, that above the inner gorge are softer formations — mainly shale — that form a gently sloping platform, that the river itself is a V-shaped notch cut into ancient crystalline rocks, we would not be dealing with geography but rather with physiography (land-form analysis).

The geography of the Grand Canyon involves relating the physiography to tourism, to the directions that various trails can take, to the stream drop of seven feet per mile, the rapids, the potential for water power and the conditions of navigation. Geography therefore involves earth-man interrelationships.

But to use the size of the Grand Canyon to express nature's dwarfing of man is not particularly well taken. Man can dam the Colorado and fill the Canyon with water, if he is so disposed. He can, with nuclear energy, blast new holes of equal magnitude or fill present ones. He can bridge the Canyon, or fly over it. If he desires, and is willing to pay the price, man *can* move mountains. I say this not because we are likely to move many mountains, but to point out that nature only overpowers us with its immensity when we do not want to go through or over it. Obviously man's sights, desires and capabilities differ from place to place over the earth's surface. What we can think of and are capable of carrying out in the United States is far different from human aspirations and capabilities in Mozambique, and part of what we are is a product of our physical environment. When, therefore, we consider man and his activities in relation to his environment, we have to take into account his specific view of the environment from his specific framework of thought and activities. But, let us not make the mistake of underestimating man as an active agent in relation to nature.

The Nature of Political Geography

Turning to the specific relationship between geography and national strategy, we must first explore that branch of geography that is known as Political Geography and that is defined as “the *Comparative Strategy of Space, Resources, and Men.*” Political Geography seeks out the relationships between the physical and the cultural environment, on the one hand, and differentiated political space on the other. From these relationships Political Geography offers a basis for national strategy in times of both peace and war, because national strategy’s concern is to make the best use of all of a nation’s resources to realize national policy. To utilize concepts derived from Political Geography, the strategist draws upon the following kinds of information :

1. The physical environment, such as landforms (including coastal configuration), climate, weather, soils, vegetation, water bodies, accessways.
2. The transportation and communication of goods, men and ideas — most fittingly termed “circulation.”
3. Economic resources, employed and potential, and the stage of technology at which these resources are being employed.
4. Population — its distribution and characteristics, including sectional and national psychology.
5. The body politic — its apparatus, characteristics, ideals and goals. This may be treated on various levels, from the national state to an administrative component of that state, such as a province, or to a regional grouping of national states and other political bodies.
6. Space, including location, shape and boundaries, as they affect internal character and external relations of political bodies.

The Power Inventory

Not all of these factors need be taken into account in weighing specific problems of geography-strategy interrelations. Indeed, much of our analysis work suffers from an overabundance of data — from an attempt to collect all possible features of the physical and cultural environment only to founder for lack of a common index base. The crux of the problem is to search out the elements that are germane and can be fruitfully applied.

For example, we have become increasingly concerned with space and numbers in assessing the relative strength of nations and blocs. China and India especially loom important on the power scene to those analysts who feel that the weight of their populations may tip the balance of world power. The geographer has to concern himself with space and numbers — but not as the statistician does. Instead, we try to search out meaningful relationships. Sheer numbers are translated into population densities. These densities are expressed in terms of arable land (which, in turn, reflects climate, soil, slope, etc.). The numbers are expressed in terms of urbanized population — a good index for reflecting technology. The raw material base can be expressed by such a factor as steel production.

The following tables suggest how the power inventory can be used in manageable terms. Table I draws together the basic data and the index base. Table II shows that there is no single answer to the power base, but rather a series of answers that depend for their selection upon the intelligence and experience of the analyst (for which no electronic computer can substitute).

What this method cannot quantify is the ideological strength, policies and goals of the political units. It can only provide the framework from which to study these aspects.

TABLE I
AN INVENTORY OF NATIONAL POWER

	Total Area in Square Miles	Pop. Density Square Miles Arable Land	Total Population	Urban Population	Per Cent of Urban to Total Pop.	Arable Land in Square Miles	Steel Production in Tons*
U. S.	2,977,128	240	170 mil.	114 mil.	67%	700,000	88 mil.
U. S. S. R.	8,954,400	235	210 "	86 "	41%	900,000	45 "
CHINA	3,490,301	1,900	630 "	75 "	12%	330,000	5.6***
INDIA	1,138,814	740	390 "	65 "	17%	520,000	6 ***
BRAZIL	3,288,050	800	60 "	22 "	37%	75,000	1.3"
CANADA	3,854,144	110	16 "	10 "	62%	145,000	3.2"
WESTERN EUROPE	1,219,300	980	280 "	165 "	60%	285,000	71 "

SAME DATA TRANSLATED INTO INDEX TERMS

U. S.	2.7	8	10.6	11.4	5.6	9.3	68
U. S. S. R.	8.1	8	13.1	8.6	3.4	12	34
CHINA	3.2	1	39.4	7.5	1	4.4	4.3
INDIA	1	2.6	24.4	6.5	1.4	6.9	4.6
BRAZIL	3	2.4	3.8	2.2	3.1	1	1
CANADA	3.5	17.3	1	1	5.2	1.9	2.5
WESTERN EUROPE	1.1	1.9	15	16.5	5	3.8	55

*1954 statistics were used because they seem to best reflect national steel production ratios for the foreseeable future. U. S. production in 1955 was 115 mil. tons (1957 capacity is rated at 133 mil. tons), and Western European steel production for 1955 was 80 million tons.

**achievable target.

TABLE II

	Average Composite Index	Average Index, Excluding Total Population	Average Index Excluding Total Pop. and Urban Population	Average Index for Total Area, Arable Land, Urban Pop.
U. S.	16.5	17.5	18.7	7.8
U. S. S. R.	12.5	12.4	13.1	9.5
CHINA	8.7	3.6	2.8	5
INDIA	6.8	3.8	3.3	4.8
BRAZIL	2.4	2.1	2.1	2.1
CANADA	4.6	5.4	6.1	2.1
WESTERN EUROPE	14	13.9	13.3	7.1

Framework of Analysis

Basic to all geopolitical analyses are two distinctive features — methods and tools. The methods used are comparative; they mark off and analyze differences between political units of space in the light of the physical and cultural environment. The tools are maps and other vehicles for representing the distribution of the elements under consideration. Without the map, there can be no geography, because it is the map — either visual or in our mind's eye — that enables us to apperceive the differences that exist from place to place on the earth's surface.

There are four levels on which to treat geography and strategy: global, regional, national and local. While they cannot be completely separated from one another, global and regional views, with their emphasis on large-scale spatial groupings or associations, generally emphasize different types of geographical data than views concerned with specific national states or portions of those states. I will limit this discussion to geography as it relates to global strategy and to some of the major geopolitical patterns that have been derived from various views of the earth.

The starting point for all geopolitical views is *space*. Space is the expression of the distribution of the total gamut of the physical and cultural features of the environment and their interrelationship. Thus, spatial relations are a geographer's simplified approach to an understanding of earth-man political interrelationships. But views of the significance of space differ, because each analyst works within two environmental frameworks: the environment as he thinks it is, and the environment as it actually is. Sprout has used the terms "apperceived environment" and "operational environment" to distinguish between the two.³ This takes us back to the point made at the beginning of the hour — that man's knowledge of geography and the ideas and concepts that flow from this knowledge are what condition strategy.

³Sprout, Harold and Margaret, *Ibid.*

Admiral Arleigh Burke has mentioned that Navy planners had, several years ago, predicted the current lines of development of the Soviet Navy.⁴ This is an example of how American analysts were able to project themselves into the geopolitical environment of Soviet naval planners and to view the world from their standpoint. It is also probably true that the apperceived and the operational environments of Soviet planners were almost alike, for the better the data and the more rational the use of this data, the more these environments are likely to coincide. From a Soviet point of view, as well as from our view of their view, aircraft carriers are unrealistic. But if we were to try to predict the lines of development of, let us say, the Egyptian Navy, we might not be able to anticipate the fact that for prestige purposes they might aspire to a carrier despite the complete illogic of the situation. This example is, of course, an extreme case of illogic, but I hope that it demonstrates the point.

Geopolitical Views of the Earth

Global views of the earth first take stock of the patterns of arrangement of lands and waters. One view is that Eurasia and Africa constitute 66% of the earth's total land area and include 85% of the earth's population. Encircling this huge landmass are open seas that are three times as vast as all of the land combined. Here, then, is a distinct view of what we can call "World Island." Its focus is the center of the earth's largest landmass. Another view is of the Northern Hemisphere — i.e., Eurasia, North Africa, and North and Central America. This embraces 80% of the earth's land area and 85% of its people. The focus for this global view is the air and ocean space that links North America with Eurasia. There are other global views, such as the one that centers on the Atlantic, and views the adjoining Americas, Europe and Africa as the key landmasses of the earth.

From these differing views of the earth's spatial patterns have evolved differing strategic views. One is that control of the

⁴Burke, Arleigh A., "Problems Confronting the Navy Today," Lecture to the Naval War College, September 9, 1957.

heart of Eurasia could mean world domination. Another is that control of those peninsular lands which rim Asia, like Western Europe, the Middle East, South and East Asia could mean world domination. Another is that control of the Polar World by one power could spell world control. Still another is that a two-or three-Great Power World can achieve geopolitical balance.

Regardless of the various viewpoints, this much is clear: strategists ascribe varying degrees of importance to various parts of the earth, so that political and military actions are greatly influenced by their geographical views.

This also applies on the national, or even local, level. Certain countries or portions of countries differ from one another physically and culturally. It is strategically significant to know these differences, whether we refer to pass routes, factory distributions, internal religious rivalries, or economic differences from place to place. Knowing the geography of an area in detail is a prerequisite to applying a sound strategy towards it, in war or in peace.

Because the ideas that various people hold about geography differ, their views on geography's influence upon strategy are bound to differ. This does not mean that there are absolutely no common or universal views of the geopolitical environment. When we place the emphasis upon physiographic or climatic patterns, or upon the distribution of land and seas, we start with essentially the same framework. But as we relate these elements to the distribution and circulation of men, goods and ideas, we come up with appraisals that are unique products of their framers. In this sense, there is no single answer — there is no *one* geopolitical view of the world.

Let us now turn to some of the more important appraisals of earth geopolitical patterns — appraisals that have influenced the minds of those who have guided the destinies of states for the past three-quarters of a century.

Mahan — Unity of the Seas

Alfred T. Mahan, the second President of this War College and one of the first to relate his views on geography to global strategy, sketched out certain geopolitical patterns in a career of lectures and writings that commenced 71 years ago. His global view emphasized the unity of the sea as a means of controlling the sea from key land bases. He recognized: (1) the significance of Russia's dominant location in Central Asia; (2) the advantages and disadvantages of its landlocked position; (3) the instability of the zone between the thirty and forty degree parallels in Asia — an instability which, at that time, made this area a crush zone between Britain and Russia; and (4) the significance of Panama and Suez as marking the southern limit of most active commerce and politics. This last view, of course, did not recognize the possibility of shipping becoming too large for these canals.

What is especially important is that Mahan spoke not of sea power as such, but of sea-transported power. In this view, unified control of the landbase (from either land or air) is essential to a unified control of the sea. Mahan's views of the world, as well as those of so many who followed him, was Eurasian-centered.

Mackinder and Land Power

Next, we turn to the views of Sir Halford J. Mackinder — that most remarkable Englishman whose geographic writings and lectures over the span of half a century led to the establishment of modern geography as a university field in Britain. He is perhaps best known for the influence of his writings upon German geographers and German geopoliticians.

Mackinder was trained in biology, history, and law, as well as in topography, strategy and geography. This will explain his interest in historical analogies, as well as in the ecological studies that led him to geography and, finally, to diplomacy. Some measure of his philosophy can be discerned from the following quota-

tion, "Man and not nature initiates but nature in large measure controls. My concern is with the general physical control, rather than the causes of universal history."⁵

Seldom have one man's theories been as exposed to critical examination as have Mackinder's over the past decade — this, after nearly four decades of passive or uncritical acceptance. But, after all is said and done, most strategists continue to view the world as suggested by Mackinder. The American Foreign Policy of Containment of the Postwar Era, with its overseas alliances peripheral to the Eurasian landmass, continues to view the world as seen by Mackinder.

His theory, first postulated in 1904, was that the inner area of Eurasia is the pivot region of world politics. He warned that rule of the heart of the world's greatest landmass could become the basis for world domination. This view of the earth was not essentially different from that of Mahan (although it was sketched out in far greater geographic detail), but the interpretation differed significantly. Mackinder warned that it was entirely possible for the landpower that gained control of the pivot area (be it Russia, Germany or even China) to outflank the maritime world.

What many critics have failed to note, as they have expounded on Mackinder's theories, is that his views of the world kept changing. As a geographer, Mackinder was more aware than most of his critics that man's use of the physical environment constantly changes, and even the environment itself changes, albeit on a minute scale and at a slower pace.

I am going to show you three maps that will demonstrate how and why Mackinder changed his views of the world. In Map 1, the pivot area, as defined in 1904, was that part of Eastern Europe and Northern Asia characterized by polar or interior drainage.

⁵Mackinder, H. J., "The Geographical Pivot of History," *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 23, 1904, pp. 442.

In Map 2, the Heartland, as defined in 1919, included all of Central and Eastern Europe, and the Tibetan and Mongolian upland courses of the great rivers of India and China.⁶ This map took into account advances in land transportation, population increases and industrialization. Because of these advances, Mackinder felt that the Baltic and Black Sea areas were strategically part of the Heartland. These western lands were part of the Eurasian Lowland Plain, and lay within the winter snowline.

In 1943, at the age of 83, Mackinder published an article which reexamined the Heartland.⁷ In the article he discarded his 1919 dictum, which had been: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland. Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island. Who rules the World Island commands the World."

Unfortunately, Mackinder drew no map to accompany his article. I have therefore prepared a map which cartographically expresses what Mackinder wrote. First, Lenaland (the Central Siberian Tableland) is detached from the Heartland. Thus, Heartland now consisted largely of the cleared forest and steppe portions of Eurasia.

More important, Mackinder's concept of the map of the world has changed. He now spoke of a North Atlantic geopolitical unit as being as significant as the Heartland — its transpolar counterpart. He also referred to monsoonal Asia and the South Atlantic Basin as important geopolitical units of the future.

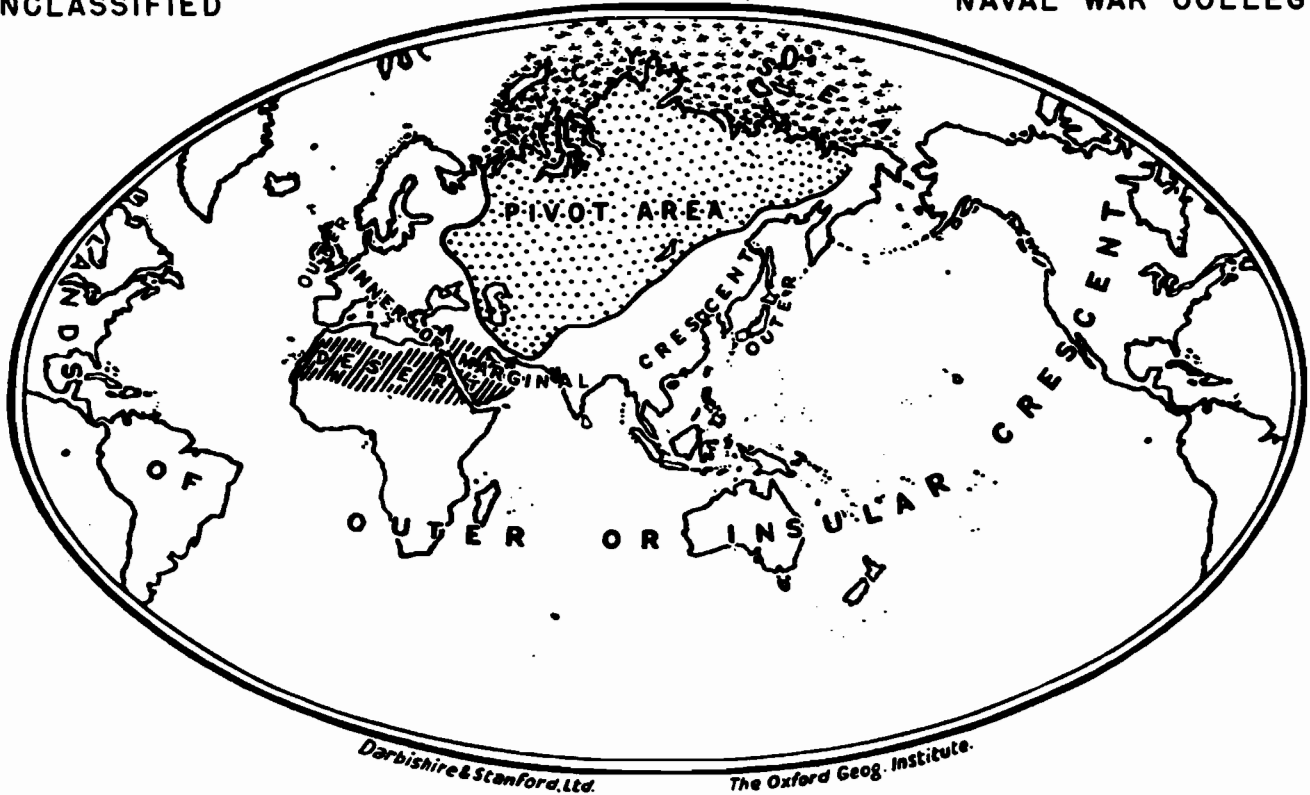
The changing yardsticks that Mackinder used in drawing the boundaries for Heartland indicate that the original concept of the pivot area of the world had changed from that of an area of movement (i.e., as a region of mobility for land forces) to one of a "power citadel," based upon people, resources and interior lines. The three maps — which reflect his changing views of the earth — and the composite one indicate that he was well aware of technological developments, including airpower.

⁶Mackinder, H. J. *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, Holt & Co., New York, 1942.

⁷Mackinder, H. J. "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 4, July, 1943.

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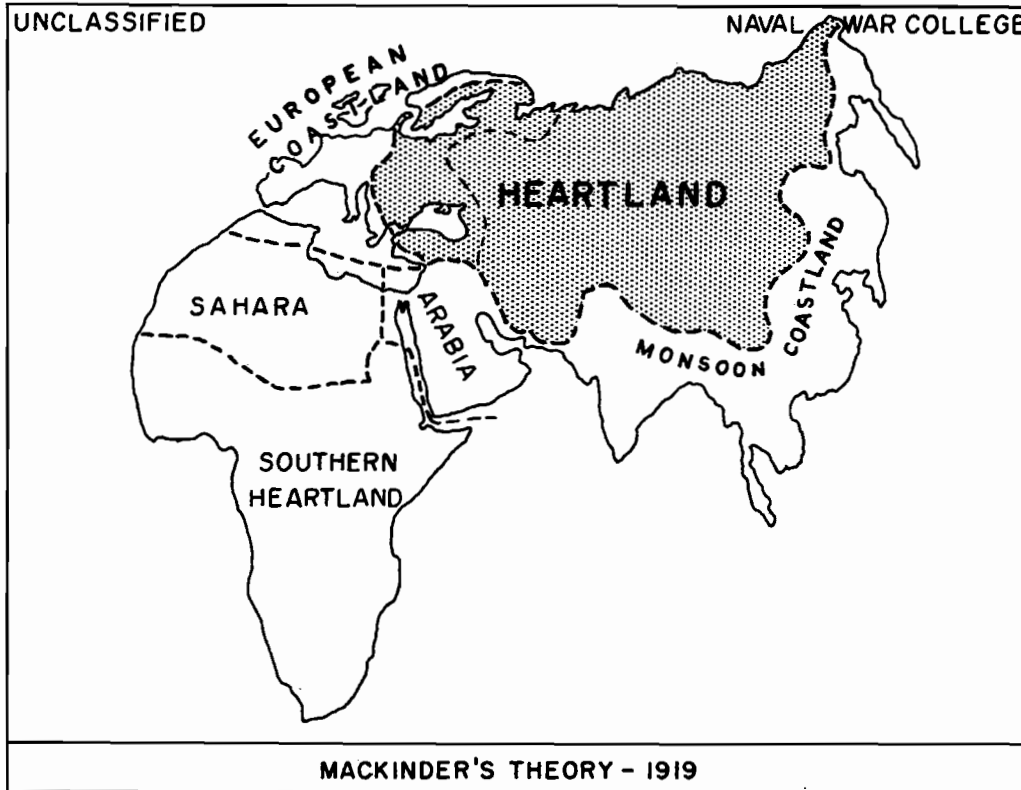
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MACKINDER'S THEORY - 1904

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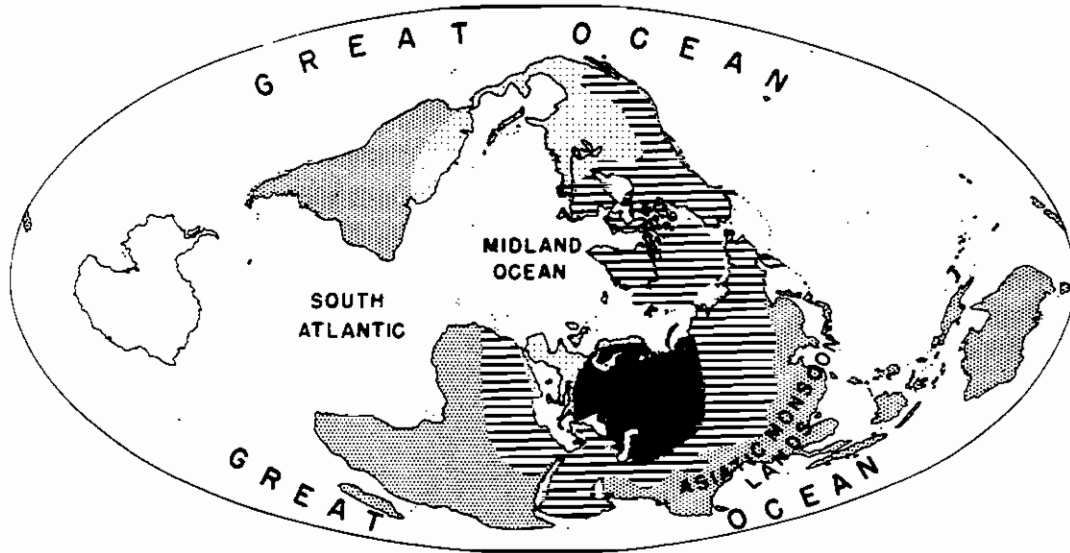
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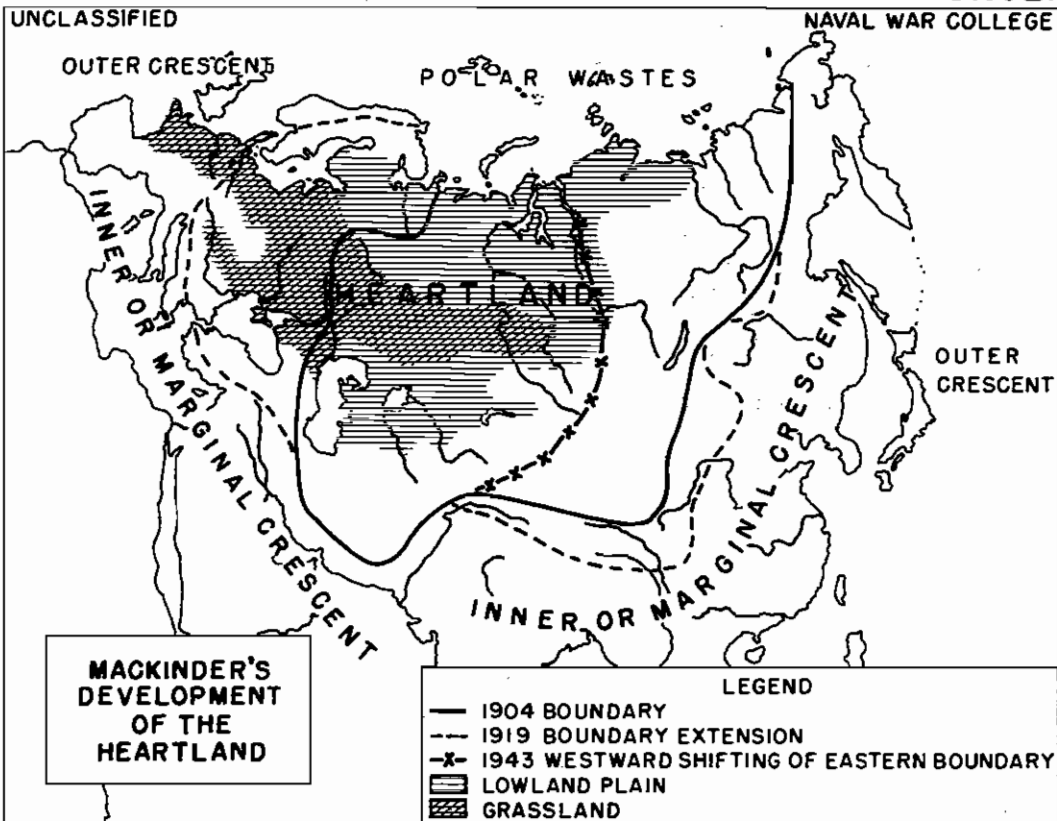
MACKINDER'S THEORY 1943



- HEARTLAND
- GIRDLE OF DESERTS AND WILDERNESS
- MIDLAND OCEAN BASIN
- GREAT OCEAN DRAINAGE

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It is futile to debate the merits of Mackinder's views today unless we take into account the changes which he himself made during his lifetime. There are, of course, certain weaknesses that the Heartland theory exhibits. One is that its centrality is not necessarily an advantage, because of the concentration of targets in the event of air attack from peripheral lands. Another fact, unforeseen up to World War II's end, is that the Soviet Union is today far better equipped to control Eastern Europe's tidal lands than is Germany. Thus, we might rephrase the dictum to state that who rules the European and West Siberian portions of the U. S. S. R. commands the rest of Eastern Europe.

What happens if we accept Mackinder's general thesis and apply it to the crucial problem of Germany? Both the United States and the Soviet Union claim to favor German reunification. However, their inability to reach a workable agreement may be conditioned by the geopolitical situation sketched by Mackinder.

The present boundary between the German Federal Republic and East Germany follows the lower reaches of the Elbe, and then swings westward to include the Harz Mountains and the Thuringian Forest. It divides a seaward-oriented manufacturing state from a landward-oriented industrial state, in which agriculture plays a relatively stronger role. Mackinder's 1943 western Heartland boundary did not attempt to follow a sharp line, but was simply indicated as a border zone running through Central Europe. The present boundary between East and West Germany generally coincides with this.

The Iron Curtain has made a Rimland State of West Germany as thoroughly as it has made a Heartland State of East Germany. If Germany succeeds in reuniting, what will the consequences be? A reunited, but neutralized, Germany would constitute the broadest and most utilized portion of the Heartland-Rimland frontier zone. It would be the only part of the boundary that does not have a barrier nature. It could remain neutral only through its own desires and efforts. A reunited Germany that

became thoroughly oriented towards the Heartland power would make the independence of the European Rimland untenable. Were such a Germany to throw in its lot with the Rimland world, the existence of this landward extension would be a permanent bone of contention, although not necessarily crucial to the survival ability of Heartland. The maintenance of political stability, from the viewpoint suggested by Mackinder, would therefore call for either the status quo or a thoroughly neutralized, united Germany.

Spykman and Interior Sea Lines

Nicholas Spykman had the same global view as did Mackinder, but rejected the land-power doctrine to say, "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world."⁸ To Spykman, the Rimland, or the peninsular lands of World Island, was the key to the struggle for the world. In the past, the fragmentation of the Western European portion of Rimland, and the power of the United Kingdom and the United States, made unitary control of the Rimland impossible. Spykman feared that one power, such as Germany, might seize control of European Rimland and then sweep onto the other portions through various combinations of conquests and alliances, using ship superiority and command of a network of naval and air bases around Eurasia. Certainly there is still much to be said in favor of the sea lanes surrounding Eurasia as being interior lines of communication as far as the movement of goods are concerned. Also, aircraft carriers have given a mobility in the use of aircraft to ocean basin powers that fixed land air bases lack.

The inadequacy of Spykman's doctrine is today most clearly apparent from the fact that no Rimland power appears to be capable of organizing all of the Rimland. A United Western Europe would have to depend upon complete control of the Mediterranean, North Africa, Africa south of the Sahara, and Australia to exert its strategic dominance upon the remainder of the Rimland,

⁸Spykman, N. *The Geography of the Peace*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1944.

and could succeed only if Heartland were not to intervene. Today's realities are that the Outer Crescent, or continental islands like the America's, Africa south of the Sahara, and Australia, and the large islands off the Eurasian shore — like the United Kingdom and Japan — are in competition with the Heartland for the lands and the minds of Rimland peoples. Complete control of Rimland by either side would mean world domination. A Rimland divided or neutralized means a world more nearly in power balance. But it is important to note that rule of the Heartland does not automatically mean command of World Island, nor is it true that rule of Rimland without the combination of the Outer Crescent commands Eurasia.

Geopolitical views of the world condition man's thinking in military-strategic terms. This applies not only to those who formulate grand strategy, but to the general public that must accept it and carry it out. The American Postwar Policy of Containment rests upon the views of the world that were first presented by Mackinder and Spykman. But the importance of interior lines of land communication, even between parts of the Rimland, looms greater today than in Spykman's considerations. Thus, the China landbase was able to sustain North Korea and Northern Vietnam, in spite of the control of the seas and the air by off-shore powers. Communist development of networks of rails and modern highways in South China and North Vietnam, as the sinews of politic-economic penetration have put Laos and Northern Thailand in more critical positions.

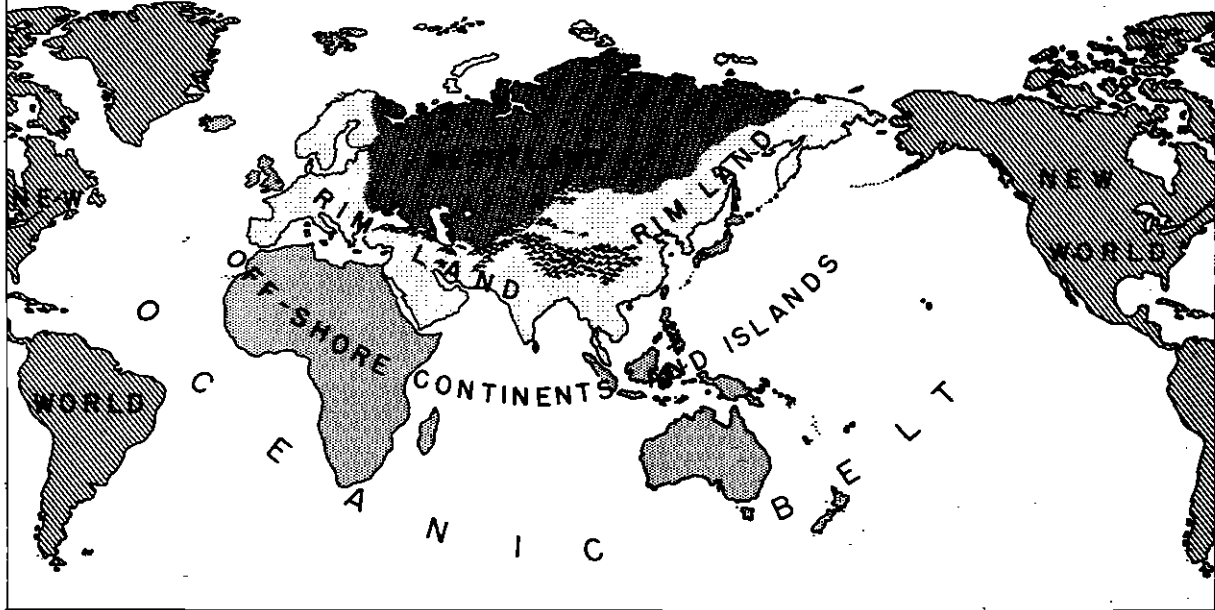
The development of railroads in Sinkiang, Mongolia and Tibet by the Chinese is an interesting example of a Rimland power penetrating parts of what Mackinder included in his 1919 Heartland. Indeed, he warned of a Chinese-dominated pivot area in his very first article. One might suggest that, in the long run, Sinkiang will be more easily controlled from the Heartland (Russian Turkestan) than from North China by means of the railroad now being built from Lake Balkash to Lanchow, but

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THE WORLD ACCORDING TO SPYKMAN

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this is not the case for Tibet. China's great space, and its influence on both Tibet and Vietnam, foreshadow the use of land connections to threaten India as well as Southeastern Asia. While China strengthens its position in Southern Tibet, the Tarim Desert, the Karakoram Mountains, the Kun Lun Mountains and the Tibet Basin, are a formidable barrier to competition from her northern Heartland ally. The remainder of the Rimland is less susceptible to landbased conquest from adjoining Rimland areas, but, of course, more susceptible to Heartland's pressures.

The Air Age

The impact of the air age upon geopolitical thought has produced a variety of views. In 1944, Renner suggested that the war plane had united the Heartland of Eurasia with a second and somewhat smaller Heartland in Anglo-America, across Arctic ice fields, to form a new, expanded Heartland within the Northern Hemisphere. A major attribute of this new pivotal area would be the mutual vulnerability of its Eurasian and its Anglo-American portions across the Arctic. Such a pivotal area would not only be a great Heartland in the power sense of the word — it would also afford the advantages of interior air, sea and land routes against most of the rest of the world. Within such a Heartland, the polar world, as the arena of movement, might well be the key to Heartland — and, therefore, world control.

Another opinion, that of de Seversky, takes a unitary global view, rejecting geopolitical units.⁹ Such a theory seems to reject concepts of Heartland, Rimland, and World Island, and preaches that long-range intercontinental bombers and guided missiles make overseas bases undesirable and unnecessary. This is the school of air isolationism, presupposing that a power which has the necessary economic resources, or control of those resources, can dominate the world — regardless of its location. But, if, as is the case today, several parts of the world may become

⁹de Seversky, A. *Air Power: Key to Survival*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1950.

equally capable of mustering such resources, then the comparative advantage of strategic spatial units reemerges.

There is the widespread opinion that the development of nuclear weapons by both the United States and the U. S. S. R. is the great deterrent to all-out global warfare. Under such circumstances local wars or subversion reemerge as the weapons for world dominance and Heartland and Rimland regain significance as concepts of strategic space. Military aircraft and routes are highly variable in this long-distance air age. They can conquer space and time. But air bases are not variable — or, on sea, are variable in a limited time-distance sense only. A string of bases on American soil and around the periphery of the Soviet Union gives a spatial advantage over counterpart Soviet bases. And even in the guided missile age, where location may be of little significance in an offensive sense, the ability to scatter bases and launching sites on both land and sea will be a prime locational advantage for Western counterattacks.

Today's logistical goals are to conquer space by shortening supply lines. Building up peripheral bases to a point where they can be indefinitely maintained through stockpiles or local production has been our goal in Japan and the United Kingdom. Improving ports and roads, and building pipelines, has been our program in Spain. Keeping control of overseas supply centers, although the actual places may vary through time, is at present necessary. Thus, for example, whether Cyprus, Suez, North Africa, Southern Italy, or the Mediterranean Sea is the most advisable locus for a marshaling base is less important than the fact that *somewhere* in a key area, or overlooking the area, there is need for a foothold for enforcing such doctrine as the American Doctrine for the Middle East. In the future, although time may not be gained by a dispersal of overseas land or sea bases, the spatial advantages so gained will be of vital importance to our ability to retaliate to Soviet counterdefensive measures and thus appear basic to the doctrine of deterrence.

Circulation and Geopolitics

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization reflects another geopolitical concept. Here, military alliance stems from the unity of the North Atlantic, and its associated sea arms. Command of the air and sea entrances to the Arctic — through Spitzbergen and Greenland, and, to a lesser extent, Iceland — is vital. Control of the Mediterranean preserves sea unity and furnishes a protective screen to North Africa. But, an ocean basin cannot be divided arbitrarily by latitudinal lines for strategic purposes, and the South Atlantic should not be neglected in the broad geopolitical sense. The voices that are now being raised in favor of broadening the North Atlantic Alliance into an overall Atlantic Alliance are pressing for a more perfect geopolitical unit in this respect.

The German geopoliticians presented us with a suggested organization of the earth along Pan-Regional lines. They divided the earth into three units: (1) Pan-America, to be headed by the United States; (2) Pan-Eurafrica, to be headed by Germany (and to include the British Isles and the U. S. S. R.); and (3) Pan-Asia, to be headed by Japan. The Pan-Regions were organized along north-south lines to provide for complementary products and peoples. The need for vast, contiguous space as a prerequisite for power, and for self-sufficient economies, was their rationale.

The inadequacies of the Pan-Regional concept, in both the political and strategic sense, have been pointed out by many. But it would be well to remember that the Pan-Eurafrican concept may be closer to realization today than it ever was in the past. Western Europe is now far more dependent upon Africa south of the Sahara as a complementary subtropical and tropical world than it was before World War Two. It obtains 43% of its tropical imports from this region. And, in the current efforts to unite Europe's economy — first, through the six-nation common market organization — the Common Market Investment Fund will contribute development capital to African colonial areas. If a broader

Free Trade Europe were to emerge, then Commonwealth, Portuguese and Spanish African spheres might be added to those of France, Belgium and Italy.

In the geopolitical views that are current, the major emphasis is placed upon the distribution of the earth's land and sea features. The unity of the waters of the globe are usually taken for granted. Only the Pan-Regional theory challenged this to any substantial degree.

I feel that we have tended to oversimplify the picture. Not all lands which lie along the sea — and which we call maritime lands — are truly seaward-oriented. This may be due to an inhospitable coast, to a lack of a basis for overland trade, or to a variety of political and historical factors. To illustrate this, I have prepared a map based upon the ratio of imports to national income. This is a generalized picture of the dependence of certain nations upon imports. The map reflects a variety of factors, such as continentality, underdevelopment or absence of resources for manufacturing, colonialism and alliances. This is a map of the earth as seen by an individual — the strategic implications that it contains are therefore the product of a specific *approach* to geography, not a product of geography itself. If we look at the world as seen on this map, we note that certain parts of the so-called maritime world are far more dependent upon sea lanes than other parts. What we see is a group of four trade-oriented "islands," which we have called *Interior Seas and Africa*. A second grouping is trade-oriented, but to a lesser extent. This, we have called *Peripheral Ocean*. Lastly, we have the self-contained countries, mostly *Circumpolar* within the Northern Hemisphere. The economic and strategic interests of these groupings vary, but the trade "islands," above all, must be free to trade with one another and with the rest of the world. The global nature of the American commitment is readily apparent from this map. As long as our important allies are so heavily dependent upon overseas trade, we will have to help them maintain their sea contacts.

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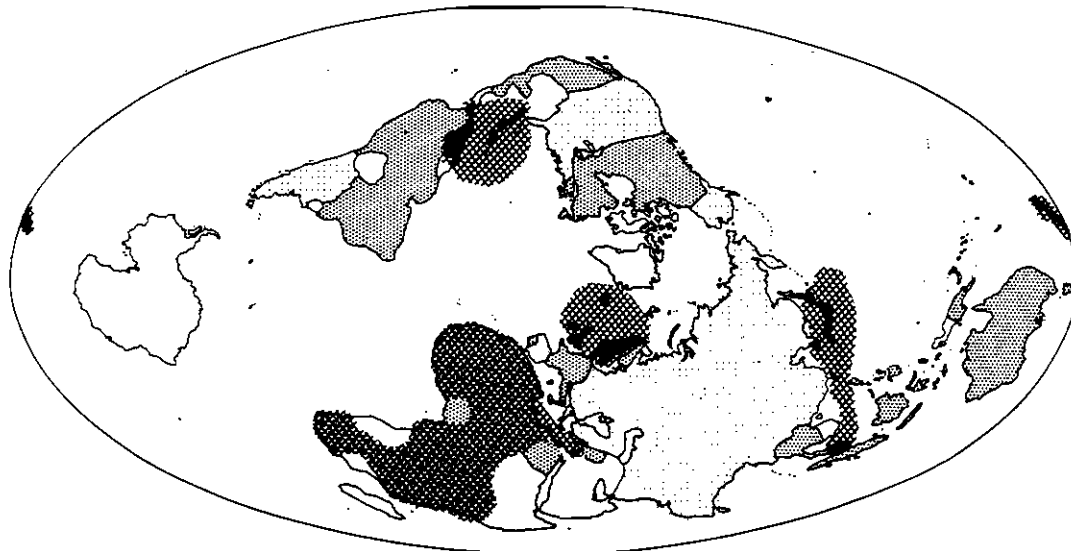
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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

GEOPOLITICS AND TRADE



IMPORTS AS A PERCENT OF NATIONAL INCOME

- | | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
|  | 1% TO 10 % | SELF-CONTAINED COUNTRIES | -CIRCUM-POLAR LAND |
|  | 11% TO 24% | INTERMEDIATE COUNTRIES | -PERIPHERAL OCEAN |
|  | 25% AND OVER | TRADE DEPENDENT COUNTRIES | -INTERIOR SEAS AND AFRICA |

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Another feature of this map is to suggest that the classical ideas about land-oriented and sea-oriented countries need re-examination. Redefining these ideas cannot fail to have geopolitical implications.

As an example, we can reconsider the term Rimland in the light of this map. Rimland, as defined by Spykman and uncritically accepted by the first proponents of the Containment Doctrine, refers to the sea-oriented portions of Eurasia. These are taken to be the four peninsular bulges of the landmass. In many respects, East and South Asia appear to have much more in common with the pivot lands of Interior Asia than with the maritime world. Yet, because of the barrier of mountains and deserts that separate East and South Asia from Interior Siberia, we tend to classify them as sea-oriented Rimlands.

Perhaps a reexamination of the Rimland concept will help us to understand more clearly the role that the so-called "gray areas" have to play, as we consider American strategy. I might add, parenthetically, that the symbolism of the color that has been selected to describe this area from Iran to Korea escapes me. Call it "green" for its characteristic vegetational color, "non-white" for skin pigment, "pink" for politics — but why "gray?"

A containment policy that views the world through the "Heartland-Rimland" looking glass draws us into grave strategic errors, for all parts of the Eurasian littoral are not of equal strategic significance to the West. We must, in our global approach, distinguish between those parts of the world that: (1) warrant American support and direct American intervention, even at the risk of total war; (2) those parts that warrant direct American intervention with the maximum risk of a limited nuclear war; (3) those parts that should be indirectly supported; and (4) those parts that should fend for themselves militarily. Only if we do this can we form alliances that will carry out the objectives of our strategy, rather than dictate our strategy.

In the first category are the American Caribbean, Western Europe, Australia and the Japanese Islands. In the second category are key parts of Africa and the Middle East — Soviet control of which would make Europe's position wholly untenable — and Brazil, without whose support the Caribbean is endangered. Broadly speaking, these two categories include the Atlantic Basin and lands overlooking the open Pacific.

Setting up the third category recognizes that some areas, especially those committed to the Free World Ideology with the will and capacity to help themselves, should be supported, but not at the risk of direct American involvement. When, for example, we decided to abstain from intervention in Indo-China, were we not admitting that a good deal of Southeast Asia was not strategically crucial to the survival of the Western World?

Finally, there are those countries which should be left to fend for themselves in a strategic sense. Neither Mainland East nor South Asia appears to be part of the maritime-oriented world. We have neither the manpower, equipment nor the money to assure that these areas remain part of the ring of containment around the Soviet Union. Our position will be best served if these areas can be helped to live and prosper as neutrals, being aided economically and encouraged to develop free institutions. We should not, however, allow ourselves to become involved in their military defense, for our strategic position will not be crucially undermined if they should turn to Moscow. Implicit in these observations is the fact that geographic areas need not be treated as strategic "wholes." In this respect, it is unsound to issue blanket invitations to countries of certain areas to enter defense pacts, because of the possibility of our becoming committed to countries whose defense is not strategically vital to American survival.

These views are some of the results that we obtain from relating our knowledge of geography to strategy. Since geography, in its broadest sense, is constantly changing, we dare not

rely upon concepts of the past, but must be continuously on the alert to examine the changing geographic scene, and to interpret the impact of this change in the formulation of strategy.

In addition to the readings cited in the footnotes, the following are suggested as supplementary readings. The first two are especially recommended for their clear and broad coverage of the lecture topic:

- Jones, S. B. "Views of the Political World,"
The Geographical Review,
Vol. XLV, No. 3, 1955, pp. 309-326.
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The Changing World,
World Book Co., 1956, pp. 432-450.

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

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Professor Saul B. Cohen received his A.B., A.M., and Ph.D. degrees in Geography from Harvard University, where he specialized in Political Geography. He also did graduate work at Columbia University.

He joined the faculty of Boston University in 1952, where he is currently Associate Professor of Geography (on leave). In 1955, he was visiting lecturer of Political Geography at Yale University, and in 1956 was a visiting lecturer in Geography at Wellesley College. He is acting as Academic Consultant in International Relations (Geography) at the Naval War College during Academic Year 1957-58.

Major fields of interest, besides Political Geography, are the Geography of Europe and the Middle East and Economic Geography. He has done specialized research and writings in Marketing Geography, and is a locational consultant to various business firms. Articles and contributions have appeared in *The Geographical Review*, *The Professional Geographer*, *Middle Eastern Affairs*, *Bulletin of the International Oceanographic Institute*, and *Military Review*.