GEOG 220
Political geography: Geopolitics,& Environmental Scarcity

Place Space and Identity

Alan Nash

Geopolitics

- definition of "**Geopolitics**":

  "The state's power to control space or territory and shape the foreign policy of individual states and international political relations" (Knox and Marston)

  – A nice definition is by Peter Taylor, "Geopolitics argues that power is firmly rooted in the physical nature of the world itself" –

    - in other words, power is an outcome of your strategic location in the world (and, that will vary depending on the available technology of the time: Cape Town (South Africa) important in the Age of Sail, but shifts once Suez Canal cut ….

THE REVENGE
OF
GEOGRAPHY

WHAT THE MAP TELLS US ABOUT COMING CONFLICTS
AND THE BATTLE AGAINST FATE

ROBERT D. KAPLAN

"[An] ambitious and challenging new book . . . [*The Revenge of Geography*] displays a formidable grasp of contemporary world politics and serves as a powerful reminder that it has been the planet's geophysical configurations, as much as the flow of competing religions and ideologies, that have shaped human conflicts, past and present." —MALISE RUTHVEN, *The New York Review of Books*

Why still worry about Geo-politics now?

- North Korea….USA
- Taiwan
- Ukraine
- So -- It is always in the news…

Early geopolitical thinkers

- **Friedrich Ratzel** (1844-1904) a German geographer trained in biology and chemistry.

- Ratzel employed biological metaphors, which he adopted from the work of Charles Darwin, to describe the growth and development of the state.

Ratzel

- Ratzel suggested there were seven laws of state growth:
    - i.e. "A state grows by absorbing smaller units"
    - These are largely forgotten today, although one of his observations – "the territory of the state grows with the expansion of the population having the same culture" – lay behind the notion of *lebensraum*, the state needed "living room" to expand to its full potential
    - Ideas of this sort unfortunately informed German geopolitical thinking in the 1930s and 1940s.

Early geopolitical thinkers

- Overall, **Friedrich Ratzel** saw the state as behaving like a biological organism – in which growth and change are "natural" – and although his "laws" are no longer of any relevance, his insight that **power + territory** are key to geopolitics remains valid.

The Changing Map of Europe: 1924, 1989, 2008

Note: break up of Yugoslavia: Now 7 states

Figure 9.1 The changing map of Europe: 1924, 1989, 2008 The boundaries of the European states have undergone dramatic changes since World War I. The changing map of Europe illustrates the instability of international politics and the resultant dynamism in the geography of the nation-state system. (*Source:* **http://europa.eu;maps**. Reprinted with permission from Prentice Hall, from J.M. Rubenstein, *The Cultural Landscape: An Introduction to Human Geography,* 5th ed., © 1996, p. 338.)

Sir Halford Mackinder

- However, in many ways we need one other geopolitical insight to interpret the changes shown on that map

- These come from the work of **Sir Halford Mackinder** (first professor of geography at Oxford University) and what became known as his "**Heartland**" theory of geopolitics, first stated in 1904

Inner and Outer Crescent of Mackinder's Heartland

Figure 9.22   Inner and outer crescent of Mackinder's heartland   A quintessential geographical conceptualization of world politics, Mackinder's heartland theory has formed the basis for important geopolitical strategies throughout the decades since its inception. Although the pivot area of Eurasia is wholly continental, the outer crescent is wholly oceanic and the inner crescent part continental and part oceanic. It is interesting to compare the Mercator map projection, which Mackinder used to promote his geostrategic theory, with the Dymaxion projection used in this text. This is a classic example of how maps can be used for ideological purposes. The Mercator projection decreases the importance of the northern and southern oceans, which are vast and significant natural barriers. The spatial distortions inherent in the Mercator projection overemphasize the importance of Asia. And the splitting of North and South America so that they appear on both sides of the map adds even more exaggerated emphasis to the centrality of Asia. The Dymaxion projection, as a northern polar representation, de-emphasizes the centrality of any one land mass but exaggerates distances between continents (see Chapter 1). Mackinder's worldview map provides a good example of how cartographic representations can be employed to support ideological arguments.   (*Source*: M.I. Glassner and H. de Blij, *Systematic Political Geography*, 3rd ed. New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1980, p. 291.)

Mackinder's Heartland model

- Was based on his theory that the history of global geopolitics was essentially a balance – or trade-off – between land-based power, and sea-based power.

- Whichever was dominant (land-based, or sea-based power) would be able to control their region.
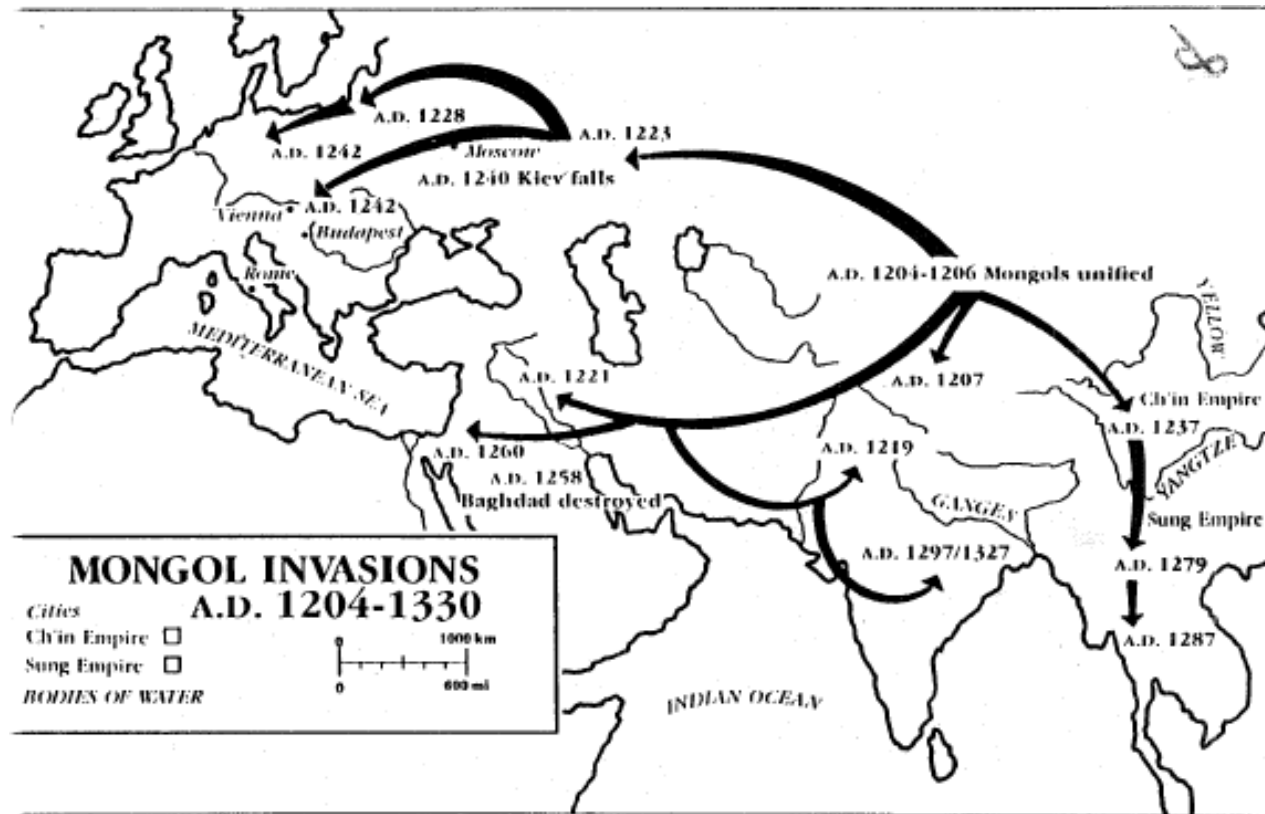
- This dominance had changed through time

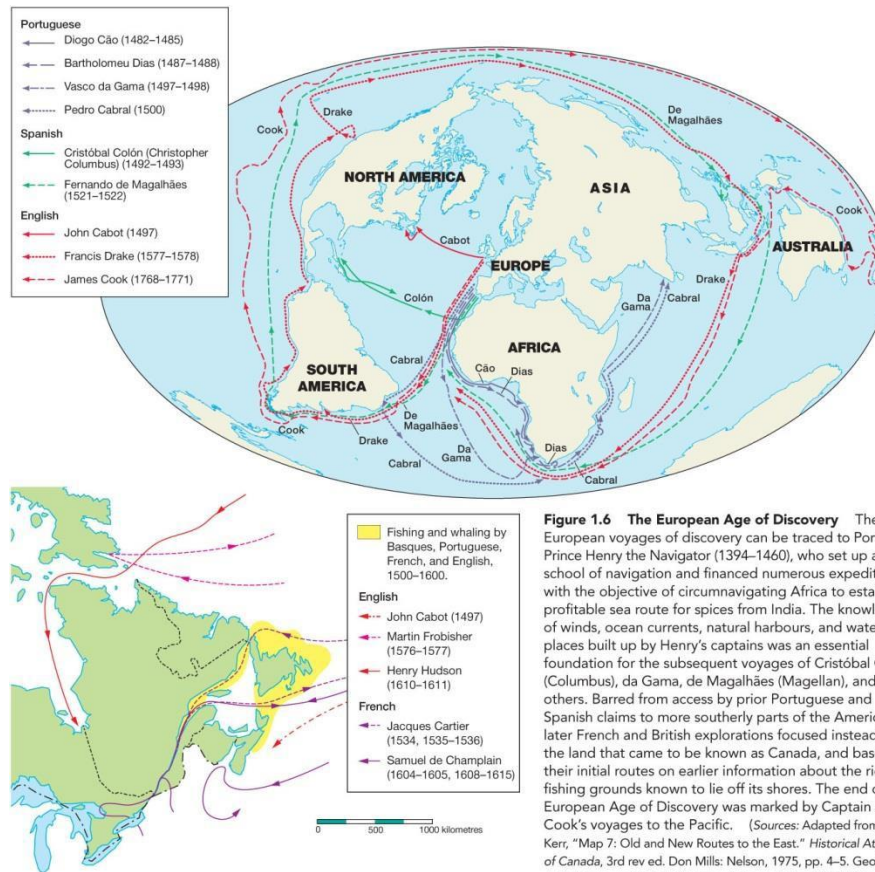# Napoleon and William Pitt divide up Europe in 1805

- Mackinder's ideas build on historical insights:

    – Dominance of land-based power

    –Dominance of sea-based power

    These varied over time

Dominance of land-based power: Mongol Invasions 1204-1330

Dominance of sea-based power from 1450s

Figure 1.6   The European Age of Discovery   The European voyages of discovery can be traced to Portugal's Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460), who set up a school of navigation and financed numerous expeditions with the objective of circumnavigating Africa to establish a profitable sea route for spices from India. The knowledge of winds, ocean currents, natural harbours, and watering places built up by Henry's captains was an essential foundation for the subsequent voyages of Cristóbal Colón (Columbus), da Gama, de Magalhães (Magellan), and others. Barred from access by prior Portuguese and Spanish claims to more southerly parts of the America, later French and British explorations focused instead on the land that came to be known as Canada, and based their initial routes on earlier information about the rich fishing grounds known to lie off its shores. The end of the European Age of Discovery was marked by Captain James Cook's voyages to the Pacific.   (Sources: Adapted from D.G.G. Kerr, "Map 7: Old and New Routes to the East." *Historical Atlas of Canada*, 3rd rev ed. Don Mills: Nelson, 1975, pp. 4–5. Geoffrey J. Matthews and Robert Morrow, "Map 1: Before 1600." *Canada and the World: An Atlas Resource*. Scarborough: Prentice Hall Canada, 1995, p. 1.)

By 1904, land-based power threatening to dominate again?

- That was certainly Mackinder's view.
- And if it was, he believed that this gave the strategic advantage to a huge area of Russia – an area which was safe because it was unreachable by W. European naval power – and from which the Russian army could mobilize huge military resources, which it could then move out to its frontiers by rail.
- This huge area he called the "heartland" ("pivot" on his map as he saw its control as pivotal).

Inner and Outer Crescent of Mackinder's Heartland

Figure 9.22   Inner and outer crescent of Mackinder's heartland   A quintessential geographical conceptualization of world politics, Mackinder's heartland theory has formed the basis for important geopolitical strategies throughout the decades since its inception. Although the pivot area of Eurasia is wholly continental, the outer crescent is wholly oceanic and the inner crescent part continental and part oceanic. It is interesting to compare the Mercator map projection, which Mackinder used to promote his geostrategic theory, with the Dymaxion projection used in this text. This is a classic example of how maps can be used for ideological purposes. The Mercator projection decreases the importance of the northern and southern oceans, which are vast and significant natural barriers. The spatial distortions inherent in the Mercator projection overemphasize the importance of Asia. And the splitting of North and South America so that they appear on both sides of the map adds even more exaggerated emphasis to the centrality of Asia. The Dymaxion projection, as a northern polar representation, de-emphasizes the centrality of any one land mass but exaggerates distances between continents (see Chapter 1). Mackinder's worldview map provides a good example of how cartographic representations can be employed to support ideological arguments.   (*Source*: M.I. Glassner and H. de Blij, *Systematic Political Geography*, 3rd ed. New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1980, p. 291.)

"Napoleon's retreat"

Even Napoleon was unable to "beat" the huge distances involved in a successful attack on Moscow – as this 19thC graphic shows…

Example – even Napoleon unable to conquer Russia – i.e his retreat from Moscow 1812-13 – he was defeated by sheer distance into the Russian "heartland"

Note: the width of the line is proportional to the size of the Grand Army – as it thins, it shows the death rate in the army

The importance of strategic bootlenecks

- According to Mackinder, the only way to prevent a Russian "breakout" (and recall, this was 1904) was to control the strategic bottlenecks (found in the "Inner Crescent") that surrounded the "Heartland" -- i.e.
    - Eastern Europe
    - Middle East
    - Indian frontier etc

Importance of Eastern Europe

- Of these "bottlenecks", the one that most concerned Mackinder was Eastern Europe
  - He saw its control as crucial to European stability

  - He summed up the crucial role of Eastern Europe as the key to controlling the world in what have become known as Mackinder's 3 dicta.

Mackinder's three "dicta" of geopolitics

- Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland.

- Who rules the Heartland commands the World-island.

- Who rules the World-island commands the world.
  - "The Geographical Pivot of History" *The Geographical Journal*, 1904.

Inner and Outer Crescent of Mackinder's Heartland

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As an aside….

- As an aside, it is interesting to compare Mackinder's dicta to the statement by Sir Walter Raleigh (1608):
  - "Whoso commands the sea, commands the trade of the world;
  - Whoso commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world."

Dominance of sea-based power

(Fig 2.12 textbook, and note the caption's words)

CALECHVT CELEBERRI:
MVM INDIÆ EMPORIVM.

Figure 2.10 British, Portuguese, French, and Dutch ships in the harbour at Kolkata (Calcutta), India, around 1600 The expansion of European trade and the protection of trade routes required strong navies and a willingness to use them. England's Sir Walter Raleigh expressed the sentiment succinctly in 1608: "Whoso commands the sea commands the trade of the world; whoso commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world."

As another aside…

- "In his will of 1725, Peter the Great [king of Russia] advised his descendants "to approach as near as possible to Constantinople and India. Whoever governs there will be the true sovereign of the world … consequently, excite continual wars, not only in Turkey, but in Persia…Move as far as the Persian Gulf, advance as far as India"." {Source: Tim Marshall, *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps that tell you everything you need to know about global politics. [London: Elliott and Thompson, 2015, rev edn 2016, p 13].*

As another aside….

- Surprisingly, as an imperialist, Mackinder less concerned about the threat to Britain's control of the Suez Canal, the Indian Empire, Hong Kong etc. – these are other "bottle necks" or breakout points for Russia

Mackinder's influence WW2

- Sadly, Mackinder's teachings on geopolitics greatly influenced German thinking – and through the work of people such as Haushofer seem to have reached the ears of the Nazis

- On the Allied side, Churchill's famous speech immediately after WW2's end speaking of an Iron Curtain coming down to divide Europe is very Mackinder-ish

Mackinder after 1945

- After WWII, Western strategic thinking was focused on:
    - keeping Germany divided,
    - keeping bases in Germany, and
    - surrounding the USSR – all designed to prevent a Soviet breakout, esp through Central Europe.
        - Terms like "The Iron Curtain" are echoes of this type of thinking.

Berlin Wall

Figure 9.7   Berlin Wall   The boundary between East and West Germany was virtually impermeable for more than 40 years. The photograph here shows the scene on November 12, 1989, when Berliners tore the wall down in celebration of the reunification of Germany.

Question: Where Is Berlin ??

Mackinder after 1945

- One geographer (Peter Taylor), has even suggested that the development and deployment of nuclear arms by the West was designed to counter the USSR's perceived strategic advantage as the "heartland"

Mackinder outmoded?

- Nevertheless, Mackinder's view becomes increasingly outmoded, because
  - The development of air-power adds a third leg to his land-based, sea-based dichotomy
  - The development of long-range missiles (whether air or submarine launched) means no "safe" heartland area
  - The development of nuclear bombs enable even small states in "peripheral" areas to become a serious threat, and means that no one "bottleneck" (such as Eastern Europe) can be as important as another.

Technology affects strategic advantage

- In other words, technology has changed too much to support his simple analysis any more.
- So – if we recall Ratzel's view that **power** and **territory** are crucial – we now need to add **technology** to this formula
- BUT note technology does not completely trump location -- as technology changes so it confers strategic advantage on *different* parts of the world – (place is still power, just different places): **one nice example would be French Guiana (European Space Project) as on the Equator.**

1945-1990: Cold War; Era of the two superpowers

- In short, the world becomes a much more complicated place than before, and out of that complexity a new set of geopolitical theories emerge –

- based on the concept of the **balance of power**

- Between the **two superpowers**, the USA and the USSR.

Scenario 2: Saul B. Cohen "Global Geopolitical change in the Post-Cold War Era"

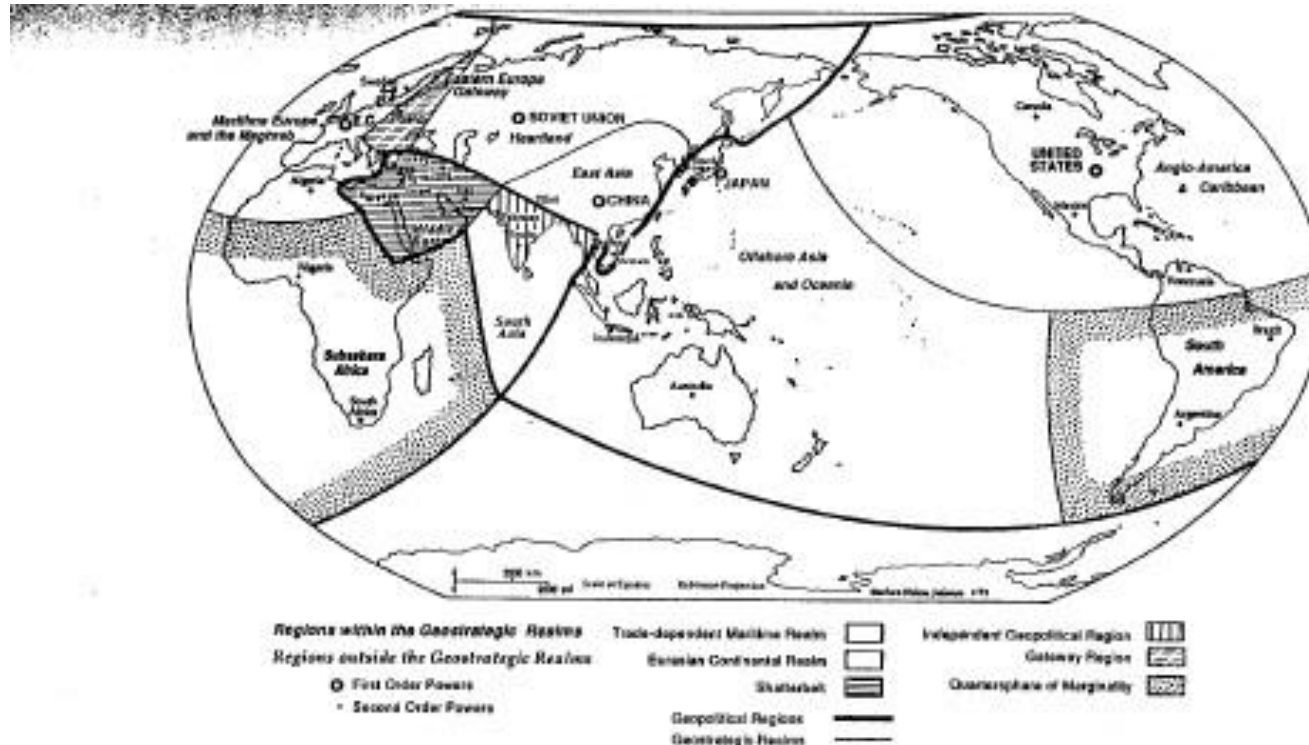Annals Association of American Geographers vol 81 (1991) 551-580

Figure 1. The world strategic realms and geopolitical regions in the 1990s, showing the hierarchical structure of the world's geopolitical framework. At the highest level are two geostrategic realms: the Maritime, an open system based upon exchange, and the Eurasian Continental, a much more closed and land-oriented system. South Asia is geopolitically independent, the Middle East Shatterbelt is caught between the two realms, while the East European Gateway is beginning to link them. Subsahara Africa and South America, the Quarter-Sphere of Marginality, are of little military and economic strategic concern to the Great Powers.

"The balance of power"

1945 – 1990 Cold War

USA   USSR

MAD

- Balance maintained by — nuclear threat
  — strategic · NATO/ alliances WARSAW PACT
  — client states · CUBA/ S.Africa.
  — limited wars · VIETNAM/ AFGHANISTAN

- Balance maintained globally & regionally.

- So, threats are contained in "shatter belts"

The nuclear threat was the most important element in this "balance of terror"

Nuclear weapons 1945-1990

Obviously, our concern would be with the two major nuclear powers - the USA and the former USSR – and their mutual destructive potential.

This potential ironically perhaps meant that neither side could be confident of victory in a nuclear war, and so what came to be known as a strategy of "mutual assured destruction" (MAD) came to herald an uneasy quiet between the 2 major powers.

This did not mean, however, that there were not other geo-political issue arsing from the development and testing of nuclear weapons at this time

Example – French nuclear testing in Algeria

One interesting paper on this topic:

Roxanne Panchesi, "No Hiroshima in Africa": The Algerian War and the Question of French Nuclear Tests in the Sahara.
History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History 9 (1) Spring 2019: 84-112.

Panchesi looks at the UN debates of 1960 about the detonation

Many countries regarded the test as France continuing to act as a colonial [white, European, western] power with no regard for the separate voices of Africa

Some saw it as a way for France to continue the Algerian War (ended 1962) – and noted the French view that the Sahara was not "part of Algeria" [but considered it an "empty region" {idea of *terra nullius*} opened up through French efforts and exploration – although, of course, there were people there]

Panchesi also suggests that France's development of nuclear deterrence was a way of the country mentally coping with its imperial decline

French nuclear test "Gerboise bleue"

Reggane test site
Algeria
13 February 1960

Original source for map:
Sébastien Ramnoux, "Le document choc sur la bombe A en Algérie"
Le Parisien
14 February 2014.
(I found this version on Google)

Note: map does not show levels
Of radiation

"Gerboise bleue": French nuclear test Algeria 13 February 1960 [gerboise = jerboa = small desert rodent]

Gerboise bleue

Champignon nucléaire de Gerboise bleue

Puissance nucléaire   France

The detonated bomb at 70 kilotons was 3 times the size of the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Note: French government argued that the area was unpopulated – but it was not.

Image Source: www.fr.wikipedia

France conducts 200 nuclear tests 1960-96

In Sahara: 1960-1966

    Gerboise Bleue 13 Feb 1960

    Gerboise Blanche April 1960

    Gerboise Rouge Dec 1960

    Gerboise Verte April 1961

    10 March 1963 (after Algerian independence)

    etc

In French Polynesia: 1966-1996

"In 1966, the shift from Algeria to French Polynesia reflected both the imperial break in North Africa, and imperial continuity in the Pacific". Source: Panchesi 2019, p 92

Algeria: location of Reggane test site (the red dot)

The test site of Reggane is 1,300 kms south
Of Algiers

Géolocalisation sur la carte : Algérie

(Voir situation sur carte : Afrique)
(Voir situation sur carte : Algérie)

Gerboise
blanche

Image Source: www.fr.wikipedia

1945-1990 Regional conflicts governed by "The domino theory"- Korea, Vietnam

- The balance of power could be affected if a client state fell, especially in a vulnerable area of the world where its fall might lead the fall of neighbouring states – a belief known as the **domino theory**
  - "the belief that if one country in a region chose or was forced to accept a communist political and economic system, then neighbouring countries would be irresistibly susceptible to falling to communism"

Vietnam/Central America
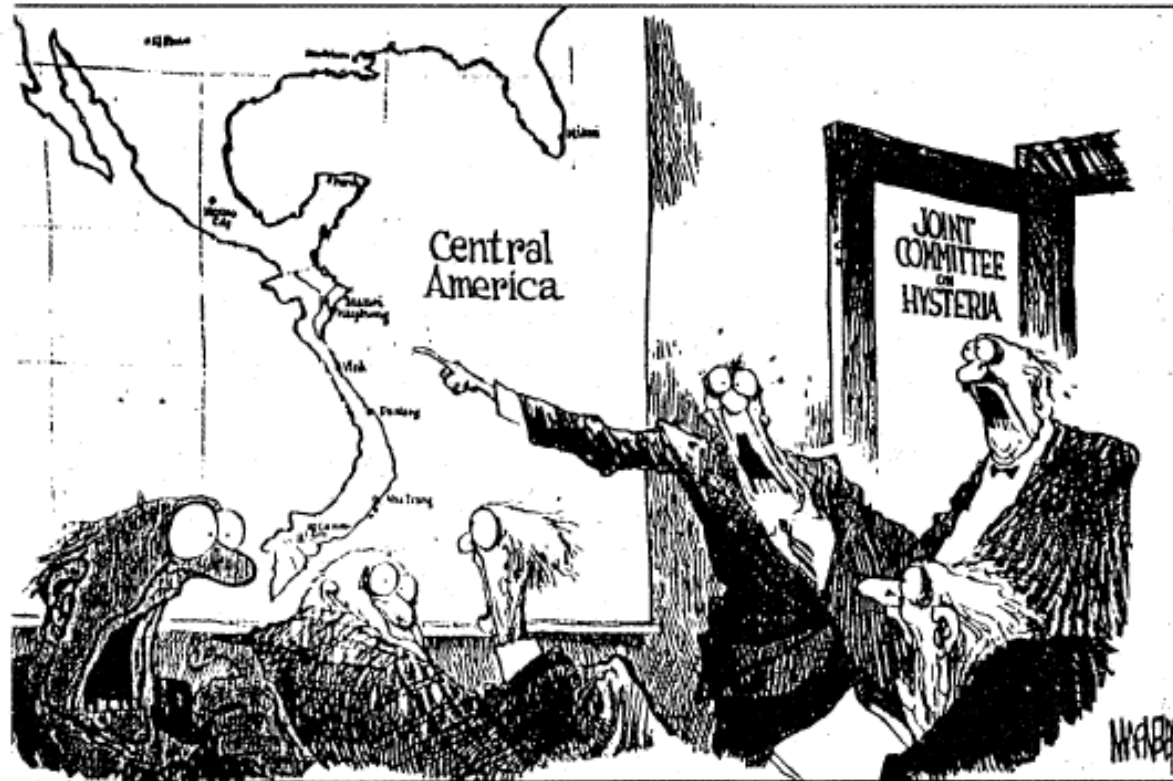
North and South Korea

Figure 9.6   Border between North and South Korea   Some boundaries are virtually impermeable. The border between North and South Korea is highly fortified and heavily patrolled. It was established at the conclusion of the Korean War (1950–1953) between two states that still contest each other's territory. Although occasional talks between the two countries have been held in recent years to declare that war officially over, the announcement in mid-November 2008 that North Korea intended to close its border with South Korea at year's end was a reminder of the difficulties that still confront negotiations.

1990: Collapse of Soviet Union

- Leads to three new geopolitical scenarios:
  - 1. Balance of power shifts entirely to USA
  - 2. A more equal "balance" of power between a number of power blocs:
    - USA
    - Russia
    - China
    - Europe
  - 3. More opportunity for some genuine multi-nationalism

(1) Scenario 1: USA dominance

post 1990 "Collapse of Soviet Bloc"

USA ▲ Russia

- No balance
  - Nuclear → USA first strike "Star Wars"
  - Strategic alliances less relevant
  - client states 'implode'
  - limited wars 'ignored'

- Balance no longer maintained

- Threats could come from anywhere
  - no longer "contained" in known locations...

Scenario 2

For a brief period after the 1990s, we saw a co-operation between the big powers that did at least prevent regional conflicts (such as that in the former Yugoslavia) developing into much larger conflicts -- with the potential to draw the USA and Russia into direct confrontation

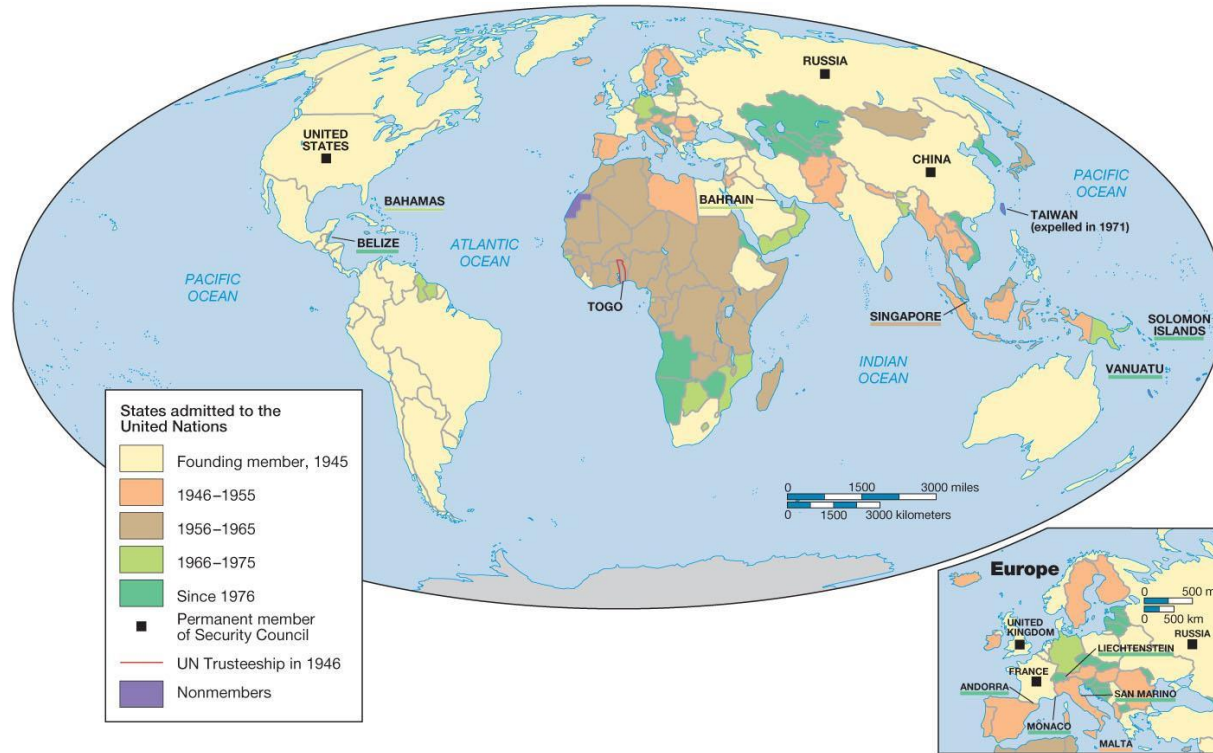# Scenario 3:greater multinationalism
UN membership

Figure 9.23 UN member countries Following World War II and the demise of the League of Nations, renewed effort was made to establish an international organization aimed at instituting a system of international peace and security. The UN Charter was approved by the U.S. Senate in July 1945, raising hopes for a more long-lived organization than the ineffective League of Nations. Located in New York City, the United Nations is composed of a Security Council, which includes the permanent members of the United States, Britain, China, France, and Russia; and a General Assembly, which includes all of those countries identified on the map.

Scenario (3): European Union

Figure 9.25 Map of membership in the European Union The goal of the European Union is to increase economic integration and cooperation among the member states. The EU was established on 1 November 1993, when the Maastricht Treaty was ratified by the 12 members of the European Economic Community (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain). The European Economic Community (EEC) had been created in 1967. Upon ratification of the treaty, the countries of the EEC became members of the EU, and the EEC became the policy-making body of the EU. The Maastricht Treaty established European citizenship for citizens of each member state, enhanced EEC customs and immigration agreements, and allowed for the establishment of a common currency—the euro—which is currently in circulation among all of the original 12 members except for Denmark and the United Kingdom, as well as more recent members Slovenia, Cyprus, and Malta. The remainder have yet to meet the conditions for adopting the single currency, although some also use the euro in addition to their own currencies (further information on the European Union can be obtained from its website **http://europa.eu.int**). The EU is governed through both supranational European institutions (the European Commission and the European Parliament, both administered by the EU) and the governments of the member states, which send representatives to the Council of Ministers (the main law-making body of the EU). Membership in the EU is much sought after, and numerous European countries have applied and are on the waiting list for admission. The largest expansion in its history occurred in 2004, when the EU admitted 10 new members: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

Copyright © 2010 Pearson Education Canada

Beginning after the World War II in Europe, the "twinning" of towns and cities provided one way to promote peace and understanding among once-warring countries of that continent. In this example, the small town of Menaggio in northern Italy is twinned with places of equivalent population size in France, Germany, and Brazil, and illustrates how twinning is now becoming a worldwide phenomenon.

But some latest developments suggest we are entering a very different scenario – a new cold war?

- Examples – China beginning to exert power over the South China sea
  - Building islands as bases
- Australia acquiring nuclear armed submarines
  - A USA backed endeavour to counter China – but potentially destabilizing region [because unlike visible land-based missile systems that can be monitored, these cannot so easily]
- Russia threatening Ukraine
  - A classic "Mackinder" threat to E. Europe

Other threats ….

More broadly:
1. Russia attacking satellites
2. China working on new generation of hypersonic missiles (launched from long-range missiles) – again, very destabilizing as cannot predict where they are)

Not all future geopolitical problems are so obvious…

Environmental scarcity and political ecology

Environmental Scarcity 1

- A leading thinker on this topic is the Canadian political scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon.
    - See his *Environmental Scarcity and Violence* (Princeton University Press, 1999) and related publications sourced in the textbook.

- His definition: "**Environmental scarcity** is a scarcity of renewable natural resources that, if not addressed by technological, social or economic means, may cause social disruption or violent conflict as one of its outcomes."

Environmental Scarcity 2

- Homer-Dixon suggests there are three types of environmental scarcity
- (1) *Demand-induced scarcity*
  - Due to population growth or increasing per capita consumption
- (2) *Supply-induced scarcity*
  - Due to degradation or depletion of natural resources
- (3) *structural scarcity*
  - due to an unbalanced distribution of resources that affects less powerful groups in society

Environmental Security - migration

- One of the consequences Homer-Dixon envisages is that of migration:

  – **Eco-migration**: "a population movement caused by the degradation of land and essential natural resources"

- and perhaps the most extreme case would be that of the "**environmental refugee**"– individuals fleeing the collapse of the environment in their homelands in order to make a new life for themselves.

A note – environmental refugees are not "political refugees" as the UN defines them, and so do not qualify for international protection
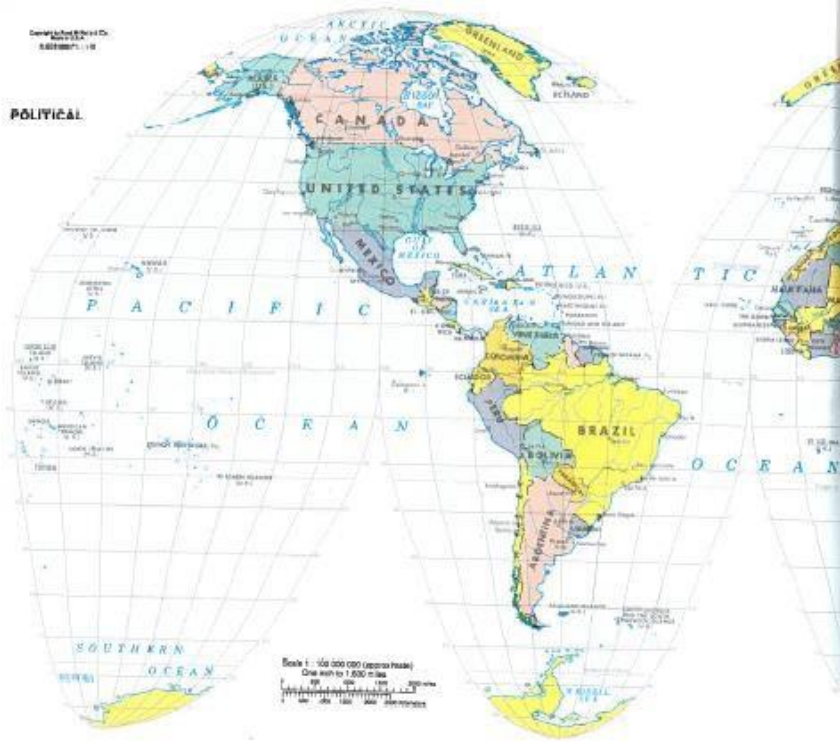
Political refugees are defined as individuals fleeing a fear of persecution on the specific grounds of—

-Race
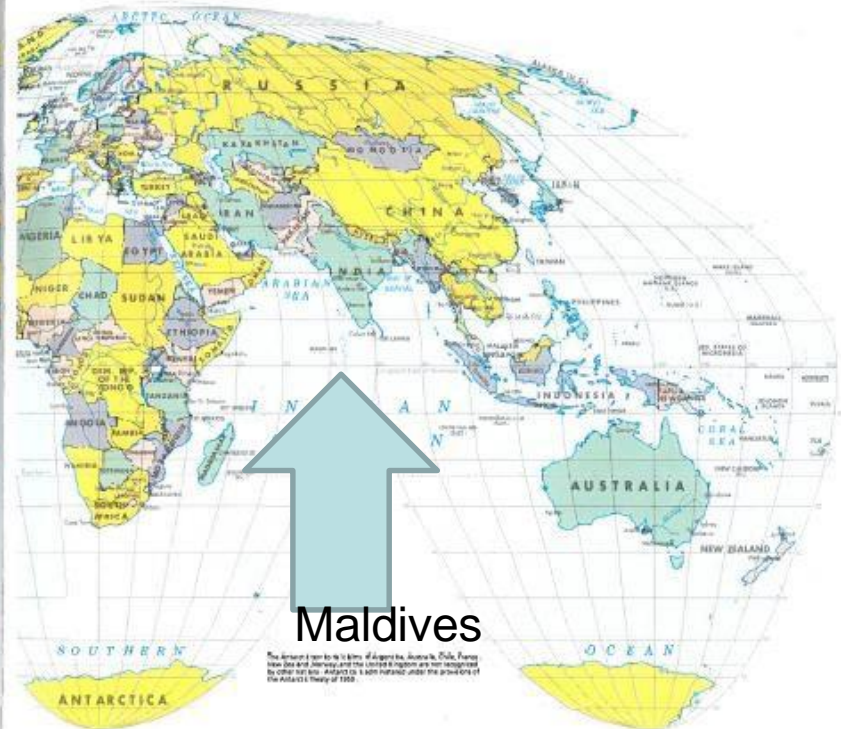-Religion
-Nationality
-Political belief
-Other Social group

[these are the categories of the *1951 International Declaration on the Status of Refugees*]

Flooding – the Maldives disappears

Maldives

Political Ecology

- Homer-Dixon's work on environmental security is really an aspect of what we would more generally see as **political ecology** .
  - Political ecology stresses that human-environment relationships can only be adequately understood by relating patterns of resource use to political and economic forces
  - Or, more simply, how politics affects our use of the environment.

Political Ecology: Example 2 Disasters

- While no one would suggest that the incidence of many natural disasters are themselves human-caused, the fact remains that the severity of many disasters is greatly increased by human actions

    – And especially through the effects of political ecology i.e. more poorer blacks suffered in Hurricane Katrina than other parts of the population of New Orleans because the lower-lying parts of the city were where cheaper housing was located.

Political Ecology: Disasters

- The latest work of disaster scholars suggests that an extreme natural event (such a an earthquake or a tsunami) only becomes a disaster

  - to the extent that our economy or society has placed people in the path of catastrophe
  - To the extent our society views nature as a separate entity or threat
  - To the extent that societies cannot rebuild themselves

- In this sense, although natural events are out of our hand, disasters are "socially constructed".