GEOPOLITICAL THEORY SERIES

Global Geostrategy

Mackinder and the Defence of the West

Edited by Brian W. Blouet

GLOBAL GEOSTRATEGY

One hundred years ago Mackinder was more than a century ahead of his time, which is why we are still talking and writing about what he said before London's Royal Geographical Society that snowy winter night in 1904 when he read his paper, 'The Geographical Pivot of History'. His geographical assessments of means and motivations in the geostrategic competition for world domination yielded a debate that continues to this day. This appropriately timed volume assesses Mackinder's forecasts in the light of present-day geopolitics and proves that they have lost none of their relevance.

H.J. de Blij

Probably no other geographer has had the same impact as that achieved by Halford Mackinder. For over a hundred years his originality of thought and immense energy have been fundamental in determining the nature of the discipline and in influencing those outside it. Mackinder's 'Pivot' paper remains essential reading.

Andrew Goudie

This book examines Mackinder's global geostrategic view, from the perspective of geography, diplomatic history, political science, international relations, imperial history and the space age.

Brian W. Blouet teaches at the College of William and Mary, Virginia. He is the author of a biography of Mackinder and other books, including *Geopolitics and Globalization* (2001).

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PREFACE

This volume examines Halford Mackinder's 'The geographical pivot of history' (1904) and his Heartland concept. Mackinder predicted that the Heartland – the core of Euro-Asia – would be contested territory in the struggle for global dominance in the twentieth century. The struggle for control of the Heartland only came to an end, for the present time, with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Halford Mackinder (1861–1947) had several successful careers. His paper on the 'Scope and methods of geography' (1887) opened the way for geography to be established as a subject at Oxford and Cambridge. Mackinder was appointed Reader in Geography at Oxford and went on to found the School of Geography there in 1899. Through his university extension work Mackinder became the first principal of a college in Reading which grew to become Reading University. Mackinder lectured at the London School of Economics from its start in 1895 and served as Director of LSE from 1904 to 1908, before pursuing a political career, and holding a seat in Parliament from 1910 to 1922.

The present volume examines Mackinder's Pivot paper, and the Heartland thesis, in terms of content, the international affairs of the twentieth century and its relevance today in the foreign relations of Russia and the central Asian republics.

The editor wishes to thank the contributors for their chapters and several people at the College of William and Mary for help. In the School of Education, Sarah Bundy was part of the project from the start and worked very hard to bring the papers into a conformity of style. Heather Griffith, also of the School of Education, gave help and in the Department of Government Valerie Trovato, and her staff, assisted in innumerable ways, while Dr. Michael Tierney shared his insights on global affairs as the book took shape. At Frank Cass, Andrew Humphrys embraced the project enthusiastically and has been very supportive.

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Sir Halford Mackinder (Courtesy University of Reading)

1

HALFORD MACKINDER AND THE PIVOTAL HEARTLAND

Brian W. Blouet

A century ago, Halford Mackinder presented a paper entitled the 'The Geographical Pivot of History', in which he set out a central concern of western defence policy – the fear that the landmass of Euro-Asia would be controlled by one power, which would be in a position to exercise global domination.[1] Mackinder's Pivot, in 'the closed heart-land of Euro-Asia', consisted of the basins of the rivers that drained to the Arctic ocean, together with the regions of internal drainage that fell into the Aral and the Caspian inland seas. The Volga river, which drained the lands between Moscow and the Urals, flowed to the Caspian and was beyond the influence of sea power. Mackinder illustrated the drainage basis of his concept with a map depicting continental and Arctic drainage using an equal area map projection.

The Pivot paper depicted history as a struggle between land power and sea power. In the Columbian era West Europeans, using the oceans, had established control over many parts of the globe. Mackinder predicted the balance would swing back in favour of land power based upon the landmass of Euro-Asia. After World War I Mackinder restated his ideas in *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919). The Pivot was renamed the Heartland and enlarged to include the Black Sea and much of the Baltic, for World War I had shown that sea power could not force its way into the Black Sea via the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, and Germany had been able to exclude the Royal Navy from the Baltic.

In *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, Mackinder supported the creation of a new middle tier of European states – the Baltics, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia – but realized that the new states of eastern Europe would be vulnerable to Germany and the Soviet Union. He issued a famous warning:

> Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland:
> Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island:
> Who rules the World-Island commands the World.[2]

Within twenty years of the publication of *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, the battle for territorial control of eastern Europe developed as Germany remilitarized the Rhineland (1936), absorbed Austria (1938), took German-speaking areas away from Czechoslovakia (1938) invaded the remainder of the Czech lands in March

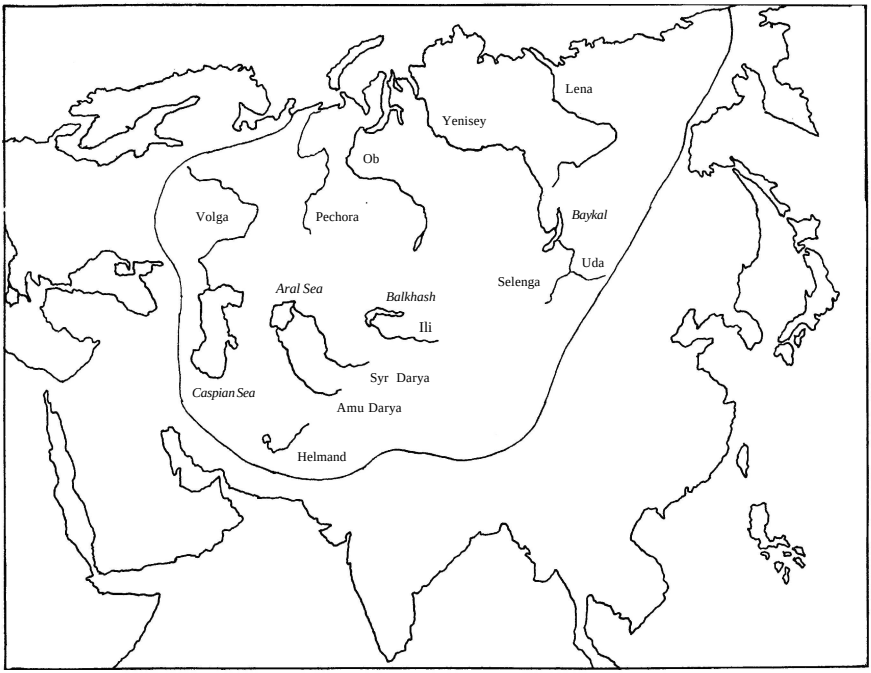

Figure 1.1 Internal and Arctic drainage in the geographical pivot of history

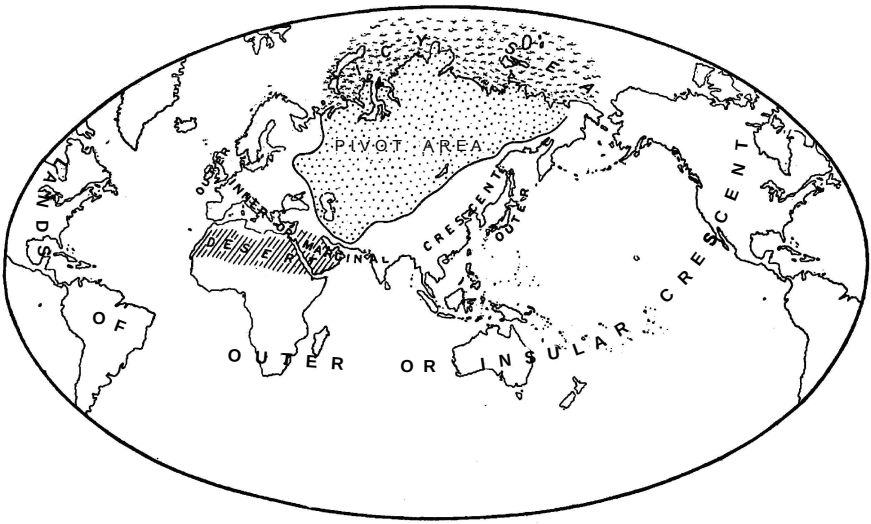

Figure 1.2 The natural seats of power (from *Geographical Journal*, 1904, courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society)

1939 and did a deal with the Soviet Union to dismember Poland a few days before attacking that country on 1 September 1939.

Halford Mackinder is one of a small group of political geographers who took an active part in political life and attempted to influence international affairs. The group includes Friedrich Ratzel, Vidal de la Blache, Albert Demangeon, Isaiah Bowman and, notoriously, General Karl Haushofer, who gained a doctorate in geography for work on Japan, but after World War I became a propagandist for German expansion.

Haushofer ran an institute of geopolitics in Munich, wanted revision of the Treaty of Versailles in Germany's favour, the expansion of Germany to include all German speaking peoples – the *VolksDeutsche* – and the creation of a greater Germany that would control central Europe. Haushofer thought Germany could become a world power by reaching an accommodation with the Soviet Union, and then launching into overseas expansion at the expense of the space owning imperialists – France and Britain. Haushofer's idea of an accommodation with Russia prior to global expansion was derived from Mackinder's Pivot paper.[3]

Haushofer used to visit and tutor Hitler and Hess at Landsdorf prison where they were detained after the Munich Beer Hall *Putsch* (1923). Fortunately for western civilization, Hitler did not accept Haushofer's opinion that Mackinder's Pivot paper was the greatest of all geographical world views.[4] Hitler's intuition took him in a different direction. Overseas colonies were expensive to run and difficult to defend.[5] Hitler wanted *lebensraum* (living space) in the east where Nordic communities could be established to exploit the grain fields of the Ukraine, the ores of the Urals, and the forests of Siberia. As Hugill describes in this volume (Chapter 7), here is the strategic problem that Mackinder referred to in 1919. Was Germany going to take territory in the east or become a maritime power in the west? Germany never resolved the strategic issue, fought World War I on two fronts, lost, and was going to do the same in World War II.

However, the first phase of Nazi expansion fitted Haushofer's world view. In 1938 the absorption of Austria and the Sudetenland brought German-speaking areas into Germany. Haushofer was less pleased, in the spring of 1939, when the take-over of the remaining Czech lands brought in non-German people. However, Haushofer's strategic model seemed to be attained on 23 August 1939, with the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop non-aggression pact. Here was the understanding between Russia and Germany that Haushofer wanted and Mackinder feared.

The non-aggression pact divided Poland, and all of eastern Europe, between Germany and the Soviet Union. On the first day of September 1939, the Wehrmacht attacked Poland. On 17 September the Red Army did the same, and Poland was erased from the map. With the east secure, Germany was now free to attack the west. In the spring of 1940, Denmark was occupied and Norway invaded. Then Belgium and the Netherlands were assaulted. In June, France sued for peace. Western and central Europe were under German control. Britain and the Commonwealth had no mainland allies. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union controlled

much of Eurasia and, in the Far East, Japan had taken over Manchuria (1931) and invaded eastern China, beginning in 1937.

By the end of June 1940, Germany controlled the coast of western Europe from North Cape in Norway to France's border with Franco's Fascist Spain. Before the conquest of western Europe, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force could watch for war ships coming out of the Baltic and the Elbe. Now German forces could operate from bases that stretched from the fjords of Norway to the submarine pens at Lorient near Bordeaux and the submarines could project sea power across the Atlantic to the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the east coast of the United States. In addition Germany had acquired sources of raw materials and manufacturing capacity in western Europe. France, in particular became a major supplier of agricultural products, raw materials, and manufactured goods to Germany.[6]

From June 1940 to June 1941, the strategic picture was close to what Mackinder had feared in 1904. An 'alliance' with the Soviet Union had allowed Germany, by force of arms, to dominate western and central Europe. The sea power, Britain, was isolated, and the resources of the Continent, including the raw materials supplied to Germany by the Soviet Union, were being used to create a submarine fleet capable of reducing Britain to impotence.

The public in the neutral United States did not see the dangers, and although the Royal Air Force, in the Battle of Britain, removed the threat of a German invasion of southern England, at the end of 1940 the prospects of Britain and her Commonwealth allies – Canada, the Union of South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand – were poor. Britain had to import food and raw materials, and the sea lanes through which ships reached Britain were vulnerable to surface raiders and submarines.

At the end of 1940 Churchill told Roosevelt of his fear that Vichy France would join Hitler's New Order in Europe.[7] Had that happened, and the US stayed out of the war, Britain would have been forced to come to terms with a Europe dominated by Germany. The Atlantic would have become an ocean over which the US and Nazi Germany competed for control.

Fortunately for Britain, at the end of 1940, Hitler looked east again, ordering an attack – Barbarossa – on the Soviet Union, which started on the night of 21–22 June 1941. Hess, apparently in an effort to make a deal with Britain, flew to Scotland in May 1941. Nothing came of this initiative, and Hitler was furious with Hess, Haushofer's Nazi party patron. Haushofer's position was weakened by the departure of Hess and his strategic ideas were cast aside as Germany attacked the Soviet Union and abandoned the non-aggression pact. Haushofer spent part of the war in Dachau concentration camp.

Had Hitler allowed his generals to run the campaign in the east, the Soviet Union might have been put out of the war. Many of Hitler's generals wanted to drive east and force a decisive battle in front of Moscow before the end of 1941. Logistically this would be difficult to achieve, but Hitler, anxious to take territory and resources, worsened logistic problems by insisting on spreading armies out on several fronts to Leningrad, Moscow, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, the Volga and

Stalingrad.[8] The pivotal battle came not in front of Moscow in 1941, but at Stalingrad, at the end of much longer lines of communication, in the winter of 1942–1943.

The German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 altered the global geostrategic balance. Germany had wars in the west and the east. Hitler hoped that if Germany attacked the USSR, Japan, not having to fear the Soviets, could expand in the Pacific against the US, and America would be unable to help Britain.

By the end of 1941, Hitler's hunches had gone badly wrong. The war in the east was not won quickly. The Soviet Union did not collapse as Hitler expected and, in early December 1941, a Red Army counter-attack stopped the unwinterized Wehrmacht in front of Moscow to freeze in the Russian winter. On 7 December 1941, Japan did attack southeast Asia, and Pearl Harbor. Germany declared war on the US on 11 December. Now German productive capacity was outclassed by American resources of manpower, minerals, foodstuffs, and the ability to mass produce ships, tanks, and planes, even if Germany defeated the USSR. The Soviets, however, moved productive capacity eastward, and destroyed what could not be saved.[9] Nazi Germany never extracted the resources from the Soviet Union that it was supposed to gain. Germany got better access to Soviet raw materials as a result of the non-aggression pact than was achieved by the Barbarossa campaign.

By the end of 1941, Hitler was hearing from several advisors, including the armaments minister Todt, that the war could not be won, and a settlement should be negotiated with the Soviet Union. Early in 1942, Todt died in a plane crash. Todt's successor, Speer, increased arms production in 1942, 1943, and much of 1944, but Germany simply could not match the productive power of the US in the west and did not have the manpower to defeat the Soviet Union on the long eastern front.

However, Hitler came much closer than is sometimes allowed to gaining long term control of central and eastern Europe. If in October 1941 there had been negotiations between Stalin and Hitler (and Stalin was apparently prepared to talk about a settlement that gave Germany the Baltics and part of the Ukraine), then the Japanese would not have been sure that the Soviet Union would be wholly engaged on its western front. Japan would not have had the same freedom to expand in the Pacific.[10] If Japan had not attacked Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, and had the US stayed out of the war longer, then Germany could have dominated Europe from the North Sea, through the Ukraine, to the Caucasus, posing a threat to the Persian Gulf and the Middle East.

With a cease-fire in the east, Germany would still have kept large armies in the conquered lands, but it would have been difficult for Britain, the Commonwealth, and the United States to invade the continent to destroy Hitler's New Order which was harnessing the resources and manufacturing capacity of western and central Europe in support of the German military. Fortunately, in the fall of 1941, Hitler would not think of a negotiated peace with the Soviet Union.

In Britain and the United States, as it became clear that the USSR was not going to collapse, several commentators made the point that, in defeating Nazi

Germany, the western allies should not hand control of Europe to the Soviet Union. Churchill had this view and in the United States, although the State Department was required by President Roosevelt to embrace, for a time, Morganthau's 1944 plan to close the Ruhr and break up Germany, other perspectives had emerged earlier in the war.[11]

In 1942 the geographer Isaiah Bowman, territorial advisor to President Wilson at Versailles and then President of Johns Hopkins University, told Sumner Welles, at the State Department, that it would be a mistake to break up, or fragment, Germany.[12] More publicly Nicholas Spykman, the Yale political scientist, declared in *America's Strategy in World Politics* (1942) that a 'Russian state from the Urals to the North Sea can be no improvement over a German state from the North Sea to the Urals.'[13] Spykman's *American Strategy* was reviewed on the front page of the *New York Times Review of Books* on 19 April 1942 and was widely read.

Spykman's work was built on Mackinder's Heartland concept. In the Pivot paper Mackinder had identified an inner or marginal crescent that occupied the margins of Eurasian land mass. Spykman later renamed the inner crescent the Rimland and thought it to be of major strategic importance. Spykman advocated the creation of regional defence organizations like NATO to secure the Rimland against Soviet expansion and he came close, in 1942, to describing the policy of containment that the US did adopt after World War II.[14] Spykman was not the author of containment policy, that is credited to George Kennan, but Spykman's book, based on the Heartland thesis, helped prepare the US public for a post-war world in which the Soviet Union would be restrained on the flanks.

In 1941 and 1942 Mackinder's ideas became well known in the US as publications like *Newsweek*, *Life*, and *Reader's Digest* carried articles on geopolitics, the Heartland, and Mackinder himself. In 1942 Mackinder's *Democratic Ideals and Reality* was re-issued with an introduction written by the respected strategic commentator Edward Meade Earle.

Mackinder's view of the post-war world was set out in *Foreign Affairs*, 1943, in an article entitled the 'Round world and the winning of the peace.'[15] He did not advocate the destruction of Germany but wanted the country contained by powerful neighbours, as insurance against further trouble, and concluded that the Soviet Union would emerge at the end of the war 'as the greatest landpower on the globe,' holding the 'strategically strongest defensive position' and the Heartland, 'the greatest natural fortress on earth,' will be manned by a garrison of sufficient quantity and quality.[16] Mackinder stopped short of predicting the relationship between the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom, in the post-war world.

In the post-war years Germany was divided into West and East Germany and the western portion was brought into NATO, as a counterweight to the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union emerged, in the 1950s, as a military superpower, equipped with intercontinental missiles and hydrogen bombs, Heartland phobia reached a peak in the Pentagon, as David Hooson tells us later in the volume.

The Cold War, and the era of containment, lasted until the fall of the Berlin Wall, German unification, and the collapse of the USSR. Now, we might think,

Mackinder's ideas, embodied in the Pivot paper and the Heartland concept, could be allowed to fall into historical context. This has not been the case as both Paul Coones and David Hooson describe in their contributions. During the Soviet Socialist period Mackinder was dismissed as an imperialist and his ideas were little studied. Today, in Russia and Uzbekistan, Mackinder and geopolitics are widely written about.

Origins of the Pivot paper

In Britain the early years of the twentieth century were a time of strategic questioning in the aftermath of the Boer War. But when Mackinder recalled, in the 1943 *Foreign Affairs* article, the events that had shaped his thinking on the Pivot paper he went back to his boyhood in Lincolnshire and his first encounter with international events. As he walked home from Gainsborough Grammar School in September 1870, at the age of nine, he saw displayed at the post office a telegram announcing that the French had surrendered to the Prussians at Sedan.[17] Young Halford carried the unwelcome news home, for his father had studied in Paris, and the Mackinder household contained a live-in French governess, who tutored Halford in French to the point where he could talk and think fluently in the language. Mackinder's fear of Germany, evident in the Pivot paper, has its origins in the Franco–Prussian war.

Mackinder also recalled from boyhood, in a general way, Anglo–Russian rivalry in Asia but then jumped forward thirty years to the Boer war, the Russo–Japanese rivalry and the German desire to add sea power to land power, as Von Tirpitz oversaw the construction of a high seas fleet. Apprehension over Germany is well represented in Mackinder's 1943 recollections, but, in 1904, the Russian empire occupied the Pivot. However, the Pivot, by one reading, only becomes a danger if Germany, by alliance or conquest, controls the region.

Throughout his working life Mackinder pursued several careers at once. For example, in 1900, he was Director of the Oxford School of Geography, Principal of the University Extension College at Reading, a lecturer at the London School of Economics, and a Liberal Imperialist parliamentary candidate. It is, perhaps, not surprising that Mackinder and his wife Bonnie (*née* Ginsburg) separated at the end of the year. In this period of hyperactivity Mackinder's imperial view underwent a transformation. In 1899 he gave a series of lectures, on the 'Great Trade Routes', to the Institute of Bankers in which he described Britain's role in the world at the centre of a system of free trade. London channeled investment overseas and Britain benefited from the activity of brains and muscles in other countries.[18] However, in the next year, 1900, he is less sure of Britain's future suggesting in his election address at Warwick and Leamington that:

> Little England, however true to herself, would soon be less safe when confronted by the military powers, the rapidly developing resources of whose vast territories would presently enable them to build great fleets.

> No other course is open to us than to bind Britain and her Colonies into a league of democracies, defended by a united navy and an efficient army.[19]

With the publication of *Britain and the British Seas*, in 1902, Mackinder's doubts are enlarged on. Britain was no longer an undisputed world leader. Much depended upon 'the maintenance of a lead won under earlier conditions', and it would be necessary to develop closer ties with the 'daughter nations' to provide for an expanded 'navy of Britains'. A new balance of power was emerging with five great world states '… Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the US … and some of the great states could use the resources of half continents.'[20] Other nations were not going to adopt free trade because that would strengthen Britain's commercial lead. The views expressed in *Britain and the British Seas* in a chapter entitled 'Imperial Britain' are pessimistic and suggest that Mackinder thought Britain could only maintain world power status by integrating the UK and the empire.

In May 1903 Joseph Chamberlain called for tariff reform (protectionism), preferential tariffs on goods from the empire and imperial unity. These views coincided with Mackinder's already transformed position. Mackinder resigned from the Liberal party and joined the Conservatives, although only a minority in that party favoured a policy of tariff reform.

In the summer of 1902 Mackinder vacationed with Sidney and Beatrice Webb in the Cotswolds and the Webbs developed the idea of a Co-Efficient dining club. The first monthly dinner was held on 6 November 1902. Members included L.S. Amery, Sir Edward Grey, W.A.S. Hewins, R.B. Haldane, Bertrand Russell, Sidney Webb, H.G. Wells, Pember Reeves, Leo Maxse and Mackinder. After dinner one member introduced a policy issue, discussion followed, and eventually a printed précis was given to members.

On 23 April 1903, Sir Edward Grey, the future Foreign Secretary, introduced a discussion of 'what should be the relations of Britain with the great European powers?' Amery and Mackinder made a summary of the discussion which concluded that while the advance of the Russian empire, against the weak states of Asia, was probably inevitable it was not a problem to face immediately. The most immediate issue was how to meet German ambitions.[21] The Pivot paper was to overcome the Germany or Russian question by suggesting that the issue was … which power will control the strategic region in the heart of Eurasia?

The Pivot paper was delivered at the Royal Geographical Society on 25 January 1904. The paper opened with the suggestion that the Columbian epoch – the age of sea power – was coming to an end. Land power was about to reassert itself. Strategically Mackinder divided the world into three zones: the Geographical Pivot of History (the closed heartland of Euro-Asia), the inner or marginal crescent of Euro-Asia, and the outer, or insular, crescent in which lay the Americas, Britain, and Japan. In 1904 the potential of the Pivot was balanced by the power of states in the inner or marginal crescent but if Germany, in the inner crescent, allied herself with Russia, the empire of the world would be in sight.[22] The countries in the outer crescent – Britain, the US, and Japan – would be at a strategic disadvantage.

In the century since the Pivot paper was published no power has gained the territorial control Mackinder feared but it has taken two world wars and the Cold War to prevent his prophecy being fulfilled.[23] In World War I Germany defeated the Russian empire and by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918) broke the Russian hold on Finland, the Baltics, much of Poland, Belarus, the Ukraine, and Georgia. In World War II, Nazi Germany, after benefiting from the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, then attacked the Red Army and occupied the Baltics, Poland, much of European Russia, the Ukraine, and reached the oilfields of the Caucasus. The thrust into the Volga river basin resulted in defeat at Stalingrad and, as the Red Army triumphed and pushed German forces westward, the Soviet Union took control of the Baltics, eastern Europe, east Germany and occupied part of Austria. Civil war in Greece created the possibility of a communist takeover in that country. The Soviet Union had undisputed control of the Heartland after World War II, and with forces on the Elbe and Danube rivers there were fears of further expansion. On 12 March 1947 President Truman declared that the US would give aid to countries opposing the spread of communism and with the creation of NATO (1949) the policy of containment was in place.

Criticism of the Pivot paper

After the delivery of Mackinder's paper members of the audience at the RGS discussed the content. Numerous interesting points were made and L.S. Amery offered a penetrating analysis. Speaking a few weeks after the Wright brothers had flown at Kittyhawk in North Carolina, Amery suggested:

> both the sea and the railway are going in the future … to be supplemented by the air as a means of locomotion, and when we come to that … a great deal of this geographical distribution will lose its importance, and the successful powers will be those who have the greatest industrial base. It will not matter whether they are in the centre of a continent or on an island; those people who have the industrial power and the power of invention and of science will be able to defeat all others.[24]

As professors Gray and Hugill discuss in this volume, the air power question turned out to be far more complicated than adding a new dimension to the land power–sea power equation. The UK and the USA made more effective use of airpower than the great land powers.

The well-travelled geographer and archaeologist, D.G. Hogarth, asked Mackinder if he really meant that the lands of inner Eurasia were going to be developed economically to the point where they would not export people but products. In reply Mackinder said:

> What I suggest is that great industrial wealth in Siberia and European Russia and the conquest of some of the marginal regions would give the basis for a fleet necessary to found the empire of the world.[25]

Critics have pointed out that the railways that Mackinder projected were never built, large areas of the Pivot remained isolated, and a hostile climate limited agricultural production. In 1904, the Russian empire was developing the resources of the Caspian region, the Urals and Siberia. Under Stalin's five-year development plans, starting in 1928, huge investments were made in the Volga River valley, the Ukraine, the Caspian, the Urals and in Siberia, as detailed in David Hooson's *A New Soviet Heartland?*[26] Since the collapse of the Soviet Union many of the investments in heavy industry have proved to be unsustainable when state subsidies ceased.

The late W.H. Parker in his *Mackinder: Geography as an Aid to Statecraft* has excellent analysis of the conventional criticism of Mackinder's Pivot paper and the book *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919).[27] James Malin developed criticism of what he called Mackinder's 'closed space'[28] doctrine, and, more recently, the critical geopolitics school has viewed presentations like the Pivot paper as being essentially territorially based and not well suited to the modern world in which globalization is increasing the flow of goods between world regions. Rather than the earth being divided into competing units, economies are becoming increasingly integrated. Mackinder would have been comfortable answering criticisms of this type. His reply would have been along the following lines. In the 1890s I believed in the free trade principles of British policy, the opening up of the world to increased trade and a freely convertible financial system based upon London and other centres. You can see this view set out in my 1899 lectures to the Institute of Bankers. Then I realized that the other major powers – France, Germany, Russia, and the US – were not going to adopt free trade. They would build self-sufficient economic systems and the large states able to utilize the resources of half continents would have the advantage. The US and Russian Empire controlled half continents and, as I suggest in the Pivot paper, Germany would attempt to take control of half a continent. Read the chapter on 'Imperial Britain' in *Britain and the British Seas* (1902) and my letter to *The Times*, in 1903.[29] At the beginning of the twentieth century it was obvious that there was a danger of large, self-sufficient, autarkic, great powers emerging which would compete for space, resources, and political dominance. What I did not see, until after World War I, was how ruthless some states would become under the control of dictators commanding totalitarian regimes. But as Klaus Dodds describes in his essay on the Pivot, in this volume, from the perspective of critical geopolitics the Pivot paper reflects the age in which it was written and a Eurocentric world view.[30]

Had Mackinder replied to the charge that his Pivot view was Eurocentric and that he underestimated the importance of North America he could have claimed: that he had spent the summer of 1892 teaching at the University of Pennsylvania and then traveled west through Ohio to Toledo and on to Chicago. No one could ignore the economic vibrancy of cities like Philadelphia and Chicago. When Leo Amery commented, after the 1904 Pivot lecture, that future wars would be won by 'the people who have the industrial power and the power of invention and of science,' he understood his point.[31]

The US, in 1904, was not a candidate to take over the Pivot. The countries mentioned as threats – Germany, Russia, Japan, and China all did enlarge territory and spheres of influence in Eurasia for a time, in the twentieth century. In each case the US came to Eurasia to reverse or resist territorial expansion.

The Pivot paper remains an interesting read and can be interpreted from several viewpoints as illustrated by the contributions to this volume. Colin Gray looks at the paper in the context of world affairs in the century since the Pivot was presented and is particularly interesting on the issue of whether Russia or Germany represented the major threat, as Sir Edward Grey and the Co-Efficients debated in 1903. In June 1904 when Admiral Mahan[32] read Mackinder's 'remarkable' paper he thought Russia was the major threat, as does Professor Gray, in the early years of the century, before Russia and Germany alternate as the feared adversary. Other contributors see Germany as the major threat, in Mackinder's mind in 1904. All of which emphasizes the way the Pivot paper can accommodate differing threats within the context of the strategic importance of Euro-Asia.

Robin Butlin places the Pivot paper in the context of the imperial defence issues which were widely debated in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century. Pascal Venier sets the paper in the diplomatic currents of the pre-First World War world and warns us against reading history backwards from the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Paul Coones examines, as did Mackinder, the role of the Heartland in Russian history. Sara O'Hara, Mike Heffernan, and Georgina Endfield view the Pivot paper in the context of the Great Game in Central Asia between Britain and Russia. Peter Hugill discusses Mackinder's views on the nature of states and territoriality. Everett Dolman takes Mackinder into the space age. David Hooson, a student of the Heartland and Mackinder's ideas for over half a century, closes the volume. David Hooson was taught by Professor E.W. Gilbert at Hertford College, Oxford. Gilbert knew Mackinder and was his biographer.[33] Through the work of Professor Gilbert many papers relating to Mackinder went to the School of Geography, Oxford.

Sir Halford Mackinder (1861–1947): a biographical sketch

Halford John Mackinder was born at Gainsborough, Lincolnshire on 15 February 1861.[34] His mother, Fanny Ann Mackinder (*née* Hewitt), came from a medical family and Halford's father, Draper Mackinder, was a well-qualified doctor. The town of Gainsborough, on the River Trent, was a port, a market town, and manufacturing centre for agricultural machinery. The town center, where the Mackinders lived in red-brick Georgian Elswitha Hall, was filled with poor housing for working families. Dr Draper Mackinder was a regular contributor to the *Journal of Public Health* and attempted to link meteorological conditions to outbreaks of disease.

Mackinder's early education was undertaken by his mother and father, and by a governess who lived in the Mackinder household. At the age of nine Halford began to attend Gainsborough Grammar School and in September 1874 went as a

boarder to Epsom College, Surrey. The College, established in 1855, provided a scientific education for the sons of doctors. Halford did well at Epsom and won a valuable Junior Studentship at Christ Church, Oxford, that could be held for five years.

Mackinder went to Oxford in October 1880. He joined the Oxford Union, the Junior Scientific Club, the Oxford University Rifle Volunteers and participated in the war game club where a leading member was H.B. George (New College) who was introducing the teaching of military and imperial history at Oxford. Later George proposed Mackinder for election to the Royal Geographical Society.

Academically, at Oxford, Mackinder concentrated on animal morphology, with ancillary work in physics, chemistry, physiology, and botany. There were long afternoons at the University Museum, under the supervision of Professor Henry Moseley, examining specimens and studying evolution via paleontology. Moseley had been on the *Challenger* round-the-world scientific expedition. He contributed much to Mackinder's world view and urged the Royal Geographical Society to help establish geography as a university subject.

Mackinder graduated with first-class honours in 1883. The Junior Studentship at Christ Church still had two years to run and in the academic year 1883–4 Halford read history, obtaining a second-class degree in 1884. Mackinder had a good knowledge of geology which he had developed at Epsom College with long walks in the Weald. During 1883–4, as he was reading for the history degree, Halford sharpened his knowledge of geology and paleontology and won, by examination, the Burdett Coutts prize which provided funding for two years of research in geology.

In 1884–5 Mackinder studied law, moving to London into the chambers of Gorrell Barnes, a leading shipping lawyer, and was called to the Bar in 1886. By his own account Mackinder defended some cases on the Midland Circuit.

Oxford University Extension and Reading University

Halford Mackinder and Michael Sadler were contemporaries at Oxford and established a lifelong friendship at the Oxford Union, where they both held the office of president. In 1885 Sadler reorganized Oxford University Extension, engaged young lecturers and introduced new subjects. Mackinder taught geography and economics at a number of centres while living in London. As he studied for the Bar Mackinder was elected to the Royal Geographical Society in March 1886 and came into contact with the officers of the RGS, including Henry Bates, Douglas Freshfield, and Scott Keltie. Bates suggested that Mackinder write down his ideas on 'The scope and methods of geography.' The paper was delivered at the RGS on 14 February 1887.[35] The society then offered funds to help establish readerships in geography at Oxford and Cambridge. Mackinder was appointed to the Oxford position and began teaching in the fall of 1887.

Mackinder's commitment to Oxford University Extension continued after he accepted the readership in geography and, in 1892, he and Michael Sadler, with the help of Christ Church, Oxford, Reading Town Council and the small School

of Science and Arts in the town, created a University Extension College in Reading. Mackinder served as principal of the college from 1892 to 1903, by which time the institution was recognized as a university college and was receiving financial support from the British Treasury. University status came later with the grant of a charter in 1926, by which time the extension college origins, Mackinder and Sadler, were being removed from the memory of the newly created University of Reading.

While Principal of Reading, Mackinder continued to lecture at Oxford and worked to establish a School of Geography. In 1895 Mackinder suggested to the RGS that a School of Geography be established in London. The RGS would not fund the London School of Geography alone but it did ally with Oxford University to help fund the Oxford School of Geography which opened for the 1899–1900 academic year, as Mackinder returned from leading an expedition to Mount Kenya, to assume the directorship.

London School of Economics

In addition to Oxford and Reading, Mackinder lectured at the London School of Economics from its beginning in 1895. In 1902 he was appointed lecturer in economic geography at London University and, when the first director of the LSE, W.A.S. Hewins, resigned in 1904, Mackinder was appointed to succeed him. He had resigned from Reading in 1903 but was still Director of the School of Geography and Reader in geography at Oxford when he took on LSE. Under pressure from Oxford colleagues he resigned his positions there in 1905.

Writing and publishing

In spite of all the work creating and expanding University College Reading, the School of Geography, Oxford and the LSE, Mackinder found time to write, and the years from 1900 to 1910 were his most productive. In addition to textbooks designed to give geography a school-level literature, Mackinder authored *Britain and the British Seas* (1902), 'The geographical pivot of history' (1904), *Money-Power and Man-Power* (1906),[36] *The Rhine* (1908)[37] and *India: Eight Lectures Prepared for the Visual Instruction Committee of the Colonial Office* (1910).[38] In the years from 1900 to 1910 Mackinder published a number of articles including two on the expedition he led up Mount Kenya in 1900. The full-length book he prepared on the ascent of Mount Kenya was not published until 1991.[39] After 1910, when Mackinder was elected to Parliament, there were few publications until a series of articles in the *Glasgow Herald* on World War I issues, culminated in the appearance of *Democratic Ideals and Reality* in 1919.

Political career

Mackinder directed the London School of Economics from 1903 to 1908, when he resigned to promote imperial unity and seek a seat in Parliament. He retained his University of London lectureship and Lord Milner organized some additional funding for a few years, while Mackinder established himself as an MP. On leaving the LSE, in the summer of 1908, Mackinder went to Canada and gave talks on imperial unity across the country.[40]

Mackinder had stood, unsuccessfully, in 1900, as a Liberal Imperialist at Warwick and Leamington. He resigned from the Liberal Party in 1903 to join the Conservatives. In 1909 he fought as the Conservative candidate at Hawick Burghs and lost the by-election. He was then adopted by the Conservatives in the Glasgow constituency of Camlachie and won election to Parliament in January 1910, retaining the seat, by a tiny margin, in the second election later in the year.

Before World War I Mackinder made little impact in Parliament as he tried to establish himself in the business world. The most important venture was the Electro-Bleach company, launched in March 1914. The company made bleaches for the textile and paper industries. When the war began the company came under the direction of the Ministry of Munitions to make chlorine for the western front. After the war Electro-Bleach was absorbed into the company which became ICI, and the facilities closed.

With the start of World War I Mackinder became increasingly active in public life, helping with recruiting in Scotland and working on the creation of the National Savings Scheme. He retained his seat in Parliament in the election of 1918 and served as the British High Commissioner to South Russia in 1919–1920.[41] In June 1920 he was appointed to chair the Imperial Shipping Committee (ISC), attached to the Board of Trade. He lost the election in 1922 and refused to consider offers to fight other seats, devoting himself to writing the ISC reports. From 1925 to 1931 he also chaired the Imperial Economic Committee.

As World War II approached Mackinder moved out of London to live with his brother and sister-in-law near Bournemouth on the south coast of England. He died there on 6 March in the long, harsh winter of 1947, aged eighty-six.

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2

IN DEFENCE OF THE HEARTLAND

Sir Halford Mackinder and his critics a hundred years on

Colin S. Gray

We all must learn geography in order to learn history.
(Walter A. McDougall, 2003)[1]

It is a tribute to the reach and coherence of Mackinder's geopolitical theorising that after a hundred years his worldview is judged worth debating. This essay can be read as a defence of Sir Halford Mackinder, though I am somewhat uncomfortable unavoidably giving strength to the claim that there is a critical case worth answering. Mackinder's geopolitics express a perspective on international security that transcends the challenges of a particular period. This is not to equate his writings with those of Thucydides or Carl von Clausewitz, both of whom, quite explicitly, sought to explain the structure of their subject for all time. Nonetheless, I maintain that Mackinder, with his Pivot–Heartland thesis, suitably enriched when necessary by Nicholas J. Spykman's Rimland notion, has pointed to an enduring geostrategic reality of the first importance. When we consider the familiar hazards of policy-oriented, not merely policy relevant, theorising, it is little short of amazing that a thesis advanced a century ago still merits a huge measure of respect today. It appears even more amazing when we remember that that thesis was keyed to progress in transportation technologies. Aside from doubts that may be harboured over the political assumptions underlying Mackinder's theory, surely the Pivot–Heartland menace must have fallen victim to a hundred years of accelerating technological advance?

It is essential that geopolitical theory should not give the impression that it is waging an unsuccessful rearguard action against the effects of technological and political progress. It is worth recalling that Mackinder's Pivot speech to the Royal Geographical Society on 25 January 1904, was delivered just thirty-nine days after the Wright brothers achieved the first sustained powered flight by a heavier-

than-air vehicle.[2] Critics at the time speculated that the coming of air power, and the growing importance of technology- and science-based industry, would reduce the relevance of the spatial focus of geopolitics. From January 1904 to the present day, geopolitics has been the target of claims alleging obsolescence, irrelevance, or harmful influence. In the hundred years since the Pivot paper startled people with its prediction of a decline in the relative influence of sea-based power, geopolitics has withstood the challenges of air power, as noted already, of nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, spacecraft, and the maturing of an electronics revolution that truly vanquishes distance and time. If spatial relationships as an element in historical causation looked vulnerable to the consequences of manned flight, how can they survive as matters of much concern in a world that is undergoing a process of globalisation led by information technologies?

As if the apparent technological challenge to the relevance of geopolitics were not severe enough, the subject and its practitioners, both theorists and policymakers, have always drawn fire from a political quarter. Many critics have viewed them not so much as commentators upon the problem of international security, but rather as part of the problem itself. The theory and practice of geopolitics attracts the charge that it produces self-fulfilling prophecies. Little can be done to persuade such critics that geopolitics is innocent of the charge. To the many people who understandably are attracted to the Whig interpretation of history, the view that history records the onward march of human progress, geopolitical analysis, certainly analysis in Mackinderesque vein, does seem dangerously atavistic. The myth of benign transformation, of the prospect for a marked improvement in how we arrange our security affairs, lurks permanently in the wings of world history.[3] After every great conflict hope and expectation are confused and a better world is predicted to be here now, or arriving soon, or distinctly possible. Geopolitics is tainted with the brush of conflict and, generally, with an association with the problems of yesterday.

A part of the difficulty in debating geopolitics lies in the absence of consensus over definition. Many scholars bring a hostile attitude to the subject, so that even fairly innocuous seeming definitions of geopolitics provide a thin disguise for assumptions that are not conducive to open-minded scholarship. For example, Mackinder's biographer, Brian Blouet, tells us that 'geopolitical policies seek to establish national or imperial control over space and the resources, routeways, industrial capacity and population the territory contains'.[4] Such a definition enables its author to label some policies as 'geopolitical'. This somewhat pejorative definition of geopolitics is contrasted, unfavourably of course, with what he understands by globalisation, a phenomenon that Blouet defines as 'the opening of national space to the free flow of goods, capital and ideas'.[5] These definitions are not wrong, indeed definitions cannot be so judged, but they are calculated to prejudice the minds of those who are relatively unfamiliar with the terminology favoured by theorists of International Relations.[6] I prefer a neutral definition which holds that geopolitics is the spatial study and practice of international relations.[7] Blouet, one feels, chose to employ a fairly tendentious

definition of geopolitics in order to provide the clearest of contrasts with his understanding of globalisation.

Few subjects in the theory and practice of international relations carry as much unhelpful historical baggage as does geopolitics. This essay is organised around five broad propositions, discussion of which is intended to help change the way in which geopolitics in general, and Sir Halford Mackinder in particular, are regarded. The propositions suggest: that Mackinder's theory has withstood assault by its critics remarkably well; that his geopolitical writings necessarily reflected the time and place of their composition, but so have the charges of his critics; that his geopolitics is a superior example of grand theory; that his theory and analysis is a variant of classical realism and ought not to be very controversial; and, finally, that his Pivot–Heartland theory proved accurate enough through the twentieth century, and continues to be relevant in the twenty-first.

Just as history inherently is strategic, so also must it be geopolitical.[8] The former quality speaks to the persistence of the threat or use of force, while the latter, the focus here, affirms that 'real international relations occur in real geographical space',[9] and spatial relationships can matter greatly. One might be excused for thinking that claims as basic as these are so obvious as to verge on the banal. However, modern scholarship on International Relations has been well populated with theories which betray an all but complete indifference to geography in its political and strategic dimensions. One uninhibited critic of geopolitics is confident that '*at the upper levels of international relations geopolitical analysis is already as obsolete as major war itself*'.[10] Further on he concedes that

> Geopolitics itself is not obsolete, nor is military force, for instability and warfare will continue to be ubiquitous throughout the 'zone of turmoil'. But among the great powers at the top of the hierarchy of states, force is no longer an option to resolve differences. Geopolitics as geo-strategy has assumptions of conflict at its root – today, since conflict between the strongest players is unthinkable, great power geo-strategy à la Mackinder, Spykman, Mahan, and Brzezinski, is obsolete.[11]

In an earlier article, the author of those agreeable certainties unconsciously spoke from a tradition of liberal optimism, and illusion, when he declaimed as follows:

> The end of the Cold War has provided the United States an unprecedented opportunity to shape the nature of the system. In order to do so it is necessary to jettison antiquated and baseless concepts like geopolitics once and for all.[12]

That worthy sentiment has a history that is almost painfully easy to trace through the past two centuries. The problem, as I have suggested already, is that it expresses a fallacious belief in the probable, or actual, benign transformation of international relations or, more economically stated, in progress. It is tempting to surrender to

our wishes and join Christopher J. Fettweis, the critic in question, in celebration of the demise of major war and hence, in his view, also the demise of classical geopolitics with its focus on conflict among the great powers. However, it is perhaps sobering to note that geopolitical analysis is ever on the lookout for those patterns in political and strategic behaviour traceable to the geographical context, and that the dominant patterns of modern history are far from reassuring. Writing twenty years ago, F.H. Hinsley offered this brutally unarguable analysis:

> At the end of every war since the end of the eighteenth century, as had never been the case before, the leading states made a concerted effort, each one more radical than the last, to reconstruct the system on lines that would enable them, or so they believed, to avoid a further war … These initiatives are as characteristic and distinctive of the operation of the system as are the dynamics of its wars. So is the fact that they all came to nothing.[13]

If only the principal sources of international conflict truly were attributable in noteworthy part to obsolete thinking, including geopolitics. In that happy event we could set about constructing a global security community in the wake of the more advanced processes of globalisation. Unfortunately, proclamation of the demise of geopolitics is at best premature, and much more likely is simply wrong-headed. The case arguing a continuing relevance of geopolitical ideas is not merely plausible, it is overwhelmingly so. Moreover, not only is geopolitics a matter of high contemporary and future importance, but so are the ideas of Sir Halford J. Mackinder.

Mackinder's theory, with its modifications over the years for changing circumstances, has withstood criticism remarkably well

To put it in the vernacular, he got the really big things right enough. Brian Blouet is very much on target when he claims, that:

> from a geopolitical perspective the twentieth century with the First and Second World Wars, and the Cold War, was a struggle to prevent Mackinder's prediction [that a single power might come to control the Eurasian land mass and, thereafter, possibly the whole world] coming true![14]

Blouet's geopolitical judgement on the twentieth century may well prove to hold for the twenty-first also. For Mackinder to be able to provide in 1904 (with modifications, and more, in 1919 and 1943) an explanation of the most essential relations of global conflict for a century and more, must count as no mean accomplishment. The integrity of his geostrategically two-dimensional world of 1904, embracing the land and the surface of the sea, has not been fatally, or even seriously, challenged

by air power, space power, and the exploitation of the electromagnetic spectrum. In one sense, Mackinder was wrong with his prediction of the end after 400 years of what he termed the Columbian era, since a maritime alliance overcame a continental alliance in the three great conflicts of the twentieth century.[15] In another sense, however, Mackinder was correct, even in his prognosis of 1904, let alone of 1943. The sea power that enabled the three world wars to be won by the mixed maritime-continental coalitions of 1914–18, 1939–45, and 1947–90, increasingly – from war to war – was the product of the extraordinary strength of a continental scale of polity with overwhelmingly contiguous territory (with apologies to Alaska and Hawaii). Mackinder was right to fear the maritime potential of great continental strength, especially were such strength not to be diverted into the more pressing demands of actual or potential continental combat. Fortunately, his prediction was realised in the form of the US Navy.

There is no evidence that Mackinder devoted close attention to the geopolitical implications of air power, but his refusal to be dazzled by its promise looks prescient today. He tended to view air power as an arm of land power, which was not unreasonable, though it did understate the degree to which the US Navy would co-opt and project the air weapon.[16] The battles of the Coral Sea and Midway in May and June 1942 might have caused some revision of his view, but 'The Round World' article for *Foreign Affairs* was written prior to the maturing of the fast carrier task-forces with which the US Navy transformed war at sea in the Pacific by late in 1943.[17] In 'The Round World' essay Mackinder observed that:

> It can only be said that no adequate proof has yet been presented that air fighting will not follow the long history of all kinds of warfare by presenting alternations of offensive and defensive tactical superiority, meanwhile effecting few permanent changes in strategical conditions.[18]

Mackinder was right. We should excuse his not taking proper account of the implications of the marriage of the weaponisation of atomic physics with long-range air and missile power: who was in 1943?! Also, he may be forgiven for underestimating the military and strategic utility of air power that is all but wholly unchallenged in the air by the enemy. Notwithstanding these caveats, Mackinder's restrained enthusiasm for air power has stood the test of repeated historical experience far better than did the breathless enthusiasm of air power's prophets. Both Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 attested to the continuing authority of a combined arms approach to warfare.[19] Mackinder's opinion of air power was echoed by Noble Frankland, one of the two British official historians of the strategic air offensive of World War II. In his memoirs, Frankland confides that:

> my research had led me to understand that, far from being a revolutionary innovation, air power had been shown to have conformed with, and been confined by, the same general principles of war as those that governed the conduct of armies and of sea power.[20]

Mackinder's theory was neither determinist nor was it indifferent to, let alone dismissive of, technological change. After all, its author laboured hard and repeatedly to try to influence policy choice so that a geopolitical and geostrategic context unfavourable for Britain should not emerge. His theory contained a warning and identified a solution. It predicted danger, not catastrophe.

Geopolitical analysis in the classical mode can give the appearance of being on the defensive today against those who argue that new technology has squeezed the significance of spatial relationships into insignificance. However, Mackinder's geopolitics were driven by his understanding of the implications of new transportation technologies. The thesis that new technology can alter the meaning of geography is a cardinal element in his system of ideas. Geography is permanently significant for statecraft and strategy. But the details of that significance alter over time, and not only as a consequence of technological advance; changes in public perception of geopolitical realities may be of greater importance.[21]

Mackinder's geopolitical writings reflected their time and place of composition, but so also have the commentaries of his critics

Mackinder was not the founding father of modern geopolitics: that distinction was shared by German geographer Friedrich Ratzell and the Swedish scholar Rudolf Kjellen. Nonetheless, it is accurate to claim that Sir Halford was the first to devise a comprehensive global theory of geopolitics, one that fitted the newly politically 'closed world' of the early twentieth century.[22] Moreover, appraised comparatively in long retrospect, he was the best. His pre-eminence in geopolitical theory does not match that of Clausewitz in the theory of war, but he does share with the magnificent Prussian the acknowledgement of both friends and foes that he is first in his field. Naturally, Mackinder wrote as a man of his time and place, and he had a particular geostrategic danger in mind in his theorising. In 1904, in the Pivot paper, he was exercised about the potential menace of a modernised Russia, especially if such a Russia were to ally with Germany,[23] while in 1919 and 1943, unsurprisingly, his focus of concern was Germany. It is worth mentioning that the next greatest geopolitical theorist in the Anglo-American tradition, the Dutch-American, Nicholas J. Spykman, also had the German Problem most in mind in *The Geography of the Peace*, a work published posthumously in 1944.[24] Writing in the midst of World War II, both Mackinder and Spykman were strong advocates of post-war continuation of the Grand Alliance. In their final geopolitical compositions in 1943–4, neither theorist was writing to urge preparation for the containment of the Soviet Union following the defeat of Germany. This is not to deny that both men clearly perceived the geostrategic potential for future trouble. Spykman, looking for a continental ally to provide a vital complement to the maritime and air power of the United States and Britain, had no hesitation in dismissing France because her 'position … in the post-war period will certainly not be strong enough to make her

co-operation alone sufficient to assure the security of Europe'.[25] The apparent solution to the Anglo-American geostrategic dilemma could hardly have been more obvious, albeit with a crucial caveat.

> Russia, on the other hand, will be the strongest land power on the continent and it will be to the advantage of both Britain and the United States to have her as an ally. Indeed, *as long as she does not herself seek to establish a hegemony over the Eurasion rimland*, the Soviet Union will be the most effective continental base for the enforcement of peace.[26]

A parallel conception had been expressed by Mackinder a year earlier in 1943 in these much-quoted and misunderstood words.

> All things considered, the conclusion is unavoidable that if the Soviet Union emerges from this war as conqueror of Germany, she must rank as the greatest land Power on the globe. Moreover, she will be the Power in the strategically strongest defensive position. The Heartland is the greatest natural fortress on earth. For the first time in history it is manned by a garrison sufficient both in number and quality.[27]

This description and contingent prediction often is misinterpreted as a prescient anticipation of the need to contain Soviet power. In fact, Mackinder is clear about the geostrategic problem of 1943. The danger resided not in Heartland Soviet Union, but in Rimland Germany. He wrote of the need for Germany to be 'controlled by strong embankments of power on either hand – land power to the east, in the Heartland, and sea power to the west, in the North Atlantic basin'.[28] Both Spykman and Mackinder spoke to the problems of the day in their writings and, necessarily, were men of their time. Both were gifted theorists and were respectful of the fact that the course of history can alter the meaning of physical geography. As a consequence their theories had a structural merit which transcended much of the obvious influence of the historical context of their time of writing.

Mackinder was a Victorian who transferred his all-but-visceral distrust of Russia to Germany as international circumstances changed.[29] So adaptable was his theory that the Russian Pivot menace of 1904 was transmuted into the Heartland power as the solution, rather than the problem, by 1943.[30] Mackinder should not be criticised too severely for having Germany rather than Russia in his sights in 1943. It might be recalled that at the time of his writing the *Foreign Affairs* article, superpower Rimland Germany still held much of the Heartland. Although it was reeling from the disaster at Stalingrad, Germany had yet to chance its arm with the final offensive fling at Kursk, and the Anglo-American landings in France were still a year in the future. It is a characteristic of superior geopolitical theory and of excellence in policy science (defined as explanation of the structure of a policy problem or issue area), that they are able to accommodate without undue strain

even apparently radical changes in historical context. Intelligent assessment of Mackinder's geopolitical theorising over a forty-year period should be as intellectually flexible about secondary matters as was he. In 1919, he wrote that 'each century had had its own geographical perspective'.[31] And, as we have noted, he shifted without apology from a Russian to a German menace. Had he still been writing geopolitics in his final months (he died on 6 March 1947), or had he lived and been fit to continue theorising for a few more years, there is no doubt that would have shifted seamlessly back to the threat assessment of 1904, which saw Russia as the leading problem.

There is a humility and an adaptability about Mackinder's geopolitics, notwithstanding their literally global domain, that some of his critics over the years would have done well to try and emulate. Of course, the major published iterations of his theory reflected the historical contexts of their drafting. It is noticeable how often Mackinder's critics fail to credit him with prescience for his correct geopolitical judgements; commit the abominable sin of critical hindsight–foresight (to criticise a person for not knowing what was not knowable at the time); and are seemingly unaware of the fact that their own views rest historically on shifting sands. For example, a recent critic of Mackinder, a critic of the root-and-branch kind, boldly dismisses geopolitics on the basis of attitudes and beliefs that were fashionable in the late 1990s.[32] For a hundred years Mackinder's theory has attracted criticism from a range of opinions, both sensible and otherwise. The theory has outlasted the criticisms. Air power, nuclear weapons, technology in general, the anticipated demise of war, particularly major war, and now IT-led globalisation, have none of them wrought lethal damage to the Pivot–Heartland theory; at least not yet.

Mackinder's geopolitics is a superior example of grand theory

Carl von Clausewitz did not discover 'friction', nor was he the first person to recognise that war is 'nothing but a duel on a larger scale'.[33] Similarly, Alfred T. Mahan most assuredly did not invent sea power. Mackinder may have written persuasively about the implications for the Pivot area of Eurasia of developments in transportation technology, but he did not reveal new facts to a startled world, any more than did Nicholas J. Spykman a generation later. On 25 January 1904, Mackinder challenged his rather modest-sized audience at the Royal Geographical Society with this question:

> Is not the pivot region of the world's politics that vast area of Euro-Asia which is inaccessible to ships, but in antiquity lay open to the horse riding nomads, and is today about to be covered with a network of railways? There have been and are here the conditions of a mobility of military and economic power of a far-reaching and yet limited character. Russia replaces the Mongol Empire.[34]

Mackinder was giving voice to what at the time was an anxiety among officers on Germany's Great General Staff; an anxiety that was to grow rapidly into an obsession which had the most dire strategic, and ultimately political and operational, implications.[35] In short, the British geopolitical theorist with his Pivot thesis did not tell German staff officers anything that they did not know already. One could multiply like examples. Did anyone in 1942–4 need Spykman to inform them of the extraordinary strength of the Eurasian Rimland, particularly of its north-central European portion? In 1914–18, Imperial Germany took on virtually the entire world and nearly won. In 1942, World War II was Germany's to lose, she was truly a super-state.[36] Although theorists' concepts frequently tell people what they know already, nonetheless they can perform a most valuable function helping organise, sort, and make sense of a messy reality. Britons had practised sea power for the better part of three centuries before Mahan explained what they had been doing. In like manner, Mackinder and Spykman, with their alternative foci on Pivot–Heartland or Rimland, provided a grander scale of explanation for what had been the golden rule of English, then British, statecraft for four hundred years: keep continental power divided. As for Sir Halford's specifically Russian anxieties of 1904, the elegant parsimony and near breath-taking historical sweep of his theory, should be considered in the context of nearly a century of Anglo–Russian rivalry and hostility. German staff officers were worried about the implications of Russian modernisation for a future war on two fronts. British diplomats and officers had played the 'Great Game' in Central Asia for generations, seeking to slow the pace of Russian penetration south and south-eastwards into Islamic lands, en route, presumably, to the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, *and India*.[37]

Despite the argument that Mackinder, Spykman, and indeed many other strategic theorists might be dismissed, or at least diminished in esteem, on the grounds that they tend to rediscover the familiar, such a view would be a serious error. Politics and policymaking generally is not a reflective profession. People can be knowledgeable and even vastly experienced, but policymaking is a pragmatic activity. The theorist, even, or perhaps one should say particularly, the grand theorist, is sorely needed to help harried politicians and a small attentive public make sense of the course of history. Lawrence Freedman is persuasive when he suggests that:

> The value of strategic concepts is to be found in their ability to provide some way through the tangle of international relations. Rather than being propelled into recklessness by a surge of popular feeling or stunned into immobility by contradictory advice, policy-makers need concepts to enable them to appreciate the likely dynamics of the situations in which they find themselves and evaluate alternative courses of action.[38]

As usual, Clausewitz has a pertinent comment. 'Theory exists so that one need not start afresh each time sorting out the material and ploughing through it, but will find it ready to hand and in good order'.[39] Most scholars in most disciplines, to the limited extent to which they theorise, typically speculate with a narrow focus.

Geopolitics has long attracted a sceptical response from scholars trained to be disdainful of ambitious theory. Whereas historians and political scientists have been educated to know more and more about less and less, and are professionally programmed to dissect phenomena, geopoliticians are committed to the all-too-rare activity of putting things together. It is a crowning glory of geopolitical theory that it seeks to connect, rather than disconnect; it is, in a word, holistic. There is some small irony in the fact that today a geopolitical worldview is contrasted with approaches identified as promoting of globalisation, when geopolitical analysis has nearly always been the epitome of a truly global perspective.[40] Mackinder's geopolitics may have been born out of his anxiety for the security and prosperity of the British Empire, but if anyone early in the twentieth century wrote in a definitively global context, it was he.

An important part of Mackinder's appeal is perhaps best described as aesthetic. Without forgetting the substantive merit of his theory, the extraordinary boldness of his conception is remarkable. Many of his critics have failed to appreciate what one might term the sheer poetry of the enterprise of geopolitical grand theory. In 1890, Mackinder wrote engagingly that 'no science can satisfy the mind which does not allow the building of palaces out of the bricks'.[41] Geoffrey Parker offers the attractive speculative judgement that 'perhaps in the end this has to be the ultimate and most rewarding justification for all geopolitical thought'.[42]

Geopolitics is a variant of classical realism and should not be controversial

However, since realism in its several modes is controversial, at least among scholars, it is not surprising that geopolitics is judged guilty by association.[43] This concedes more than strictly one need, since my neutral definition of geopolitics, 'the spatial study and practice of international relations,' has no necessary connection with any particular school of thought on International Relations. While it is true that geopolitical theory, including that of Mackinder, has been apt to have conflict as its centre of gravity – sea power versus land power in the case of Mackinder – there is no reason why this has to be so. Christopher Fettweis argues plausibly, but short-sightedly and not strictly accurately, that

> geopolitics as we have known it to this point, from Mackinder to Brzezinski, needs conflict to survive. Without the threat of war, geopolitical reasoning, and more importantly the conclusions to which it leads, will have little to say about how the most powerful, industrialised countries behave in the 21st century.[44]

The importance of geopolitics, and hence of Sir Halford's theory, lies precisely in the facts that it addresses a major dimension to international conflict, the geographical, and that it seeks to identify and explain patterns in international conflict behaviour. These are simply existential claims. International conflict has

been endemic to the course of history, never more so than in the twentieth century, and geopolitical grand theory inevitably has reflected that reality. It is easy to sympathise with Walter A. McDougall when he complains that 'geography's importance ought to be so obvious that no one would challenge it'.[45] All political action occurs in a geographical context, and spatial relationships, keyed to the facts of relative location, are almost invariably of significance. In other words, political behaviour necessarily is *geo*political.[46]

Although the geopolitical writings of, say, Mahan, Mackinder and Spykman, plainly belong to the realist canon, actually there is no necessity for that methodological affiliation. Geopolitical analysis and theory is a tool that can serve a wide range of worldviews. When Fettweis asserts that 'conflict, and the oppositions that arise from it, is a central assumption of geo-strategic analysis',[47] he seems not to appreciate that the assumption that conflict is possible is central to strategic, not only to *geo*-strategic, analysis. His next sentence sounds powerful, but really is banal to the point of being meaningless. He tells us that 'where there is no such conflict, or the potential for conflict, geo-strategic analysis is almost useless'. Quite so, except, of course, for the education of statecraft with respect to possible or probable difficulties in the future. With equal cogency, one could just as well condemn strategic thinking and defence preparation during an inter-war period. In practice, the broadly realist view of the world was shown by the course of twentieth-century history to be all too relevant, and Mackinder's geopolitics yielded a close fit with the global context for the defence of the West. Those impressive facts have not sufficed, however, to save geopolitics from some ill-judged charges.

Inadvertently, Mackinder's biographer, Brian Blouet, contributes to misunderstanding of the subject when he claims that 'the history of geopolitics is a history of bad ideas – sometimes mad ideas – that have led countries to wars and recessions'.[48] There are two problems with Blouet's exciting assertion. First, it is not at all likely that geopolitical theory has had the identifiable historical influence that he claims for it. In the early 1940s, Americans persuaded themselves that Major-General Karl Haushofer and his *Geopolitik* was the evil genius directing the Nazi bid for world power. That proposition never could withstand close scrutiny. The general was a tireless advocate of German–Russian co-operation, and his *Geopolitik* did not lend itself readily to accommodation of the racist nonsense in Nazi ideology.[49] Second, although Blouet undoubtedly is correct to claim 'bad ideas' can be found in the history of geopolitics, is it accurate to imply that only bad ideas have been the fruit of labour in geopolitical theory? Surely not! It would make as much sense to claim that politics or economics 'is a history of bad ideas – sometimes mad ideas – that have led countries to wars and recessions'. Indeed, compared with the poisonous consequences of pseudo-scientific socialism and the quasi-religion that was Nazism, geopolitics must be awarded close to a clean bill of health.

Geopolitics, like strategy, is an equal opportunity tool of analysis. Each suffers from guilt by association: with conflict, war, and suffering; with some dangerous sounding, even crazy, ideas; and in general with an approach to the world that focuses upon competition rather than co-operation. Some scholars would shoot

the geopolitical messenger and condemn the geopolitical message that explains the dynamic spatial dimension to some persisting patterns of conflict in international relations. One might as well condemn medical research for its obsession with disease. Geopolitics treats the world as it is and tends to scepticism over the prospects for progress towards lasting peace. Because much of academe holds to the liberal illusion that international relations can be transformed benignly, it associates geopolitics, and its generally realist approach to statecraft, with conditions that need to be changed. When one debates either geopolitics in general, or Mackinder (or Mahan, or Spykman, among others) in particular, both sides to the controversy are armed with assumptions, hopes, fears, and possibly some dubious reading of history, that are not helpful to a constructive exchange of views. To those of a broadly realist persuasion, such as this author, geopolitics requires no generic defence. If the record of two and a half millennia of humankind's bloody historical passage does not speak with sufficient cogency, then there can be little that is worth saying in hope of persuasion.

Mackinder's geopolitics proved accurate enough through the twentieth century, and continues to be relevant in the twenty-first

In the last century the state champions of Western civilisation waged and won three necessary world wars. None of those wars were prudently avoidable by Britain and the United States, notwithstanding the unconvincing long retrospective wisdom of some revisionist historians.[50] Mackinder, and Spykman, explained why those wars were necessary. In this chapter I have claimed some importance for the historical context of theory creation, and I could easily be persuaded to endorse Adam Garfinkle's insightful maxim that 'we become where we are',[51] which asserts the significance of geographical context. In the case of Sir Halford and his Pivot–Heartland thesis we are in the realm of truly grand theory. A notion of just how grand is conveyed usefully when his central idea pertaining to the menace of unbalanced land power in Eurasia is considered in the light of an astute observation by the French philosopher, Raymond Aron. In Aron's highly plausible opinion, 'strategic thought draws its inspiration each century, or rather at each moment of history, from the problems which events themselves pose'.[52] The Pivot paper certainly lends itself to explanation as the response by an anxious Briton to what he perceived as the emerging problems that would be posed by a modernising, hence much more powerful, Russia. Before the Pivot concept is dismissed as a historical curiosity, however, it happens to be the case that Mackinder's theory fitted the circumstances of 1914–18, of 1939–45, of 1947–89, and prospectively of some great struggles in the future.

Some of Mackinder's critics, among others, assure us today that the era of major inter-state war is now past, and with it the era wherein geopolitics may, possibly, have relevance. They could be correct, but we should not forget that the third great war of the twentieth century was concluded only little more than

a decade ago. Moreover, we have in excess of two thousand years of historical experience which argues for the eventual return of major conflicts. It has to follow that only naïve optimists would bet heavily on the prospect of the future of international relations registering a systemic benign transformation.

The problem for British imperial security addressed by Mackinder in January 1904 was one literally grounded in permanent geographical realities, and propelled by unstoppable, securely predictable, technological trends. Some assertions in praise of Mackinder and Spykman can be almost as misleading as their obverse. Sir Halford did not discover the implications of steam power and the internal combustion engine for the strength of large continentally contiguous polities. Furthermore, and more to our focus at this juncture, he was not in any direct sense the parent of America's global policy and strategy of containment in the Cold War.[53] That said, what he did was assemble the pieces of the security puzzle, allocating superior significance to the most influential trends and also, of course, to the enduring spatial context of international relations. Mackinder was not a geographical determinist. He recognised physical geography as being but a dimension of political affairs, the realities of which not infrequently are overborne in peoples' minds by the geography of their imagination. But underlying his, and Spykman's, geopolitics was a truly permanent geographical reality that specified important spatial relationships. The exact meaning of that geographical reality naturally would vary with historical circumstances.

It is a mistake, at least it is apt to mislead, to focus upon the obvious changes in Mackinder's geopolitical writings, from 1904, through 1919, to 1943. Also, it is an error to emphasise the self-evident differences between Mackinder and Spykman.[54] Properly regarded, the two men should be seen as telling compatible geopolitical stories; stories which had identical implications for the defence of the West. So, what was the core of Mackinder's theory?

- He warned that the polity that controlled the Pivot (1904) or Heartland (1919, 1943) area of Eurasia, would have the basis in central location (interior lines of communication) and resources to stage a credible bid for control of the Eurasian land mass and subsequently for world domination. From its geographically contiguous continental fortress, and if untroubled by major diversions on land, the Heartland state or coalition would be able to acquire the maritime and other assets necessary to challenge the sea power of the states of the 'Outer Crescent' (especially Britain and the United States).
- Mackinder was open-minded regarding the identity of the continental foe. In 1904 it was Russia; in 1919 and 1943, Germany. In addition, he considered China a distant possibility to succeed as the Heartland polity. The identity of the foe was not important for the cogency of the theory. In common with a long tradition in the rationale behind British foreign policy, the Heartland theory identified a permanent interest and postulated a permanent policy solution. Britain needed to encourage or join the second-strongest state or coalition so as to deny continental hegemony to the threat of the day.

- In 1943, he explained the innovation of what he called his 'second geographical concept [the first being the Heartland], that of the Midland-Ocean – the North Atlantic – and its dependent seas and river basins'.[55] His brief description of this North Atlantic security community reads remarkably like a highly prescient description of the essential geopolitical and geostrategic structure of NATO (1949–). The facts that Mackinder's Midland-Ocean collective defence concept was designed with Germany in mind as the enemy, and with the Soviet Union in mind as a vital land-power ally, are really unimportant, theoretically speaking. Germany or Russia, what did it matter? The geostrategic logic was the same. In Mackinder's words:

> Without labouring the details of that concept [the Midland-Ocean], let me picture it again in its three elements – a bridgehead in France, a moated aerodrome in Britain, and a reserve of trained manpower, agriculture and industries in the eastern United States and Canada.'[56]

The Pivot–Heartland theory rested upon geographical realities. Such is the arrangement of the continents that potentially lethal menaces to the security of the West plausibly could come only from the Eurasian land mass. Some critical theorists may disagree, but Mackinder's concepts were hewn out of bedrock. The concept of the Pivot–Heartland is of course a constructed one, but it reflected material facts and truth about location. As Hans W. Weigert once observed, geography 'does not argue: it simply is'.[57] Contemporary objections to the Heartland thesis are not in short supply. Critics point to the current, and prospective, weakness of the Russian Federation; to the integration of Germany into a fitfully uniting Europe; to the unmatchable (for a while) strength of the United States; to the decades of effort still required before China can aspire to be a peer competitor to the United States; and to the apparent fact that the principal geostrategic fault-line in international relations today is that between militant Islam and its many enemies. The 'arc of crisis' from Morocco to the Philippines certainly impinges on Heartland issues in Moslem Central Asia, but bears not at all upon some general struggle to control the Eurasian land mass. One could add yet more objections. What they all have in common is an essential irrelevance to the validity of Mackinder's theory. The contemporary distribution of power among the United States, EU-Europe, Russia, and China, does not undermine the theory. Too many critics appear to live only in the present. It is scarcely more than a decade since the West thwarted the third bid in a century by the Heartland, or would-be Heartland, power to dominate Eurasia as a necessary giant step on the path to world domination.[58] How much more supportive evidence does one need? Moreover, the unchanging distribution of continental space around the globe, heavily concentrated in the northern hemisphere of the World-Island of Eurasia-Africa, mandates that a potentially worthy foe of the lone US superpower can arise only from the Eurasian land mass.

The obvious differences between Mackinder and Spykman are of no real significance. Whether the strength of Eurasia lies more in the Heartland or the

Rimland is a question not for resolution by logic, but rather empirically, because the answer will vary from period to period. In the first half of the twentieth century, Rimland Germany seemed vastly superior to Heartland Russia, until the verdict of the battlefield settled the controversy for a while. In the words of Rudolf Kjellen, 'war is like wine, it always tells the truth'.[59] During the decades of the Cold War, much of the Rimland was functionally and formally allied with the United States in the global effort to contain the Soviet Union. Retrospective judgement on whether Moscow needed as much containing as was assumed to be the case in Washington, London and elsewhere, is really beside the point. To the statesmen of the Midland-Ocean powers in the late 1940s and 1950s, the menace from the East appeared beyond basic argument and fitted all too closely the paradigm first outlined by Mackinder in 1904. It may well be that the Western, especially the American, conduct of containment degenerated for a while in the 1950s and 1960s into what Geoffrey Sloan has termed an 'indiscriminate globalism'.[60] One needs to be careful lest Mackinder's sound geopolitical theory suffers from guilt by unfair association with unsound policies. Nothing in his writings advised the Midland-Ocean polities to pursue containment militarily in any particular location (to ignore the fact that he had Germany in mind). As Clausewitz should not be held responsible for World War I, so Mackinder was entirely innocent of any blame for Vietnam.

Lest the point inadvertently has been obscured above, I am arguing that Mackinder and Spykman, notwithstanding their differences, were offering essentially the same analysis of, and prescription for, the major threat to Western civilisation. Both pointed to the peril that would be posed by a power or coalition that succeeded in dominating the Eurasian land mass. Whether the threat derived from the Rimland (i.e., Germany, China, EU-Europe) or from the Heartland (e.g., Russia, or Russia and Germany), is a distinction without much of a geostrategic difference. When the threat stemmed from the Rimland, as in 1914–18 and 1939–45, the maritime West allied with the Pivot–Heartland power. But when the threat emanated from that Heartland power (1947–90), the maritime polities of Mackinder's 'Outer Crescent', pre-eminently the United States, allied with those in danger on the Rimland.

A recent critic of Mackinder has written without evidence of intended irony that 'there are no "timeless truths" in world politics':[61] I am tempted to add 'including this one'. However, Mackinder and Spykman's warnings about the need to balance, or overbalance, the power of an ambitious state, a potential hegemon, in Eurasia enjoys the status of an approximation to a 'timeless truth'. The reasons why this should be so could hardly be more basic. First, states rise and fall, and sometimes rise again, in relative power and influence. Germany had the distinction of falling twice within thirty years, while Russia fell twice in seventy-five. Who will rise next? The motive is unlikely to be world domination, but policy tends to follow role and function and in good part is the product of relative power and its insecurities and opportunities. Second, 'whatever our politics, the grammar of geography is grounded in reality'.[62] Effectively it is a 'timeless truth' that great peril to the West can come only from Eurasia. The 'grammar' of world physical geography allows for no other assumption.

The geometry of geopolitical alignment and realignment in this century may well contain some surprises. Modern history has recorded several fairly sudden radical shifts in security affiliation; it would be strange were the future not to reveal like events. Mackinder's Midland-Ocean concept, which translates fairly neatly into the North Atlantic security community and its collective defence organisation, NATO, might suffer not merely the decline evident today, but terminal demise. A classic diplomatic revolution might result from a Sino–American conflict. China might find a useful security partner in EU-Europe, while the United States could judge the new Russia to be the perfect continental complement to its own maritime and air power. Alternatively, China and Russia might find common cause, as might EU-Europe and Russia. In all of these cases, the logic of Mackinder and Spykman would still hold. There would be great danger in the domination of the Eurasian land mass by a single state or coalition.

Sir Halford Mackinder was the first and, to date, the greatest of geopolitical theorists. Much of this chapter, perhaps too much, has been somewhat partisan in an endeavour to defend his theory against criticisms that I deem unfounded or, at least, excessive. By way of conclusion to the discussion, however, it is useful to stand back from the question of whether or not one finds the Pivot–Heartland theory persuasive, and appreciate Mackinder's geopolitical achievement. Policymakers are obliged to deal with issues as they arise and 'on their merits', as the cliché insists. Long-range policy navigation is beyond the skill and the time available to most policymakers. Satisfactory policy is policy that works well enough, now. What it is all about, and what the consequences of the major alternatives might be, are questions that busy officials typically are content to leave to the historians with their 20:20 hindsight.

The glory of geopolitical theory at its best, and it has come no better than in Sir Halford Mackinder's three principal forays (1904, 1919, and 1943), is that it connects what otherwise is likely to be regarded unduly in isolation. Also, geopolitics has the potential to show the long-term consequences of actions and inaction, and of trends of many kinds (e.g., technology, demography, climate), in the context of some spatial discipline. Sound geopolitics is neither geographically deterministic, nor is it wedded to the absurd notion that particular features of physical geography have an inherent, unchanging significance, regardless of political or technological change. Geopolitics does insist, though, that spatial factors, especially the key facts of location, reflecting as they must the actual grammar of physical geography, be accorded their due. A great deal of scholarship and popular commentary on the subject of security lacks historical perspective, is naively optimistic, and assumes that geography, if not dead, at least is terminally ailing under the assault upon 'mere distance' staged by the evolution of communication technologies. A close and empathetic reading of Mackinder's geopolitics, with some adjustment for the changing historical context, affords a counterweight to analyses that are ahistorical, ageographical, too narrow in scope, or unduly optimistic. Mackinder's grand general theory provides a reality check for those among us whose vision is restricted and whose understanding is stunted.

Notes

1 W.A. McDougall, 'Why Geography Matters … But Is So Little Learned', *Orbis*, 47, 2 (Spring 2003), p. 217.
2 'The Geographical Pivot of History' is in Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962), pp. 241–64. The author's other key geopolitical essay, 'The Round World and the Winning of the Peace' (1943), is included also. *Democratic Ideals and Reality* was first published in 1919. All references to Mackinder's geopolitical writings are to the Norton, 1962 edition.
3 The myth of benign transformation in international relations is exposed and taken to task in Colin S. Gray, 'Clausewitz Rules, OK? The future is the past – with GPS', *Review of International Studies*, 25, special issue (Dec. 1999), pp. 161–82.
4 B.W. Blouet, *Geopolitics and Globalization in the Twentieth Century* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 7.
5 Ibid.
6 This chapter follows the convention of referring to the scholarly discipline as International Relations, and the real world activity itself as international relations.
7 See Colin S. Gray, 'Inescapable Geography', in Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan (eds), *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 163–4.
8 This is the principal thrust of Gray, 'Inescapable Geography'.
9 M.T. Owens, 'In Defense of Classical Geopolitics', *Naval War College Review*, 52, 4 (Autumn 1999), p. 61.
10 C.J. Fettweis, 'Revisiting Mackinder and Angell: the Obsolescence of Great Power Geopolitics', *Comparative Strategy*, 22, 2 (April–June 2003), p. 119 (emphasis in the original).
11 Ibid., p. 123.
12 C.J. Fettweis, 'Sir Halford Mackinder, Geopolitics, and Policymaking in the 21st Century', *Parameters*, 30, 2 (Summer 2000), p. 70.
13 F.H. Hinsley quoted in Ian Clark, *The Hierarchy of States: Reform and Resistance in the International Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 3.
14 Blouet, *Geopolitics and Globalization*, p. 11, see Blouet, Chapter 1, this volume, note 23.
15 Mackinder, 'Pivot'. A maritime alliance is one whose most essential lines of communication are seaborne. The composition of the maritime alliances of the West in the three world wars – two hot, one cold – were, of course, of a mixed, complementary maritime–continental character in each case.
16 Mackinder, 'Round World', p. 274.
17 See C.G. Reynolds, *The Fast Carriers*: *The Forging of an Air Navy* (Huntington, NY: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1978).
18 Mackinder, 'Round World', p. 274.
19 See S. Biddle, *Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Nov. 2002). Jonathan M. House, *Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001), provides valuable historical context.
20 N. Frankland, *History at War: The Campaigns of an Historian* (London: Giles de la Mare Publishers, 1998), p. 61.
21 Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals*, p. 30.
22 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 242.
23 Ibid., p. 262, p. 436.
24 N.J. Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1944. Reprinted Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969). Also see his major study of *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1942).
25 Spykman, *Geography of the Peace*, p. 57.
26 Ibid. (emphasis added).
27 Mackinder, 'Round World', pp. 272–3.

28 Ibid., p.273.
29 See the excellent biography, Brian W. Blouet, *Halford Mackinder: A Biography* (College Station, TX: A and M University Press, 1987). W.H. Parker, *Mackinder: Geography as an Aid to Statecraft* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), also is valuable.
30 Mackinder, 'Round World'.
31 Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals*, p. 29. The similarity with Clausewitz is striking. 'We wanted to show how every age had its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions. Each period therefore would have held to its own theory of war'. *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (1832; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 593.
32 Fettweis, 'Mackinder, Geopolitics, and Policymaking'.
33 Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 119–21, 75.
34 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 260.
35 Jehuda L. Wallach, *The Dogma of the Battle of Annihilation: The Theories of Clausewitz and Schlieffen and Their Impact on the German Conduct of Two World Wars* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986); Arden Bucholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and Prussian War Planning* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1991); Terence Zuber, *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan: German War Planning, 1871–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
36 This argument is well made in Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), ch.1.
37 For highly readable narratives, see Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Karl E. Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Asia* (London: Abacus, 2001); and Antony Wynn, *Persia in the Great Game: Sir Percy Sykes, Explorer, Consul, Soldier, Spy* (London: John Murray, 2003).
38 Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).
39 Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 141.
40 See Blouet, *Geopolitics and Globalization.*
41 Mackinder quoted in Geoffrey Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1985), p. 120.
42 Ibid., p. 182.
43 On realism see Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Stefano Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold* (London: Routledge, 1998); Jack Donelly, *Realism and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Jonathan Haslam, *No Virtue Like Necessity: Realist Thought in International Relations since Machiavelli* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), especially ch. 4 on 'Geopolitics'.
44 Fettweis, 'Revisiting Mackinder and Angell', p. 119.
45 McDougall, 'Why Geography Matters', p. 218.
46 See Gray, 'Inescapable Geography'.
47 Fettweis, 'Revisiting Mackinder and Angell', p. 113.
48 Blouet, *Geopolitics and Globalization*, p. 177.
49 This is not to deny that in the worst tradition of opportunistic policy science, Haushofer did his best to rationalise Nazi ideology, and then Nazi policy and strategy, in geopolitical terms. See Holger H. Herwig, '*Geopolitik*: Haushofer, Hitler and Lebensraum', in Gray and Sloan (eds), *Geopolitics*, pp. 218–41.
50 Revisionists are obliged to argue: that Britain could have coexisted satisfactorily with an Imperial Germany victorious on the continent; that World War II was ruinous for the British Empire and should have been avoided by a prudent determination in London to cut a deal with Hitler, allowing him a free hand on the continent; and that the Cold War was quite unnecessary, because Stalin's USSR was determined only to protect itself against further aggression by securing its position in the territories conquered by the Red Army or conceded by inter-allied diplomacy. I

am thoroughly unconvinced by all three cases of revisionism. I grant that Germany went to war in 1914 more out of fear than ambition, that Nazi Germany initially had a European, at most Eurasian, territorial agenda, rather than a global one, and that Stalin's first concern was to defend Russia's recent gains. However, intolerable threats to British, even Anglo-American, security and values, would flow inexorably from such relatively modest continentalist ambitions.

51 Adam Garfinkle, 'Geopolitics: Middle Eastern Notes and Anticipations', *Orbis*, 47, 2 (Spring 2003), p. 275.

52 Raymond Aron, 'The Evolution of Modern Strategic Thought', in Alastair Buchan (ed.), *Problems of Modern Strategy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 25.

53 See G.R. Sloan, *Geopolitics in United States Strategic Policy, 1890–1987* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1988).

54 For example, as in Michael P. Gerace, 'Between Mackinder and Spykman: Geopolitics, Containment, and After', *Comparative Strategy*, 10, 4 (Oct.–Dec., 1991), pp. 347–64.

55 Mackinder, 'Round World', p. 277.

56 Ibid.

57 Hans W. Weigert quoted in McDougall, 'Why Geography Matters', p. 218 n. 3.

58 Imperial Germany, Nazi Germany, and the USSR may not have had serious plans for world domination, but had they been completely successful in continental warfare they would have been obliged to bid subsequently for global hegemony, if only to secure what they had won in Eurasia.

59 Rudolf Kjellen quoted in Geoffrey Parker, *Geopolitics: Past, Present and Future* (London: Pinter, 1998), p. 29.

60 Sloan, *Geopolitics in United States Strategic Policy*, pp. 150–9.

61 Fettweis, 'Mackinder, Geopolitics, and Policymaking', p. 68.

62 McDougall, 'Why Geography Matters', p. 232.

3

THE PIVOT AND IMPERIAL DEFENCE POLICY

Robin A. Butlin

H.J. Mackinder's paper 'The Geographical Pivot of History' was delivered to the Royal Geographical Society on 25 January 1904, and published in the *Geographical Journal* for April of that year.[1] The historical and political contexts of its delivery are significant. As Stoddart has indicated, it came at the end of a long period of serious military engagements by Britain on imperial fronts, including the Afghan Wars, the Sudan, and the Boer War of 1899–1900:[2]

> Within a fortnight of his lecture, however, the imperial Japanese Navy attacked Port Arthur in the opening encounter of the Russo–Japanese War. The Japanese defeated the Russians in a naval battle off Port Arthur in August, and the city surrendered early in January 1905. Russia's humiliation was completed at the Battle of Tsushima Straits in May. It was an extraordinary and immediate refutation of Mackinder's land-based thesis which has scarcely been noticed by subsequent commentators obsessed by the naval expansion of Germany.

This chapter will evaluate aspects of contemporary ideas about imperial defence in Britain, with reference to the experiences of other European countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and will review the extent to which they were reflected in the basic tenets of Mackinder's 1904 paper.

Mackinder's Geographical Pivot of History paper

The 1904 paper contained a number of significant new concepts about the geopolitics of power balances and the systems within which they operate. The era of European maritime supremacy (the Columbian period) was at its end 'soon after the year 1900'.[3] The world had become a 'closed' political system, with very few areas left to explore and settle:

> From the present time forth, in the post-Columbian age, we shall again have to deal with a closed political system, and none the less that it will

> be of world wide scope. Every explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos, will be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe, and weak elements in the political and economic organism of the world will be shattered in consequence.[4]

Mackinder claimed that 'Probably some half-consciousness of this fact is at last diverting much of the attention of statesmen in all parts of the world from territorial expansion to the struggle for relative efficiency.'[5] The contemporary scene offered a new opportunity to review, at a broad level, correlations between 'the larger geographical and the larger historical generalizations', and enabled a formula of 'geographical causation' to be produced which might have some value in the putting of then-contemporary forces in international politics into perspective. Historically, Europe and its civilization were seen by Mackinder as historically subordinate to Asia and were the product of 'the secular struggle against Asiatic invasion'.[6]

Contrasting the geographical positions and characters of Russia with that of the Western powers of Europe ('peninsular Europe'), Mackinder traced their influences on European history, and described the core of Euro–Asia as the Geographical Pivot of history, whence emanated many of the invaders of Western Europe and its margins through historical time. The expansion of influence of western Europe through sea-based movement resulted in the creation of 'new Europes' in Canada, the United States, Australia and parts of Africa, which, together with Japan, constituted 'a ring of outer and insular bases for sea power and commerce, inaccessible to the land-power of Euro–Asia.'[7] In terms of direct links with then contemporary strategic thinking, Mackinder stressed the significance of the European discovery of a route to the East via the Cape, with the effect of connecting

> the western and eastern coastal navigations of Euro–Asia, even though by a circuitous route, and thus in some measure to neutralize the strategic advantage of the central portion of the steppe-nomads by pressing upon them in rear … The one and continuous ocean enveloping the divided and insular lands is, of course, the geographical condition of ultimate unity in the command of the sea, and of the whole theory of modern naval strategy and policy as expounded by such writers as Captain Mahan and Mr Spencer Wilkinson.[8]

Nonetheless,

> the land power still remains and recent events have again increased its significance. While the maritime peoples of Western Europe have covered the ocean with their fleets, settled the outer continents, and in varying degrees made tributary the oceanic margins of Asia, Russia has organized the Cossacks, and emerging from her northern forests has policed the steppe

> by setting her own nomads to meet the Tartar nomads … The eastward swoop of the horsemen from across Asia was an event almost as pregnant with political consequences as was the rounding of the Cape, although the two movements long remained apart.[9]

The influence of major land-based regions, including Asia, was thought to be increasing. Notwithstanding the influence of steam-power and the Suez Canal on maritime movement, Mackinder contended that the parallel development of the trans-continental railway in particular had been of great significance:

> As we consider this rapid review of the broader currents of history, does not a certain persistence of geographical relationship become evident? Is not the pivot region of the world's politics that vast area of Euro–Asia which is inaccessible to ships, but in antiquity lay open to the horse-riding nomads, and is today about to be covered with a network of railways? There have been and are here the conditions of a mobility of military and economic power of a far-reaching and yet limited character. Russia replaces the Mongol empire.[10]

Beyond the pivot area was what Mackinder identified as an inner crescent (Germany, Austria, Turkey, India and China) and an outer crescent (Britain, South Africa, Australia, The United States, Canada and Japan). He reflected on the role of India in the defence of empire, making reference to bridgehead bases for imperial navies, and L. Amery's concept of a 'British military front [that] stretches from the Cape through India to Japan'.[11] Mackinder speculated about the possibility of predominance of Russia as a political and economic power, particularly if linked with Germany, and identified various other great power and regional permutations, including the future functions of the United States in relation both to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

The possibilities of a social revolution changing the Russian course of advancement was discounted by Mackinder (only thirteen years ahead of the Russian Revolution), and he made interesting statements at the end of the paper about the risks of a German–Russian alliance, and of an alliance between Japan and China.[12] A German–Russian alliance, said Mackinder, would cause a regrouping of France and other 'oversea powers', so that

> France, Italy, Egypt, India, and Korea would become so many bridge heads where the outside navies would support armies to compel the pivot allies to deploy land forces and prevent them from concentrating their whole strength on fleets … May this not in the end prove to be the strategical function of India in the British Imperial system? Is not this the idea underlying Mr. Amery's conception that the British military front stretches from the Cape through India to Japan?[13]

Geographical perspectives

Mackinder, towards the end of his paper, said: 'I have spoken as a geographer'. The President of the Royal Geographical Society, inviting comments at the end of Mackinder's presentation, said: 'We hope that Mr. Spencer Wilkinson will offer some criticism on Mr. Mackinder's paper. *Of course, it will not be possible to avoid geographical politics to a certain extent*'[14] [my italics], thereby raising, as perhaps had Mackinder, the problem that the RGS had, through its charter, in openly discussing political matters. In the mid-nineteenth century this had not prevented such active enthusiasts for a British 'forward policy' in the defence of India, notably Henry Rawlinson, in politicizing debates at the RGS on Central Asia, some of which were reported in full in newspapers such as *The Times*, others of which were not: 'A number of meetings degenerated into political harangues, though reports in *The Times* and the Society's *Proceedings* were abridged or doctored to conceal the greater part of this.'[15]

This raises a question about the paper's simplicity. Some time ago Pounds, while recognizing the impact of the 1904 paper on subsequent studies in geopolitics, stated that 'it is not a good paper. Its boldness and simplicity have been achieved at the expense of inaccuracies and inattention to historical and geographical detail.'[16] He also pointed to Mackinder's inaccurate anticipation of the speed of railway building in the Pivot area, his use of the Mercator projection for his map of the Natural Seats of Power (which exaggerated the size of the British empire and the Pivot), his failure to evaluate the potential influence of the aircraft on geopolitical relativities, his underestimation of the continuing influence of sea power, and his overstatement of the accessibility of rivers flowing to the sea as routes of maritime penetration.

The discussion that followed Mackinder's paper at the RGS was also significant, particularly the contributions by H.S.Wilkinson, journalist and military historian, and L.C.M.S. Amery, also a journalist (for *The Times*, notably during the Boer War) and later a politician – Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (1919–21), First Lord of the Admiralty (1922–4) and Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Dominions from 1924–9. Spenser Wilkinson (1853–1937) had studied at Oxford where, like Mackinder, he had been a member of a *Kriegsspiel* (war games) club. He trained as a lawyer but became a journalist in 1882, and wrote editorials on the Egyptian Campaign for *The Guardian*. He worked for the *Morning Post* from 1895–1914. One of his main concerns was with military education, on which he wrote the book *The Brain of an Army* in 1890, which seems to have influenced the formation of the British General Staff. He was a founder member of the Navy League. A great exponent of Clausewitz's classic *On War*, he became the first Chichele Professor of Military History at Oxford in 1909. He had an active correspondence with many senior soldiers including Lord Roberts (1832–1913), who had read Wilkinson's work, as also had A.T. Mahan, the American naval strategist. His earlier account, with Charles Dilke, of the changing geopolitical conditions of the late nineteenth century, including the expansion of Russia, argued for closer links between colonies and the metropole.[17] Similar concerns were to be

expressed by Leo Amery in 1905, particularly on the need for a navy and army of great efficiency, capable of defending Britain and its imperial outposts, preferably as part of a common imperial defence system. Killingray suggested that at the turn of the century 'The dilemma of how to balance the requirements of metropolitan security with the need to uphold and maintain a greatly varied global Empire lay at the heart of Imperial defence schemes and their subsequent history.'[18]

In the Pivot paper, Mackinder's only explicitly stated link to contemporary naval and military strategy, apart from Mahan, was to Wilkinson. The Dilke and Wilkinson book *Imperial Defence* was based on the premiss that Britain was not prepared for war, and that this was largely a matter to be addressed by various forms of practical re-organization of the armed services. Little was said about broader global geopolitical strategies, but the assumption was made that the root of British defence, at home and abroad, would be the Navy. In the second chapter, entitled 'The Primacy of the Navy', they wrote that 'The ocean is, in fact, a British possession, not indeed a property conveyed and settled by treaties or title deeds, but English in the sense that Englishmen incomparably more than others use it and occupy it',[19] and that 'The British Navy, then, so long as it maintains the superiority at sea, is a sufficient protection against invasion for every part of the Empire except India and Canada.'[20] They assumed that neither the United States nor Russia would challenge British naval supremacy, but the maintenance of superiority at sea would be critical. A fundamental creed would be that the function of the British Navy in war should be to take the initiative and attack and destroy an enemy navy, frequently by blockade in its home ports. They were not convinced that the British Navy was large enough for the purpose, and advocated the development of a force of battleships large enough to effect major blockades of enemy bases, and two 'large fleets of cruisers, the first to act as scouts and messengers for the combatant fleets, the second to undertake the duty of patrolling the ocean.'[21] Speed was an important factor, especially now that steam power was in use, as was the development and security of systems of cable telegraphy. Their main concern about fleet size was that it should be greater than that of the French. Surprisingly, no mention was made of Germany.

Dilke and Wilkinson envisaged three circumstances of conflict for Britain: 'a war with France (about Egypt, or Siam, or Newfoundland), or some other of the dangerous questions often pending between the Western Powers, which would turn primarily on the question of naval supremacy; a war with Russia, which would be a land war for the defence of India; or a combination including both these wars at once.'[22] Much of the book was taken up with the question of Russia and the Indian border. At the time they wrote, the notion of Russia as a threat to India was losing some of its currency, but Dilke and Wilkinson still regarded it as serious, and it is implicit in Mackinder's 1904 paper. Dilke and Wilkinson's view was that both China and Russia posed potential threats to India's security, and the more likely to activate its interest would be Russia. While they did 'not assume on the part of the Tsar or his advisers any malignant purpose', Dilke and Wilkinson thought it self-evidently 'probable that they may attempt to extend their possessions into

Afghanistan, and to use their position on the Indian frontier as a lever for exerting influence on our policy in Europe.'[23] They then evaluated, in a patronizing and imperious tone, the possibility of Russia replacing Britain's 'demi-god' status in the minds of Indians. The possibilities of British naval and army strategy to attack Russia at its margins were reviewed, and then the geographical and political character of the north-west frontier of India and strategies for its defence were described and evaluated. In their last chapter, Dilke and Wilkinson assess the efficacy of the British army, noting its three major functions: to defend the homeland, India and to service colonial garrisons.[24] The nub of their argument was that change was needed in the terms, conditions and recruitment of soldiers, in the constant shifting of battalions at home and abroad, in the cost of support of British soldiers in India, and of maintaining naval support of garrisons abroad.

Wilkinson, speaking to Mackinder's Geographical Pivot lecture on 25 January 1904, was both supportive and critical of a number of aspects of the paper. Wilkinson's thinking had moved on from the book of 1892. He supported the notion that the modern world had become, because of improvements in transportation (particularly steam navigation) a closed system, and wished that British politicians (whose absence from the lecture he noted)

> would give more time to studying their policy from the point of view that you cannot move any piece [in chess] without considering all the squares on the board. We are very much too apt to look at our policy as though it were cut up into water-tight compartments, each of which has no connection with the rest of the world, whereas it seems to me the great fact of today is that any movement which is made in one part of the world affects the international relations of the world – a fact which, it seems to me, is lamentably neglected both in British policy and in most of the popular discussions of it …[25]

Wilkinson was less convinced by Mackinder's point about 'the enormous importance to the world of the modern expansion of Russia', claiming that he had overestimated the historical role and impact of the tribes of Central Asia on its periphery and on Europe, and Wilkinson counterbalanced this idea by emphasizing the global – particularly imperial – role of Britain as an island state, and by implication, the developing role of Japan as a parallel maritime-based power in east Asia.

Leo Amery, in his comments after the 1904 paper, supported Mackinder's 'big comprehensive idea' of 'the whole of history and the whole of ordinary politics' related to 'the great economical struggle between the great inside core of the Euro-Asiatic continent and the smaller marginal regions and islands outside'. He argued that there were historically three 'economico-military forces' … 'There is the economic and military system of the agricultural country, the system of the coast and sea-faring people, and the system of the steppes; each had its peculiar weaknesses and its peculiar sources of strength'. He drew attention, using the example

of the recent Boer War, to the 'the difficulty a civilized state finds in conquering a steppe-power.'[26] His most important comment, however, and an implicit criticism of Mackinder's paper, was

> that both the sea and the railway are going in the future – it may be near, or it may be somewhat remote – to be supplemented by the air as a means of locomotion … and when we come to that, a great deal of this geographical distribution must lose its importance, and the successful powers will be those who have the greatest industrial basis. It will not matter whether they are in the centre of a continent or on an island; those people who have the industrial power and the power of invention and science will be able to defeat all others.[27]

A significant point in relation to these and other contemporary comments on Mackinder's Geographical Pivot paper is the determination of the extent to which he had taken into account other current or earlier notions of global geopolitics and current political thinking in Europe. From the paper alone it is difficult to say, as his sole reference in this area was to Mahan's theories of sea power and to Wilkinson's writing. Yet Mackinder was well-connected politically and must have had knowledge of contemporary thinking about military and naval strategy. Parker stated that it was an independent and original thesis, influenced – as Mackinder later indicated in 1943 – by British movement of troops to South Africa by sea [for the Boer War] and Russian movement of troops to Manchuria by rail [to fight the Japanese].[28]

Assessments of the nature of imperial defence

One of the key elements of Mackinder's paper was clearly his reading of future global strategies, specifically the role of maritime and land-based power. The Pivot paper envisaged a declining role for sea power, and this is an idea, particularly in relation to the dynamics of British maritime power and strategy, which has been questioned. How did the tenets of the Pivot paper match the evidence of contemporary policy and practice of imperial defence and the balance of power between European states?

P.M. Kennedy has suggested that the mix of countries represented at the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884–5 was symbolic of the old world order, but also that projections of future balances of power were being made, which 'stressed struggle, change, the use of force, and the organization of national resources to enhance state power',[29] citing Mackinder's argument about efficiency and internal development as the new drivers of state power, replacing territorial expansion, a theme also echoed in Leo Amery's comments on Mackinder's 1904 paper.

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century Britain was a strong naval power, but fears were constantly expressed in government about the cost of maintaining a thinly-stretched navy with an imperial role, which the

Navy itself felt should be changed to a more concentrated presence in fewer regions, around Britain's shores and in the Mediterranean. The broader problem, which to varying degrees affected other European imperial powers, was that of linking together policies that would accommodate defence of the metropolitan homeland with protection of widely scattered colonies and of the sea and trade-routes that supported them, and the determination of the relative roles of navy and army.[30] British policies for imperial defence changed through the nineteenth century, and Burroughs has suggested that 'By the late 1870s another pattern began to emerge, one which sought to integrate Britain and the colonies into an overall strategy of imperial defence, although the navalist bias towards sea power and centralization operated against such a design.'[31] Another factor from the 1870s onwards was the increasing colonial activity of other European powers, which left 'British ministers and their professional advisers … groping their way towards a more co-ordinated strategy which entailed a greater emphasis on the Royal Navy, a slackening of financial constraints, and bids to conjure co-operation from self-governing colonies.'[32] A key factor in the development of British imperial defence policy was the work of the Carnarvon Committee, established in 1879 to review 'the defence of British possessions and commerce abroad,'[33] and which, in its report of 1881–2, highlighted the significance of sea-based trade between constituent parts of empire and the problems of its protection, notably in times of war, and the lack of defence of many of the land-based settlements of empire.[34] The Commission 'marked a turning-point in official policy. It sketched a system of imperial defence based on naval power, embracing both Britain and colonies, combining central command and local contributions.'[35]

There has been much debate by military and economic historians about the role of the navy in imperial defence at this time. O'Brien has suggested that, after the Imperial Conference of 1902, which succeeded in obtaining slightly greater contributions from the dominions (apart from Canada) towards the cost of the Royal Navy,

> all overseas squadrons of the Royal Navy were denuded to increase British strength in the Mediterranean and, most dramatically, around the British Isles. The signing of the Anglo–Japanese Alliance, the destruction of the Russian Navy by the Japanese, the development of dreadnought class battleships and the growth of German naval power all contributed to this change.[36]

He then showed how this concentration was intensified by 1907, with all the navy's battleships and torpedo gunboats, most of the destroyers, the majority of the armoured cruisers, and two-thirds of the unarmoured cruisers in European waters, leaving small numbers of cruisers and destroyers in the China (13), Australia (9), East Indies (5), Cape of Good Hope (3), North America (3) and West Indies (3) squadrons. On the basis (and fact) that trade with empire was less than trade with North and South America and that the threat from Germany was the most important

strategic issue, the logical development was a naval strategy concentrating resources in Europe.[37] Although complaining about resources being stretched too far, and thus emphasizing the need for dominions to contribute to the cost of naval defence of their territories:

> after 1902 the British were actually complaining about one thing but doing another. They were trying to pry more money from the dominions for the navy at precisely the time they were planning to use the navy almost solely for Britain's own defence.[38]

There were geographical dimensions to Britain's deliberations and actions about the roles of the army and navy in defence of empire, not least because her formal empire had increased substantially in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Beyond formal empire was the need to protect merchant shipping, to police far-flung areas in times of crisis, all of which meant a constant juggling act for navy resources, from the west to the far east, and in European and Mediterranean waters, and the army transferring 'battalions from Aldershot to Cairo, or from India to Hong Kong'.[39] Britain had much experience in managing distant places of imperial and economic interest, had networks of coaling stations, cable connections and strategic colonies, and notwithstanding her diminution of economic strength relative to Germany and the United States, still remained the world's major political and strategic power. Germany was a rapidly developing industrial, naval and military force in the 1890s. The other partner in the potential land-based alliance feared by Mackinder – Russia – was far behind in terms of military, naval and technical efficiency, though its perceived interest in the borderlands of India was a matter for British concern.

Against Mackinder's and other arguments foreseeing or accepting the relative decline of naval power and the rise of land-based power, especially from the Eurasian pivot, can be posed counter-arguments about the factors affecting world power balances in the context of the relative strengths of the navies of Britain, France, Russia and Germany, with Germany a later naval developer. Lambert resisted the notion that Britain, by the end of the nineteenth century, had a weaker navy and a declining industrial position, arguing that the navy was in fact stronger than ever, but that the position was obscured by interservice rivalries, and a liberal mind that evaluated sea power solely as a defensive rather than offensive force.[40] Lambert dismissed Mackinder's Pivot paper as 'a pseudo-scientific justification for Russophobia, based on fears for the security of India prompted by the completion of the Orenburg–Tashkent railway in 1905.'[41] This may overstate Mackinder's concern with India and its borders, even though the defence of India was a concern for many British intellectuals and politicians, notably after 1857. Lambert was also sceptical of the relevance for the Royal Navy of the strategic analyses contained in Alfred T. Mahan's *The Influence of Seapower upon History: 1660–1783* (1890) and his *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire* (1892). Mahan's main thesis was concerned with the necessity for a

state with a coastline to develop sea power, and the acquisition of overseas bases for both military and naval strategic purposes. His writings related historically to a time of transition from sail to steam propulsion, and of fast-changing positions of geostrategic supremacy.[42] Elsewhere, Lambert has examined the conflicting theories of Mahan and Mackinder, their relevance to the debate on imperial defence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as a source for the ideas in Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*:

> Kennedy builds his thesis on the contrast between A.T. Mahan's sea power theories and the 'heartland' thesis of Sir Halford Mackinder, propounded in 1904. This ignores the unreal nature of Mackinder's thesis, which was a parody of the more extreme 'blue-water' arguments of the day, rather than a profound analysis … its popularity, then as now, rests more on the Russophobia of the audience than any particular intellectual merit. Mackinder's argument that the railroad would replace the ship as the world's prime mover was, and remains, absurd … The railways of Russia collapsed in 1877 and again in 1904–5.[43]

G.S. Graham, in publications in 1965 and 1972 on British naval supremacy and Britain's expansion overseas,[44] supported Mackinder's thesis about the ending of sea-based supremacy by the rise of land-based powers such as Russia and the United States, giving a basis for what Gough has called the 'Mackinder versus Mahan' theme.[45] A related theme in Graham's writings is the significance of 'naval supremacy as a foundation of Empire along the Asian rim', which again echoes a theme in Mackinder's Pivot paper.[46] The Mackinder thesis was supported both by P.M. Kennedy in his *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (1976) and Edward Ingram in *Commitment to Empire: Prophecies of the Great Game, 1797–1800* (1981).[47]

Lambert suggested that the notion of the gradual weakening of sea power as against increased military power enhanced by the advance of railway networks was more a reflection of alarmist groups looking for higher military expenditure.[48] On account of technological developments in the nineteenth century, worldwide bases, and Britain's economic strength, Lambert contended that

> Between 1856 and 1914, the Royal Navy remained unchallenged as a war-fighting force at sea. The legacy of history, the unequalled size of the fleet and national commitment to maintaining naval mastery ensured that the Royal Navy remained both the foundation and the sword arm of global power.[49]

In his specific analysis of the role of the British navy in the development of a strategy for imperial defence, he asserts that Britain lacked a carefully constructed national naval strategy or doctrine, such as had been proposed by Mahan or embraced by France, Russia, Germany and the United States. Britain had in effect

proceeded pragmatically, relying on the long history of British naval experience 'for guidance. The transmission of this knowledge was a major part of the intellectual development of career sea officers. From a structural perspective, the position for statesman was less satisfactory.'[50] Effective and dominant British sea power enabled early strikes to be made both in Europe and in the further territories of empire both in advance of and in support of military engagements in coastal areas. Its strength also related to the maintenance of an extensive network of naval bases around the world, a necessity given the global extent of Britain's trading interests. It also assisted in the suppression of the slave trade, notably in East Africa, and in the opening and protection of coastal areas, in West Africa, for example, for the purpose of legitimate trade: naval power was synonymous with the concept of a British Empire.[51] Lambert's arguments against the Mackinder thesis, therefore, point to his alleged underestimation of British sea power and maritime strategy in Europe and in defence of a global empire, together with his overestimation of the significance of land-based power and logistical systems such as railways.

Technical innovations, naval policy and imperial defence

How effective were technical innovations in maintaining, contrary to Mackinder's thesis, the superiority of British sea power and maritime strategy to the beginning of the First World War? Black has identified the three crucial elements of naval ship design in the nineteenth century as 'speed, armament and armour',[52] and much of the history of naval development in Europe and elsewhere revolves around them. The transition from an early modern to a modern weapons system was impressive:

> At sea, navies had made the transition from sail-powered men-of-war, with broadsides of cannon firing solid shot, to armour-plated steel warships, steam powered and armed with guns that fired explosive shells to ranges clear over the horizon. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, fleets had competed in continual arms races to develop these vessels.[53]

Sondhaus[54] has also emphasized the role of technical innovation – especially the application of steam propulsion, armour plating, developments in weaponry and the use of torpedoes – in changes in maritime supremacy within and beyond Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In some respects, the state of technological advancement and efficiency of national navies reflected the particular dynamics of national economic growth, including population growth and the pace of industrial development. Basic industrial resources and efficiencies were important, but it is worth noting, however, that until the end of the nineteenth century naval vessels and parts were freely bought and sold between different countries. Prussia in the mid-1860s had bought ships from the British and the French, and a united Germany was still buying torpedo boats and armour-plating from British shipyards

after the building of the battleships *Deutschland* and *Kaiser* in Germany in1875, but later battleships were all constructed in German shipyards. The Krupp armaments manufacturer in Essen supplied artillery for the German fleet and also for the Russian and Austro-Hungarian fleets.[55] In the early 1870s Japan was buying corvettes and gunboats from Britain, France and the Netherlands: evidence of the development of a particular kind of international arms trade:[56]

> By the 1870s there was a division of naval power status between the great powers of Europe: Britain, France, and Russia, joined by Italy, newly united Germany, and Austria Hungary. The other maritime countries of Europe, the United States, and other naval states beyond Europe fell into a clearly inferior category of sea power … The 1870s also witnessed a clear division of fleets into armoured and unarmoured components, with the terms 'battleship' and 'cruiser' coming into use to describe the two groups of vessels. For the European powers the ironclad battle fleet remained in home waters for the event of a war against another great power, while the unarmoured fleet showed the flag worldwide in defence of colonial and trading interests.[57]

The term cruiser covered a great variety of types of naval vessel, and naval engagements in the 1870s reveal no commonly employed tactics. The concept of 'militarization' (naval vessels as floating artillery) was thought to be inadequate, especially in the protection of colonies and overseas trade, but it had some continuing currency in Britain where the navy remained essentially disconnected from the role of the protection of commerce.[58] The dilemma remained of how to protect Britain's overseas interests, and the slow sail – or steam-propelled merchant vessels that served to connect metropole and colony – from attack. This was partly solved with the construction of faster-moving, steam-powered torpedo boats, from the late 1870s.[59] By the late 1870s the French, who had immediately after the Franco–Prussian War given most attention to the reconstruction of their army, had developed cruisers with central gun batteries and largely constructed of steel, which together with the *barbette* cruisers, served to protect French interests overseas. Such was the intensity of construction that 'by the late 1870s France had more armoured cruising ships on foreign stations than any other naval power … Between 1874 and 1880 the French laid down twenty-eight more composite corvettes, gunboats, and dispatch vessels, all for colonial service.'[60] This was a time of substantial French colonial expansion and consolidation in North Africa, West Africa, Equatorial Africa, Indo-China, and the South Pacific, supported by an increasing naval presence.

Land-based defence: the role of armies

In 1904 most imperial European powers were primarily concerned with the role of their navies in imperial defence. The great distances between homeland and peripheral colonies and protectorates meant almost insuperable problems of cost

and provision of troops, so that the scale of the military presence overseas, with the exception of British India, was quite small.

Stoddart, reviewing the changing role of geographical knowledge in British army reform in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, contended that 'the British Army's field experience in the second half of the nineteenth century had been limited to small colonial wars which gave no impetus to strategic, theoretical, or technical advance,'[61] resulting in low professional standards and indifference to progress, and continuing lack of information on topography of theatres of war and their accurate representation in maps, as evidenced by the experiences of the Crimean and Boer Wars. The Carnarvon Commission of 1879 had addressed the problems of imperial defence, with particular reference to the Royal Navy's role. The 1903 Royal Commission report into *The Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa* highlighted, in the experience of the Boer War, the continuing difficulties with geographical information, notwithstanding the creation of an Intelligence Division of the army in 1873: 'geographical information on South Africa (and anywhere else) available to the military was virtually non-existent.'[62] Military reform got underway thereafter, and Stoddart[63] demonstrated how the shortcomings of the British Army in relation to geographical knowledge were subsequently addressed in a 'New Army', and chronicled Mackinder's close links with this process, particularly through developing a course at the London School of Economics from 1906 for army administrative staff officers.

It does appear that general geopolitical strategy was not a major part of the British army's thinking, training and practice, and that more practical issues were uppermost. How then, did the army figure in the defence of the British Empire?

The main functions of the British army in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were to defend the British Islands and imperial territories, near and far. The sizes of European colonial armies varied considerably. The defence of empire by British and other European military forces in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was mainly achieved by small numbers of officers and troops from the metropolitan hearths being supplemented by locally recruited soldiers and other supporting staff. India was the major overseas commitment by Britain: by the mid-nineteenth century with an estimated 45,000 European troops and 230,000 Indian troops providing not only defence against external and internal threats to security but also a 'reservoir of manpower for employment elsewhere. Indian troops served in Arabia (1821), Burma (1824–6) and Aden (1839), and after mid-century were often sent increasingly far afield.'[64] During the Mutiny (1857–8) the number of soldiers in India was about 100,000 European and 250,000 Indian, reducing to 60,000 and 120,000 by the mid-1860s, but preserving a prescribed European: Indian ratio of 1:2.[65] Much of the cost of maintaining such a large force was met by taxation in India. India played a key role in British imperial policy, and Britain developed and maintained interests in countries near the Suez Canal (opened in 1869) to protect the route to India.

The Boer War (1899–1902) in South Africa was one of a number of wars connected with the extension and consolidation of British power in Africa. Logistically it demonstrated the importance of sea-based communication and of railways for the transfer of troops and armaments. In practical terms it raised a number of problematic technical and strategic issues. Although Britain had ultimately succeeded, it did so at great cost in lives lost and money spent. For long periods its army in South Africa had been outmanoeuvred by the mobile and well-equipped Boer commando, using long-range rifle fire and smokeless ammunition cartridges. The British army's lack of adequate topographic maps and use of a less than fit and inadequately trained supplementary volunteer force had been major handicaps. A consequence was a 'total overhaul of the army's organization, equipment, tactics, and organs of command and administration.'[66] In the year of the 'Geographical Pivot' paper – 1904 – this review and reorganization was still underway.[67]

Other European powers were reviewing their military organization and battlefield strategies. The French in 1904 were still living in the aftermath of the Dreyfus affair, and review and reform of the army was still underway which included proposals for the reduction in the length of military service and the democratization of the army. The inadequacies of topographic maps and other failings in the Franco–Prussian war of 1870–1 had led to the establishment in 1887 of the *Service Géographique de l'Armée*, one of whose tasks was the production of large-scale topographic maps.[68] French military geographers, such as Gustav-Léon Niox (1840–1919) initially showed little interest in broader global issues of geopolitical balances of power: their main concern was the internal military geography of Europe and its shifting power relations. Niox, who was professor of military geography at the École Supérieure de la Guerre in Paris from 1876 to 1895, published a major work, *La Géographie Militaire* in seven volumes between 1876 and 1895. In 1906 he published a history of the Russo–Japanese War. In early editions of his *La Géographie Militaire*, he regarded Great Britain as the sole imperial expansionist power that constituted a threat to peace in Europe. By 1891 he had changed tack, regarding Germany as the main threat. Initially Niox had neglected the rising powers such as the United States and Japan, and made little reference to Asia (apart from the Anglo–Russian rivalry in Central Asia) or to French colonial interests in the Far East and the Pacific.[69] In 1888, however, with the publication of the seventh volume of his work on military geography (*L'expansion européenne, empire britannique et Asie*) and in later editions up to 1895, he recognized that Britain was again in a position of superiority, that Germany was a rising colonial power under Bismarck, and that Africa was a continent on which many of the political tensions of Europe would be played out.[70]

Germany in 1904 was a country which was seen as the major land threat to France and rival sea power to Britain, but which did not seem to have major military expansion in mind, concentrating instead on Admiral von Tirpiz's plan to expand the battle fleet.[71] This policy was assumed by von Bülow, the German

Chancellor, to be sufficient for the advancement of Germany as a colonial and commercial power.[72] In contrast to the British and French policy of having colonial standing armies, Germany, late on the imperial scene, and concerned at the cost of protecting territorial interests in, for example, East and Southwest Africa, provided protection via protectorate troops (*Schutztruppen*). These were the administrative responsibility of the colonial department of the German Foreign Office, and were made up of small numbers of German troops and of indigenous soldiers. Zirkel has suggested that 'the number of soldiers active in the colonial army never amounted to more than 6,500 in all, if we disregard the phase of the great uprisings of 1904–7.'[73]

One of the singular ironies of the year 1904 in relation to Mackinder's paper, was the beginning on 9 February of the Russo–Japanese war, resulting by 1905 in the collapse of Russia as a European and Asian military power.[74] Russia's imperial and territorial advancement across Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century, viewed partly as a substitute for domestic reform and a consequence of the Berlin Congress of 1878, was a matter of deliberate government policy.[75] Russia's active advancement and railway building in Central Asia was seen as a threat to the land frontier of British India, leading to 'forward policies' in relation to the Middle East and Afghanistan, and a degree of 'Russophobia' in British political, diplomatic and geographical circles, fed by the Russo–Afghan clash of 1885,[76] though partially resolved by the 1907 Anglo–Russian Entente.

Notwithstanding the fact that Russia had the world's largest army, the location of the most effective troops and weapons (on the western frontiers) was not conducive to major engagements in the Far East, such as the war with Japan in 1904–5. Mackinder's observations in 1904 on the potential use of railways for movement of troops in the geographical pivot area are relevant here. The trans-Siberian railway, which reached Vladivostock in 1901, was indeed used for the transfer of very large numbers of Russian troops to the east, but the mixture of troops and equipment of differing efficiencies, together with a reliance on defensive tactics against the Japanese led to defeat, and to revolution in 1905. The distance from Moscow to the east coast by rail was 5,500 miles, the journey taking over a week, partly on account of the line to the south of Lake Baikal not having been completed.[77] The naval logistics of the defence against Japan were obviously different: the Russian Baltic Sea fleet was sent in October 1904 to the Yellow Sea after the Japanese attack on the Russian Pacific Fleet in February 1904. Denied use of the Suez Canal, the fleet sailed via the Cape, and arrived in the Yellow Sea in May 1905, where it was destroyed by the Japanese.[78] Hardly evidence of the role of a major land-based power of the Geographical Pivot?

Conclusion

C.A. Fisher, reviewing the role of the Commonwealth in relation to the development of the European Common Market in the 1960s, took a positive view of Mackinder's paper of 1904 and its influence:

> It is nevertheless interesting that it was the British Geographer, Sir Halford Mackinder, rather than his American contemporary, Admiral Mahan with whom he is so often compared, who seems to have been the first in the English-speaking world to appreciate the full implications of these new geopolitical trends, which must ultimately favour the giant land states at the expense of those based upon the sea. But although Mackinder had drawn attention to this as early as 1904 … it is perhaps understandable that his doctrines, with their unwelcome implications for Britain, made only a very limited impression in this country, though both they and those of other European thinkers along roughly similar lines have since received much more serious attention in the great land states, notably Germany and the United States.[79]

Parker has argued that it is a mistake to read too much geopolitical foreboding or forewarning (together with his own anxiety for the future of the British empire) into Mackinder's 1904 paper. Parker contended that, although Mackinder had obviously debated such issues with contemporary politicians and academics, the arguments were essentially his own, and suggested that 'the 1904 statement is a work of genius independent of the nationality of its author, free from the preoccupations of its time and from the stigmata of geo-political propaganda.'[80] This last point, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, may have more than a little to do with the Royal Geographical Society's anxiety to avoid political debate in order to present an essentially scientific image, though the earlier *caveat* made about the nature of reporting of RGS debates must be kept in mind. Mackinder, however, had spoken of political geography in his presidential address ('Modern Geography, German and English') to Section E of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Ipswich on 12 September 1895. In a discourse on the nature of German 'anthropogeography', he presented a view of the dynamics of human/environmental relations that:

> At all times each race exhibits a great variety of initiative, the product, in the main, of its past history. In each age certain elements of this initiative are selected for success, chiefly by geographical conditions. Sometimes human genius seems to set geographical limitations at defiance, and to introduce an incalculable element into every problem of anthropogeography. Yet, as we extend our survey over wider periods, the significance even of the most vigorous initiative is seen to diminish. Temporary effects contrary to nature may be within human possibilities, but in the long runs nature reasserts her supremacy … Political geography becomes reasonable when the facts are regarded as the resultant in large measure, of genetic or historical elements, and of such dynamic elements as the economic and strategic.[81]

A curious feature of his survey of German and English geography is the omission of any reference to the work of Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), whose *Anthropo-*

geographie had been published in two volumes between 1882–91. His highly controversial book *Politische Geographie* was not published until 1897, and was not mentioned by Mackinder in his 1904 paper.

Agnew has also suggested that Mackinder's thesis of 1904 drew on much older binary concepts of the division of the world between land and sea powers, developed in ancient Greece by Thucydides in *The Peloponnesian War*, and translated forward in time by theorists such as Mackinder to the concept of Britain as a sea power and Russia and Germany as land powers: 'Geographical location in relation to the oceans and land masses suggested a kind of geographical "fate" against which agency was largely futile, save to point out the possibilities or options available to different parties depending on their relative location.'[82] The credibility of this 1904 model, in Agnew's view, was enhanced by its use of historical evidence and analogy.[83]

The Mackinder model of 1904 has some shortcomings, including an underestimation of the future role of the United States in global events: 'The relegation of the United States to the margins of his thinking was perhaps Mackinder's greatest blunder …'.[84] It also surprisingly failed to capture the significance of Africa as a contemporary focus of intense European rivalry. The Mackinder paper of 1904, however, was also ahead of its time in its modernist vision of a shrinking world – a closed global system of complex economic, political and social interactions, new strategic alliances and searches for greater national efficiencies of resource-use. It was, not surprisingly, a reflection of much contemporary concern about the impact of the movement of people, capital and goods on national economic power and prestige, and concerns with national productivity in such sensitive industries as iron and steel, in relation to the relative strengths of individual places, regions and states in the world.[85] It has been suggested that the essence of Mackinder's thinking more generally is not about geopolitics but about 'material transformations of his age', closely linked to concerns for greater national efficiency and the imperial context.

These transformations included: the effects of transport and communication innovations, especially railways, on world 'shrinkage' to a closed and interlinked system,[86] together with the effects of the migrations of people, capital and goods; and the change in the status of the British empire, and hence a parliamentary election speech by Mackinder in 1900 about the need 'to bind Britain and her colonies into a league of democracies, defended by a united navy and an efficient army'.[87]

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4

THE DIPLOMATIC CONTEXT

Britain and international relations in 1904

Pascal Venier

Research conducted in the history of both geography and geopolitics has stressed the importance of re-situating key texts within their original context. Political geographers have demonstrated an interest in exploring Mackinder's thought, in its historical setting.[1] More recently, Geoffrey Sloan has shown a way forward in analysing each of the 1904, 1919 and 1943 versions of Mackinder's heartland theory, 'in the context of the unique periods of their formulation'.[2] This chapter examines the diplomatic and strategic context of the period when the 'Geographical Pivot of History' was written, presented, and published.

The history of international relations before 1914, has been the subject of scrutiny due to the question of the origins of the Great War.[3] Controversies over the issue of responsibility for the war have generated many publications. We have to be wary of hindsight for international relations in 1904 were different from 1914.

To analyse the early years of the twentieth century, which are described as years of 'geopolitical transition' by political geographers, or a time of 'diplomatic revolution' by international historians, it is essential to be aware of historiographical debates about international relations during the period. Analysis will involve studying the period around 1904 within its own logic, rather than as the prelude to the First World War, and take account of the histographical revision;[4] which now stresses how central imperial issues were in the formulation of British foreign policy up to 1914.[5] The snapshot of the diplomatic context of the 'Geographical Pivot of History' will involve, first, an analysis of international relations and the British geopolitical code at the begining of the twentieth century; second, examination of the orientation of Edwardian foreign policy between 1902 and 1904; and finally, look at the international situation in the winter of 1903–1904.

International relations and the British geopolitical code in the early twentieth century

Following the Great War, the old diplomacy and the alliances of the pre-1914 period have been stigmatised and held responsible for the outbreak of the war. An

illustration is to be found in a cliché such as that of 'fateful alliance', widely applied to the Franco–Russian alliance.[6] Such powerfully anchored, evocative statements have distorted perceptions of the ways in which the international system operated during the first years of the century. In the 1890s, alliances were defensive in nature, and operated as 'blocking coalitions'.[7] As such, they contributed to maintaining a balance of power in Europe. This was arguably still the case around 1904. Presenting Europe as divided into two antagonistic blocks can be misleading as, at that time, the 'Triple and Dual Alliances stood – to modify a phrase of Winston Churchill – side by side, not face to face.'[8] Thinking about the international system as multipolar, rather than bipolar, may give better insight into the way it operated. Not only was Britain remaining aloof from the two main European alliance systems, but greater fluidity and a more dynamic environment than usually acknowledged, were key features in international relations during the first years of the century. Furthermore, the alliances themselves were showing signs of fragility, and 'The Triple Alliance undoubtedly passed through a period of ineffectiveness.'[9]

One of the most vivid images of the period before 1914 is undoubtedly that of the 'struggle for mastery in Europe'. However, as Paul Schroeder has noted, 'for most of the period covered, up to 1890 or 1900 at least, there was no such struggle for mastery in the sense of a conscious drive to achieve preeminent position and dominant power.'[10] It can be argued that this was still a reality in 1904. Analysis of the potential clash points between the great powers in the early years of the twentieth century reveals a reduction of intra-European rivalries: 'the two danger-zones of Europe, Alsace-Lorraine and the Near East, were relatively quiet'.[11] From the mid-1890s, a climate of détente prevailed in Franco–German relations and the 1897 agreement between Russia and the Habsburg Empire opened a period of relative quietude. A shift of tensions from within Europe to the wider world took place in the 1890s. Greater stability in Europe corresponded with the unleashing of imperial rivalry overseas, as European powers such as such as Britain, Russia and France, soon joined by Germany, and extra-European powers such as the United States and Japan, competed for world positions. The 'New Imperialism' and doctrines of power politics were the order of the day, with the Far East often taking centre stage in international relations.

Analysing Britain's geopolitical codes is stimulating. Political geographers define a geopolitical code as 'the strategic assumptions governments make about competitors in forming foreign policy'.[12] This usually incorporates a definition of interests, the identification of threats to those interests, and a suggested response to threats. The definition of British interests started with issues pertaining to trade. In an international economy based upon overseas trade, preserving the safety of sea routes was essential, for Britain was reliant on imports for domestic comsumption, and for access to foreign markets. Hence Britain's keeness regarding the 'open door' policy in China, which was preserved. The security of the British Isles and of the Empire was of great importance. This involved ensuring that Britain remained protected from invasion, a risk that gave rise to recurrent invasion scares.

Another crucial issue was the integrity of imperial frontiers as Britain had over 12,000 miles of frontiers in Africa, more than 3,000 miles of frontier with the United States in Canada and above all India's frontiers, 'nearly 6,000 miles long with Persia, Russia, Afghanistan, Tibet, China, Siam, and France'.[13] Finally, maintaining the balance of power in Europe was another British interest, and involved denying

> continental hegemony to any state or coalition of states, because a hegemonic enemy, undistracted by the need to wage major conflict on land, would have been able to use all or most of western Europe as a base for developing a quantity and quality of seapower fatal to Britain's ability to command the narrow seas and hence to thwart invasion and protect its maritime commerce.[14]

The identification of the main threat was not problematic, as Russia, engaged in rivalry with Britain on the landward margins of the Indian sub-continent, was a traditional enemy. Russian expansionism was of increasing concern as the Russians were following an agressive policy in the Far East.The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and the ensuing European intervention had been an opportunity for Russia to occupy Manchuria in northern China, which it later refused to evacuate. The British also felt that the security of India was threatened by both Russia's advance into central Asia, and her increasing influence in Persia. Of particular note was the construction of the railway line from Orenburg to Tashkent, which was to be completed in 1905. 'This line doubled the potential supplies that could be transported into Western Turkestan from Russia in the event of a military expedition.'[15] The growth of Russian naval assets in the Far East concerned the Admiralty, which feared 'it would be unable to match a Franco–Russian naval combination in the Far East.'[16] The rivalry with Russia posed a problem of imperial defence, which Prime Minister Arthur Balfour described in a speech to the Commons on 8 August 1902 as 'one of the most difficult and one of the most complicated problems that any Government or any body of experts, can have.'[17] This was not the only threat that the Balfour administration could identify, for on account of the Franco–Russian Alliance, any conflict with Russia could potentially lead to a global struggle against both her and her French ally. Worse still was the risk that Britain would face a hostile coalition of continental powers made up of Russia, France and Germany.

British planned responses to threats focused first and foremost on maintaining British worldwide naval supremacy and command of the seas. Since 1889, the two-power standard had provided an indicator of the adequacy of naval relative strength**.** The South African war of 1899–1902 exposed the weaknesses of the British Army, and reform and modernisation were on the agenda. However, budgetary contraints, the weight of the military bureaucracy, together with the British political tradition not to maintain a large standing army in peacetime, were impediments to the development of a British army, of the necessary standards, to

meet a Russian challenge on the frontiers of India. Diplomacy was a key element in Britain's response to perceived threats. The policy of splendid isolation followed by Salisbury was based on the diplomatic paradigm of the 'Free Hand'.[18] This involved avoiding, as far as possible, joining alliances in peacetime, to preserve Britain's existing freedom from entanglements. The policies followed by Salisbury's successors at the Foreign Office, Liberal Unionist Lord Lansdowne and Liberal Sir Edward Grey, are conventionally described as marking the end of isolation. Nevertheless, besides the 1902 alliance with Japan, renewed in 1905 and 1911, and limited in scope to the Far East, British diplomacy between 1902 and 1914 did stick to the 'Free Hand' paradigm. Landsdowne's foreign policy aimed at defusing, as much as possible, any risk of conflict for Britain. It involved an active diplomacy, focusing on improving bilateral relations with powers perceived as a threat. Niall Ferguson, following Sir Michael Howard's view, has interpreted Edwardian foreign policy as one of appeasement. It also involved dealing with key issues on a case by case basis, and attempting to bring about, whenever possible, a form of collective security at a regional level.[19]

Edwardian foreign policy, 1901–4

To get a picture of Britain's position in international affairs around 1904, it is useful to analyse the dynamics of Edwardian foreign policy. An important development was the improvement of relations with the United States, which had in the Spanish–American war (1898) asserted imperial power in the Caribbean and the Pacific. This allowed for a transition from a relation of rivalry to one of friendship, and amounted to an informal Anglo–American rapprochement. The US was determined to enforce a broad interpretation of the Monroe doctrine (1823) which involved preventing any European interference in the western hemisphere.[20] London had for a long time ignored such a doctrine, but this proved no longer possible, and following the Anglo–Germano–Italian blockade of Venezuela in 1903, the British came to recognise this.[21] Britain, 1901, renounced her claim to a share in the construction of the Panama Canal and two years later the Alaskan boundary dispute was settled favourably for American claims. The improvement in relations with the US allowed Britain to withdraw naval units from the western hemisphere.

In the Far East, upholding British interests and maintaining the 'open door' policy in China, became increasingly difficult due to Russian expansionism. Having initially explored the possibility of a diplomatic understanding with both Germany and Japan, Lansdowne finally came to sign an agreement with the latter alone. He did so under pressure and in order to preempt a Russo–Japanese rapprochement, which seemed imminent and which would have isolated Britain in the region.[22] Ian Nish has demonstrated how 'Britain entered into the alliance largely by reason of her eastern rather than her European interests'.[23] The agreements between Great Britain and Japan of 30 January 1902, in substance a military alliance, by which which each power was bound to belligerence in a war between their ally and any two other powers, were strictly limited in scope to the Far East.

This Far Eastern commitment marked a departure from the usual British foreign policy of not committing in advance. Its positive effects for Britain were clear, preventing isolation in the region and reducing the number of the Royal Navy's commitments. The alliance designed to bring about stability in the region, however, did not prevent the rise of tension between Russia and Japan. It was soon feared that Britain could be drawn into a war. Not simply a local war but a global war, if a third power, most likely France, became involved against Japan in support of Russia.

If the years preceding the outbreak of the Great War has been marked by the rise of Anglo–German rivalry, it is essential to bear in mind that relations between the two powers were far from hostile before 1905. To the contrary, Britain had welcomed the foundation of the German Empire in 1871, as Germany's 'half-hegemony' in Europe established a balance of power.[24] Between 1898 and 1901, several attempts to bring about an alliance with German took place but came to nothing. Fundamentally, Germany feared that such an alliance might result in a situation where it would have to face the Franco–Russians alone on the continent,[25] for Britain objected to committing herself to war in advance.[26]

The momentum for an alliance with Germany passed, but maintaining good working relations with Berlin remained a priority for London. Prime minister Arthur Balfour remained convinced of the identity of interests between the two powers and ruling out the possibility of working with Germany would have limited Britain's freedom of action.[27] Not only did the two powers undertake, together with Italy, a naval blockade of Venezuela in 1902, but in the following year, explored the possibility of jointly financing the extension of the Baghdad railway project; a smart way, in Lansdowne's view, to prevent further Russian penetration in the Middle East.[28] The British government, however, could not go far with Germany because of popular germanophobia in the United Kingdom.

It has been suggested that the threat posed by the German fleet became, as early as 1902, a key factor in British policy making. It is difficult to follow this interpretation. Germany's aim was to become the second naval power in the world.[29] However, the superiority of the Royal Navy over the infant German navy was overwealming in 1902–4, and for many years after.[30] When First Lord of the Admiralty Selborne expressed, in 1902, concern about the development of the German navy, Balfour remained sceptical. It is important to stress that Germany was only perceived as a threat as part of an anti-British coalition. As a counter, in 1902, the Admiralty asked for an additional six battleships above the two-power standard that gave parity with France and Russia.[31]

Britain's policy towards the partners in the Franco–Russian alliance was crucial in the early years of the century. Russia remained Britain's traditional enemy and the defence of India was a sensitive issue in London. In late 1901, Lansdowne had explored the possibility of an understanding with Russia, before settling under pressure for the alliance with Japan. Nevertheless, the Balfour cabinet remained keen to reach an understanding with Russia on Asian issues. In the summer of 1903, the Russian expansionist party seemed to gain increasing influence over the

Tsar. A viceroyalty of the Far East was created on 13 August 1903, and Witte, the finance minister, resigned. As tension between Russia and Japan increased in the Far East, London again sought an agreement with Russia, but to no avail.[32]

It is tempting to see Lansdowne's handling of relations with the Franco–Russian alliance as an urge to follow a policy of reinsurance, designed to avoid the dangers inherent to the Far Eastern commitment. A parallel could be made with the policy of Bismarck who, after signing a defensive alliance treaty with Austria-Hungary in 1879, brought about the League of the Three Emperors in 1881, and, after it lapsed, concluded the Reinsurance treaty with Russia in 1887.[33] Lansdowne came to think that an improvement of relations with France could lead to positive effects on Anglo–Russian relations. He observed in September 1903 that 'A good understanding with France would not improbably be the precursor of a better understanding with Russia, and I need not insist upon the improvement which would result in our international position.'[34] It is, however, generally accepted that from the start of his period as French foreign secretary, Théophile Delcassé's grand design was to bring about a coalition between France, Britain and Russia. A difficulty for the French was to conciliate a possible Entente cordiale with Britain and her alliance with Russia.

Between 1902 and 1904, Franco–British relations evolved, as Edward Grey put it in a speech to the Commons on 1 June 1904, from a 'glacial epoch' to a 'genial epoch'.[35] French and British interests seemed to converge. Financial ties contributed to the two powers coming closer together, as the City invested much French capital.[36] From a strategic perspective, the Anglo–Japanese alliance had undermined the security of French Indochina, but whilst the overall balance of naval power with France remained in Britain's favour, the French naval policy of concentration in the Mediterranean had modified the equilibrium in that sea. The rapprochement of 1903 was marked by an exchange of visits by Edward VII and President Loubet in May and July 1903, and steps were taken to open negotiations on outstanding colonial disputes between the two imperial powers, leading to the signing of the Anglo–French entente, 'the Entente Cordiale', on 8 April 1904.[37] The entente was not an alliance nor was it anti-German.

To complete this analysis of Britain's international position at the time when 'The Geographical Pivot of History' was conceived by Halford Mackinder, in the winter of 1903–1904, it is useful to consider the two key elements: the on-going rethinking of British defence policy and the implications of the developing Far Eastern crisis for British diplomacy.

Following the Boer War a major re-evaluation of defence policy was undertaken. A painstaking assessment of the army performance was conducted by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the South African war, the Elgin Commission, which highlighted the need to reorganise the War Office. The reorganisation was, however, extremely slow, on account of the political sensitivity of the issues involved. The War Office Reconstruction Committee, chaired by Lord Esher, which was appointed in September 1903 by Balfour, was in January 1904 finalising the first of the three installments of its report which led to a War Office reorganisation.[38] At the same

time War Secretary Arnold-Forster was, early in February 1904, revealing to cabinet colleagues a scheme to reform the army. With the acute budgetary crisis faced by the British government and the prospect of a large deficit in the coming year, it was vital to reduce defence spending.[39] The Committee of Imperial Defence, set up in October 1903 by prime minister Balfour, had undertaken a systematic analysis of imperial defence. The invasion issue was investigated, and in November 1903 the committee deemed the possibility of a large-scale invasion of the British Isles unlikely. This assessment was of great importance, as it subsequently informed the study of imperial defence requirements and was a triumph for the blue-water school.[40] The consensus was that the Empire was most vulnerable in India, 'our only possible place of contact with a great European Army', as Arnold-Foster put it in his speech on the Army Estimates on 7 March 1904,[41] and the main strategic problem remained the defence of the north-west frontier. Prime minister Arthur Balfour, in a letter to Edward VII on 14 December 1903, summarised what military policy should be:

> The object to be aimed at may be roughly summarised as follows: we want an army which shall give us sufficient force for at least any immediate need of Indian defence; and, in conjunction with the auxiliary forces, for Home defence; which shall be capable of expansion in time of national emergency … and shall throw a smaller burden on the tax payer. This last is of peculiar importance, not merely because of the present condition of our finances, but because the demands of the navy are so great and so inevitable that the total cost of imperial defence threatens to become prohibitive.[42]

The development of the Russo–Japanese crisis in the Far East placed Britain in a difficult situation. In December 1901 Balfour's worst fear was the possibility that 'we may find ourselves fighting for our own existence in every part of the globe because France has joined forces with her ally over some obscure Russo–Japanese quarrel in Korea', was becoming a possibility.[43] The main shortcomings of the Anglo–Japanese agreement were its binding nature, and the fact that it amounted not simply to a defensive alliance but also to an offensive alliance. Accordingly, the Japanese Imperial Cabinet was left with great freedom of judgement to decide whether Russia was following a policy of provocation. After Russo–Japanese war successive British administrations, Tory and Liberal alike, stayed clear of any new alliance between 1904 and 1914, much to the French despair. The development of the Russo–Japanese crisis led the British government to take diplomatic steps to avoid being drawn into the conflict, which involved active diplomatic collaboration with France. The convergence of views on this matter became quickly apparent as French foreign secretary Théophile Delcassé shared similar concerns. Both realised how easily their respective existing alliances with Russia and Japan could lead them to become involved in the coming conflict. A Franco–British attempt at mediation between the two parties came to nothing as the Japanese

attacked Port Arthur on 8 February 1904. After the outbreak of war, the two powers promptly engaged in close diplomatic collaboration to attempt to localise the conflict, by remaining strictly neutral. The conflict gave momentum to the Franco–British discussions and both parties became convinced of the pertinence of promptly reaching a timely settlement of their imperial disputes. On 8 April, two months after the beginning of the Russo–Japanese war, Britain and France signed the entente cordiale.[44]

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5

THE HEARTLAND IN RUSSIAN HISTORY

Paul Coones

'Geographical causation in universal history'

With respect to the many seeming contradictions and divergences of interpretation which characterize the life, work, and legacy of Sir Halford Mackinder, some of the most conspicuous are associated with his paper, 'The geographical pivot of history', and its reception over the course of a century. For the first thirty-five years it rested in the pages of the twenty-third volume of the *Geographical Journal*, apparently forgotten, at least in the English-speaking world, until the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Pact by Ribbentrop and Molotov on 23 August 1939 and the rapid unfolding of events on the world stage. After a further thirty-five years, it was proclaimed that 'the Heartland theory stands as the first premise in Western military thought'.[1]

The word 'heart-land' appears just thrice in the paper (the author himself claimed 'once … but incidentally'[2]), yet it has come to be regarded as Mackinder's most famous (or infamous) idea, and remains 'the best known and most provocative term in geopolitics'.[3] In truth, Mackinder's geopolitical writings form a limited proportion of his work, although his renown (or notoriety) is as a geopolitician, credited as he is with contributing probably 'more than anyone else to the popularity of geopolitics'.[4] A further twist is provided by the fact that Mackinder disliked the term 'geopolitics' and demurred from the title 'geopolitician'.[5]

Whether the 1904 paper be hailed as 'uniquely prescient'[6] or, as a result of the perceived inadequacies of Mackinder's conception, with its 'sweeping prognostications',[7] as flawed in its vision of the future, Mackinder himself insisted that in 1904 he 'had no idea of playing the part of a prophet'[8] and his aim was 'not to predict a great future for this or that country'.[9] (In contrast, A.T. Mahan, in *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (1890 and subsequent editions), was much more confident in his own belief in the ultimate triumph of sea power.) Dahrendorf asks, rhetorically, 'Was it prediction or exhortation, and if the latter, to what end?',[10] but it reads as neither: Parker concludes that unlike *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, the 1904 statement is 'an intellectual exercise in historical and

political geography',[11] and disagrees with those who dismiss it as a product of its time, motivated by the concerns and outlook supposedly inevitable to an English gentleman active in politics and empire during the Edwardian era. Retrospective contextual interpretations have a tendency to reveal more about the intellectual fashions and ideological frameworks adopted by the critic or commentator than about the ideas and concerns of the subject, and appraisals of Mackinder include some noteworthy examples.

Despite – or perhaps as a result of – certain of the approaches adopted in critiques of Mackinder over the years, and most recently, the theoretical and ideological constructs erected by the 'new', 'newer', and no doubt, imminently, the 'newest' geopolitics, a more general perplexity is in evidence. It was noted by Parker, in his review of the various criticisms levelled at the Heartland theory (he identified 'about a hundred'): 'often the critic has misinterpreted or misunderstood what Mackinder wrote'.[12] This state of affairs is surprising, given Mackinder's command not only of the spoken but also of the written word, which is self-evident and equally widely attested: 'he took infinite pains with his writing, and was with difficulty satisfied';[13] indeed, he 'wrote little, testing every sentence over and over again'.[14]

It is ironic, in view of subsequent developments, that Mackinder's English proved no barrier to his being read in Germany, whatever interpretation is adopted with respect to the difficult and controversial issue of the influence exerted by his writings there. A particular puzzle, of especial importance in the present chapter, and perhaps qualifying as a genuine paradox, is the apparent lack, at least officially, of any real reception afforded to his ideas in Russia, the 'pivot state', especially during the Soviet period: until, that is, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. On the face of it, this event might seem to undermine, and even prove fatal to, the Heartland theory itself; whereas, the last decade has witnessed a remarkable surge of interest in Mackinder's geopolitics in certain intellectual and political circles in Russia. As a coda, as far as is known, Mackinder visited Russia only once, and very briefly, after he had written both the 1904 paper and *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, in his short-lived and precipitately concluded official capacity as British High Commissioner to South Russia over the New Year period of 1920.

In attempting to resolve these interrelated issues, it may be useful to review Mackinder's stated aim in the 1904 paper, which was 'to exhibit human history as part of the life of the world organism' and to 'seek a formula which shall express certain aspects, at any rate, of geographical causation in universal history'.[15] This will help to prepare the way for the body of this chapter, the purpose of which is to examine the role of the Heartland in the history of 'the Russian tenant of the pivot region'.[16]

Mackinder discussed the relationship between geography and history in several of his books and articles. According to him, they are the 'outlook' subjects, of great practical importance in the study of international affairs, but although they might be likened to sisters, as Heylyn[17] had ventured, it does not follow that they are Siamese twins.[18] History and geography are mutually enriching, but it is important to appreciate

their essential differences. In particular, the geographer should take care to distinguish between the dynamic and the genetic: 'geography proper is a description of things in the present … a physiological and anatomical study rather than a study in development';[19] the geographer is 'primarily concerned with space, and with time only in the sense that everything has momentum'.[20] Furthermore, the geographer, concerned with the 'complex dynamic present',[21] thinks in shapes and patterns: visualization comes naturally, but is withered away by the printed page;[22] 'it is the essential limitation of literature that it must make its statements in sequence to the mind's ear, whereas geography presents its map to the mind's eye and states many facts simultaneously'.[23] This is not the least of the reasons why geography 'is inherently not an elementary but an advanced subject'.[24]

In his treatment of the relations of geography and history, attempting 'a correlation between the larger geographical and the larger historical generalizations',[25] Mackinder was no fatalist. The Heartland theory has been attacked countless times over the years, by writers of a whole range of persuasions and ideologies, as deterministic, and this charge is the root cause of much of the more vitriolic criticism and categorical dismissals. The American historian J.C. Malin championed 'the contriving brain as the pivot of history' and declared that 'it would be difficult to find an essay of comparable length and reputation that is more indefensible in terminology and ideas than Mackinder's "The Geographical Pivot of History"'.[26] To Isaiah Bowman, 'it is always man that makes history … the "mind" of man is still a more important source of power than a heartland or a dated theory about it'.[27] Muir and Paddison wrote of 'the gross environmental determinism of Mackinder's Heartland concept',[28] and for De Blij, 'the most frequently leveled charge against the Heartland concept is that it constitutes an oversimplification of history and a dangerous deterministic prediction'.[29]

Three points may be made in response to these charges. First, Mackinder repeatedly rejected the kind of determinism of which he is accused,[30] and there are many passages in his published works which bear this out;[31] 'do not attempt to … explain everything human in terms of geography. You cannot and it is well that you should not. The initiative is the soul of man …'.[32] In addition, there survive several revealing manuscript jottings in the Oxford School of Geography Mackinder Papers: 'Either Man will conquer Geog *or* Geog will be too much for him (I do not say will conquer him because Man has the initiative) …';[33] 'There is humanity and there is geography. They cannot get away from each other, yet as between them there is no determinism. There is no question of the one being cause and the other effect. Yet for purposes of analysis and clearness of thought we must separate the elements of which they consist'.[34]

Second, Mackinder was far from deterministic prediction: he looked not to the short-term future; rather, his analysis was set within an extended time-scale and he speculated in an informed fashion about an ultimate stage which may be long in developing or may never do so.

This leads to the third and crucial point, that the deterministic elements in

Mackinder's thought were *conditional*. The significance of geographical configurations and the unequal endowment of nature, often given impetus by the momentum of history, must be recognized, understood, and included in human calculations, and thereby absorbed and, if necessary, redirected. Otherwise such influences might well dominate events. This was the whole point of *Democratic Ideals and* (geographical) *Reality*, with its warnings concerning the immeasurable cost of geographical ignorance, as Sir Thomas Holdich expressed it.[35] Human control over nature is conditional; it depends upon a society's civilization or culture, which consists principally of technology and social organization. The former (know-how and tools), which many accuse Mackinder of failing to appreciate,[36] is the subject of another of those criticisms which is easily refuted through a study of his writings.[37] The latter is central to Mackinder's geopolitical writings, with their concentration upon societies as 'geographical facts'[38] and on the activities and operation, with respect to them, of idealists, ruthless organizers, garrisons, going concerns, and man-power (a term which Mackinder is credited with having invented);[39] when East, in discussing the Heartland theory, states, 'Mackinder was little concerned here with either manpower or wealth, actual and potential',[40] it is difficult to understand how anyone who had read *Democratic Ideals and Reality* could really hold such a view.[41] Mackinder was also concerned to point out that productivity is more important than wealth.[42] He stressed that technology changes geographical relationships, but its impact is influenced by social organization and circumscribed by the fact that it operates within the context of a pattern of uneven environmental conditions and strategic opportunities upon a globe which is ultimately a closed system. This remains the case however advanced human know-how might become. The conditional character of human control stems from the fact that society is part of nature (in a curious simile, 'man is a part of his own environment, as cheese-mites are a part of the cheese'[43]), and society's structure, wealth, and power are influenced by natural conditions as well as by historical momentum.[44] Sooner or later, however, the line of least resistance would be followed: 'temporary effects contrary to nature may be within human possibilities, but in the long run nature reasserts her supremacy'.[45]

These ideas of Mackinder's can be traced in direct lineage through his writings, beginning with his earliest statements.[46] They are fundamental to the speculations of 1904 and to the warnings of 1919. The balance of political power is 'the product, on the one hand, of geographical conditions, both economic and strategic, and, on the other hand, of the relative number, virility, equipment, and organization of the competing peoples';[47] 'man and not nature initiates, but nature in large measure controls'.[48] *Democratic Ideals and Reality* urged the peacemakers to recognize geographical realities and take account of them in their deliberations, calculations, and policies: dire consequences were not inevitable, but there existed a real danger of their not being avoided. 'Human victory' necessitates rising superior to 'mere fatalism',[49] but first we must 'recover possession of ourselves, lest we become the mere slaves of the world's geography'.[50]

Europe, Asia, and the pivot region

The scale upon which Mackinder attempted his 'correlation between the larger geographical and the larger historical generalizations' was global rather than national or even continental: 'for the first time we can perceive something of the real proportion of features and events on the stage of the whole world'.[51] In surveying the past and assessing the present, his justification would lie in the future. He asked his audience to shed the 'cramping effect upon thought'[52] of the belief that European history was the only history that mattered.

In *Britain and the British Seas* (1902) Mackinder had written of Britain not as central but, for much of its history, as marginal and insular, situated at the western extremities of a great landmass of which Europe itself is a mere peninsula. Even today, it is customary in Britain to speak of Europe not only as a continent, but also, indeed, as *the* continent. Such Eurocentricity has little foundation in the facts of geography. In reality, the geographical characteristics presented by Europe are the very antithesis of continentality. Complex geologically, intricate physically, and varied climatically, Europe consists of a detailed arrangement of peninsulas and islands, dominated by maritime influences. A crazy mosaic of landscape cells, relief units, and vegetation communities, Europe encompasses extraordinary variety, its scenery changing markedly even over very short distances.[53] A geographical textbook published three-quarters of a century after the 1904 paper described Europe as a pattern of 'fretted and interdigitated land and sea'; while 'conventionally and traditionally a continent – [it] comprises in reality a collection of peninsulas, islands and epicontinental seas that form the western flank of the immense Eurasian landmass, itself truly the "world island"'.[54] There is a long tradition embodying this geographical truth, although the employment of Europe as a cultural term has confused it. Despite the general ignorance of the geography of the lands to the east of Europe, and the exaggerated importance afforded to the Don as the boundary of Europe by such authorities as Pomponius Mela, Pliny, Arrian, Ovid, Manilius, and Lucan, the ancients recognized the contrast between the diversity of the European peninsula and the huge landmass from which it projected.[55] The same distinction has been made on grounds ranging from physique[56] to climate.[57]

For Mackinder, the greater geographical reality is the continent of 'Euro-Asia', around the Heartland of which are located four appendages: peninsular Europe, south-west Asia, India, and China. The name, 'Eurasia', was given to the united, true continent by Eduard Suess in *Das Antlitz der Erde* (1885–8). Upon this reality Mackinder founded his opposition between central and peripheral location, and, through contrasting styles, means, and exploitation of mobility, the opposition between land power and sea power.

An appreciation, at the outset, of the conception of Euro-Asia helps to clarify three related matters. The first is the age-old question of the relationship between Europe and Asia. It is an unsatisfactory dualism: the division of the Eurasian continent into two very unequal halves has no sound geographical basis.[58]

Furthermore, there are difficulties inherent in the delimitation of Asia: most people would surely include India and Japan, yet the former is separated from the rest of Asia by the highest mountains on earth and the latter by sea.[59] Europe presents no such barrier at its eastern margins. The cultural dualism enshrines a much-discussed, highly charged, and value-laden series of discourses, ranging from current debates about 'otherness'[60] to the very nature of civilization itself. Hegel concluded that Europe 'constitutes the rational region of the Earth, or consciousness', while Asia 'is the bacchantic eccentricity of the comet, the wild middle, which brings forth only from itself, engenders without form, and is unable to master its centre' (*Philosophy of Nature* §339 [1819–30]).

The second question is that of the delimitation of Europe, surrounded as it is by water on every side but the east, wherein lies the problem. The Urals, chosen on account of a seemingly convenient configuration which lends itself to providing a neat linear termination on the eastern margin of a map, are inadequate in every respect. Far from being a great natural divide, they are really a range of worn hills which form a region intimately related to the lands to both east and west; not until Peter the Great began his policy of westernization could Europe even be considered as extending thus far east, and the Swede, P.J. von Strahlenberg, was in 1730 apparently the first to determine upon the Urals in this connection.[61] It has been claimed that the notable early Russian geographer, V.N. Tatishchev (1686–1750) actually suggested the idea to Strahlenberg, who was first into print; prominent among the attractions of the Urals solution was the dichotomy it created in terms of a European 'metropolitan' Russia and an Asiatic extra-European 'colonial' periphery stretching across Siberia, thereby matching and reproducing the dualism exhibited by the European great imperial powers.[62] Toynbee[63] remarks, cuttingly, that 'the geographers belatedly discovered that the Ural Mountains which they had made into a household word were no more noticeable a feature in the physical landscape than the Chiltern Hills'. In any case, they lie well to the east of any boundary separating intricate, complex, maritime Europe from the huge, uniform, monolithic, continental landscapes, with their great east–west trending belts of climate, soils, and vegetation, which replace these traits eastwards. The clear division between the two – between Europe and the rest of Eurasia – lies in the low-lying ,ill-drained zone stretching between the Baltic and Black Seas.[64]

The third question to be taken in connection with the concept of Eurasia, which follows from the others, is that of the identity of Russia. Is Russia to be considered as belonging to Europe or to Asia, in both or in neither? Mackinder's standpoint in this never-ending debate, given a new lease of life during the past decade, was clear. The outstanding geographical characteristic of Russia is continentality, manifested in her structure, geology, relief, drainage, climate, soils, and vegetation: all expressed on a huge scale. Largely isolated from maritime influences, physical contact with unfrozen seas being minimal, Russia's continental climate, definitely established by the time the River Vistula is reached, travelling east,[65] is so pronounced as to produce extreme conditions in the eastern regions, a 'wedging-out' eastwards of the limited belts of temperate vegetation and fertile soils, and a

lack of correspondence between the reservoir of heat and that of moisture such as to represent a heat–moisture balance problem of monumental proportions. Thus on purely geographical grounds, Russia is the very antithesis of Europe: the great Russian historian Klyuchevskiy was definite on this point.[66] Some scholars, accepting the Europe–Asia dualism, have, by excluding Russia from Europe, placed her in Asia.[67] Others, balking as much at the perceived cultural implications of this conclusion, were reduced to adopting the solution so despised by Toynbee, of 'dissecting the living body politic of Russia into an imaginary "Russia-in-Europe" and "Russia-in-Asia" along the unconvincing line of the Ural River and the Ural Mountains'.[68] Who, after all, would divide the United States of America into two continents, east and west of the Appalachians?[69] Mackinder's solution, whereby Russia formed a division, in her own right, of the true continent of Eurasia, avoids all these contradictions. It also provided the geographical framework for his interpretation of history and of the role played by the pivot region.

The emergence of Russia as the pivot state

Mackinder's thesis resonates with the great geographical themes of Russian history, emanating as they do from the facts of Eurasian continentality: sheer distance; isolation, yet at the same time vulnerability to invasion; conflict between settled communities and nomadic peoples; mobility, trade, and the frontier; the obstacles posed to the organization of territory and the gradual evolution of centralized political power; and, at base, the unrelenting struggle with a hostile environment. These geographical elements have been widely acknowledged by Russian historians, both classical and modern.[70] Even in instances where basic geography seemed to offer assistance to human endeavour, ultimate frustration often resulted. Thus the great rivers which flowed at right angles both to the direction of movement of the horsemen[71] and to the latitudinal climate, soil, and vegetation complexes – thereby facilitating the necessary exchange, linkage, and gathering in particular places of the resources peculiar to each zone – debouched into inland basins, frozen seas, or naturally constricted maritime outlets, the river mouths controlled by unfriendly neighbours.

For a while, the loose federation of Slavic tribes known as Kievan Rus' flourished, founded upon the strategic value of Kiev, located on the Dnieper so as best to exploit the network of river communications, and situated at the boundary between the *polyes'ye* – deciduous and mixed forest – and the wooded steppe. Grand Prince Svyatoslav, in the third quarter of the tenth century, attempted to consolidate a north–south state following his conquest of the Volga Bulgars and the Khazar strongholds, but in destroying the latter he rendered Kievan Rus' vulnerable to worse invasions by the steppe nomads. After an unstable history, the Kievan state broke up in the thirteenth century, riddled with internal dissension and having been attacked by the Lithuanians, Ests, Finns, Volga Bulgars, Poles, Hungarians, and catastrophically by the nomads. Defence against incursions from all directions, particularly from across the steppes, so favourable to the mobility

of the horse-riding nomads, constituted a persistent problem for the Russian state. There had been a constant battle for control of the rivers and for access to both the Baltic (where Russia was opposed by the Poles, Lithuanians, Finns, and Teutonic Knights) and the Black Sea (against the armies of Byzantium, the Pechenegs, and Polovtsy). Even in more recent times Kiev has proved vulnerable, the culminating devastation being caused by the Germans in 1941–3.

Under the Tatar yoke, the Russians retreated to the forests and swamps where the steppe-based mobility of the nomads was greatly impaired; here the princes of Muscovy were gradually able to consolidate their power, building upon the advantages of Moscow as a potential core of the Russian state, as successive Russian historians, such as N.M. Karamzin (in his monumental *Istoriya gosudarstva Rossiyskogo* of 1818–29), have described. (James Fairgrieve, who, incidentally, seems to have been responsible for formally introducing the term Heartland, also pursued this theme in *Geography and World Power* (1915).) Superseding Suzdal-Vladimir (sacked by the Mongols in the winter of 1237–8), Moscow was situated deep in the mixed forest zone (close to the taiga to the north and north-east and the broad-leaved forest to the south and south-east), and gradually gained command of a river system affording access in all directions. During the time of Ivan III (1462–1505) the Tatar yoke ended, and Muscovy was extended to the south, to the east even as far as the lower Ob', and westwards to annexe the dependencies of defeated Novgorod, which stretched to the Arctic Ocean and the Gulf of Finland. Ivan IV lost the last of these in the Swedish war which was concluded in 1583 – the gradual and often brutal establishment of Muscovy was the subject of constant setbacks – but he famously overcame the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, thereby achieving control of the Volga right down to the Caspian Sea. The reign of Ivan IV, 'Ivan Grozniy', the 'Tsar of all the Russias', Grand Prince from 1533 and Tsar from 1547 until his gruesome death in 1584, while it 'saw Russian power carried from Moscow through Siberia', as that of Elizabeth I witnessed 'the expansion of Western Europe over the sea' – Mackinder himself[72] drew this parallel contained within the 'Tudor century' – ended with failure in the Baltic. It encapsulated the historic predicament of Moscow: physically isolated, culturally separate, and economically constricted. In the words of Sir Jerome Horsey, with the Baltic port of Narva denied him, Ivan IV was in despair as to how to send his letters to the Queen of England, with 'his countries invironed and passages shutt up'.[73] Ivan's desperation to find an exit at all costs was expressed in the foundation, on the White Sea, of Archangel in 1584, despite the difficulties presented by distance and climate. Sadko, the hero of Rimskiy-Korsakov's opera of that name (1897), whose story was taken from the great Novgorod cycle of bardic narratives, similarly laments the fate of Novgorod's merchants, confined as they were by the position of their city on a lake, with no access to the ocean; if only their ships could reach the sea, he sings in the first scene of the opera, they would bring back fortunes from all over the world.

The quest by Russia for warm water – the 'urge to the sea'[74] – is a useful though somewhat simplified motif which may be supported by evidence drawn

from a study of events. Much discussed by Russian and western scholars, it is a popular theme, if one occasionally dramatized as an elemental urge; but its outright rejection by Morrison (1952)[75] as a 'fallacious generalization' remains unconvincing because the author perceives it as merely an inexplicable quirk, originating in Peter the Great's 'passionate, dramatic, and quite un-Russian interest in the sea'.[76] Morrison does not acknowledge that the push for maritime access relates to a whole complex of factors of which it is a symbol. For example, he suggests that the drive south was inspired rather by the desire for agricultural land and defence against the southern Tatars.[77] But once the land was recovered, it became necessary to export the wheat (the theme of the resource complementarity of the forest and steppe zones played a part), and the Tatars were not only a threat to sedentary civilization but were also able to interrupt trade. Mackinder noted the use made by the Russians of the unruly Cossacks, forming their own mobile forces of the steppes to counter the Tatars.[78] With respect to the Baltic, even Morrison is obliged to accept the basic truth of the thesis. The root cause of his dissatisfaction is, predictably, his distrust of large-scale ideas and his detection of the 'virus of geographic determinism'[79], the denial of free will, and, in his view, writing as he was during the Cold War, the employment of the generalization by those seeking a possible justification for future Russian expansion.

Throughout the seventeenth century Russia was surrounded by a huge semi-circle of hostile powers extending from the Black Sea to the Arctic; an ever-changing kaleidoscope of alliances, conflicts, and territorial changes frustrated Great Russian ambitions and devastated the lands of the White Russians on the exposed western borderlands and those of the steppe peoples of the frontier Ukraine. 'The seas belonged to other nations. All foreign trade was in the hands of foreigners … Tatars held the Black Sea coast, the Baltic was inaccessible'.[80] Peter the Great's decisive victories in the Great Northern War, however, finally resolved the Baltic question in Russia's favour. Peter had wasted no time in founding St Petersburg in 1703, at the earliest opportunity, despite the unfavourable nature of the site; where he had failed, in the Black Sea region, Catherine the Great succeeded, close to the end of the century, and inaugurated Odessa, a 'second Petersburg',[81] in a similar fashion.

The westernization policy of Peter I, and of the Romanov dynasty over the course of three hundred years, launched and from time to time reinvigorated by such dramatic and unaccustomed successes in foreign policy, was, nevertheless, in Mackinderesque terms, a denial of geography and an example of the belief that 'however dramatic the achievements of peoples and their leaders, natural forces, acting through human cultures, tend in the long run to prevail'.[82] Cultural factors sustained St Petersburg – a foreign creation with a German name, condemned by Dostoyevskiy as the most abstract and artificial city in the world – in the teeth of an adverse geography, and it seemed that at last Russia had become a European power possessed of a European capital. Russia certainly became involved with European history to an unprecedented extent,[83] although some schools of thought, especially those nervous of any implication that not to be European is not to be

civilized, conceive of a much longer if interrupted heritage, extending back through Orthodoxy to Kievan Rus';[84] this brings the discussion back to the subject of the historical geography of the idea of Europe.[85]

Yet the problematic nature of the European involvement was persistently, increasingly, and in the end disastrously apparent. Peter the Great failed in his bid to re-create Europe in Russia: the whole milieu was fundamentally different.[86] Russia was always seemingly at a relative disadvantage, from economic and technological backwardness, from difficulties of transport and access, and from the nature of her political and social institutions. European powers showed that they could still form alliances to frustrate Russian ambitions. The International Straits Convention of 1841 closed the Bosporus to all warships while Turkey was at peace, thereby denying the Russians any passage to the Mediterranean, which was, in effect, a second maritime antechamber in the form of a British lake with yet another constricted outlet to be negotiated before the open ocean could be reached. The Peace of Paris of 1856, which terminated the Crimean War, reaffirmed the stipulation of 1841 and made Russia undertake to maintain no fortifications or bases on the Black Sea coast and to keep no navy in the Sea itself, leaving control to the Turks. The essential principle with regard to the Straits remained, despite both the London conference of 1871 (which accepted the Russian re-militarization of the Black Sea) and the Russian victory in the Russo–Turkish War of 1877–8, concluded by the abortive Treaty of San Stefano, which sought to realize Pan-Slav ambitions. The Treaty of Berlin, the outcome of the Congress of Berlin, an international conference convened later that year (1878) to revise San Stefano to the satisfaction of the western powers, effectively replaced Russian control in the Balkans with Austrian and Turkish. At base, neither were the territory and resources of Russia controlled by a society organized and single-mindedly devoted to overcoming the obstacles to their development, and nor was the politically subservient and economically semi-colonial relationship to the states of Europe solving her critical problems. It was surely no coincidence that the Russo–Japanese War was followed by the 1905 Revolution and that the Russia of the Romanovs collapsed when the European system of alliances drew her into a general European war. By the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918), superseded and invalidated by Versailles, Russia lost almost all the territory gained since the accession of Peter the Great, including the Ukraine, territory of the future Baltic states, and parts of White Russia and the Caucasus.

Just a fortnight after Mackinder delivered his 1904 paper, the Japanese navy launched a surprise attack on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur, an ice-free port leased to the Russians by China in 1898. Although the Russians, after initial disasters, managed to contain the Japanese land troops along the Yalu River and in Manchuria, they failed spectacularly at sea, the Russo–Japanese War ending with the annihilation of the Baltic Fleet in the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905. In attempting to recover the sea power lost in the Pacific, it had not been possible to send the Black Sea Fleet, on account of the Straits Convention, so the Baltic Fleet undertook the seven-month voyage round the Cape, without support or friendly

bases; on encountering Admiral Togo's ships in the Strait of Tsushima, between Japan and Korea, the defeat of the unbattleworthy ships was sudden and overwhelming.[87] It was yet another example of the inability of the Russians to compete with a peripheral maritime power on its own terms, the compartmentalized nature of the Russian navy being a direct product of geography. The war demonstrated that territorial size was not to be equated with power, and it was the first time that an emerging Asian state had achieved victory over a 'western' Great Power. But at the same time it seemed to confirm the general belief that land power would never seriously challenge sea power. And, indeed, Tsushima is still held up by some commentators as 'an extraordinary and immediate contradiction of Mackinder's land-based thesis'.[88] The extraordinariness, however, lies with the commentators, who have again failed to read what Mackinder wrote: he was looking, conditionally, at the future realization (or otherwise) of a potential state of affairs. Russia may have replaced the Mongol Empire, and 'emerged from her former seclusion in the northern forests',[89] but the creation of a 'heart-land' power which might then use its 'vast continental resources for fleet-building' was yet to occur.[90] (F.T. Jane, five years earlier, had predicted that the Russians would seek a great sea-empire and challenge British maritime supremacy.[91]) 'This might happen if Germany were to ally herself with Russia'.[92] This speculation of 1904 became a dire warning in 1919.

'The new map of Scythia': the Soviet Heartland

Mackinder was quick to appreciate the significance of the Russian Revolution in geopolitical terms. Tsarism, despite the creation of a vast land empire, had, with its veneer of Europeanism, essentially failed to confront Russia's geography. Mackinder, in the very last words of his paper,[93] spoke of 'the Russian tenant of the pivot region'; the transformation into a Heartland power had yet to be achieved. The 'war to end wars' had left unresolved what Mackinder termed 'the issue between German and Slav in East Europe', and the prospect of German domination (for which the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk opened the way) promised to be 'a chastisement of scorpions as compared with the whips of Russia'.[94] Present disorder was no guarantee of future impotence: the appearance of 'ruthless organizers' loomed, emerging from the confusion accompanying the rise of 'idealists', and indeed autocratic rule of some sort was, to Mackinder, almost inevitable in Russia if the Germans were to be resisted.[95] Mackinder accused the British government of not accepting the Bolsheviks 'at their own evaluation': democracy was not going to evolve in Russia; rather, there would be a centralized and military power, a 'Jacobin Czardom'.[96] A mere decade later, during the first Five-year Plan, the embodiment of Soviet Russia's substitution of autarky for dependency, Stalin delivered his famous 1931 speech on the 'history of old Russia' and

> the continual beatings she suffered for falling behind, for her backwardness … She was beaten because to do so was profitable and could be done

> with impunity … We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us.[97]

Ten years later again, Germany, under her own 'ruthless organizer', launched Operation Barbarossa, the 'great reckoning', as Hitler termed it,[98] and the titanic struggle for the Heartland commenced.

In 1919 Mackinder enlarged his 1904 descriptive, physical Heartland to embrace eastern Europe – although he seemed undecided on the point[99] – thereby redefining it in strategic terms. Events demonstrated the veracity of his analysis, the independent states in the 'third tier' as set up at Versailles proving as vulnerable as he had feared; it was therefore not to be wondered at that in 1945 the Soviet Union, following her bitter experience in the war, was determined to re-establish the tier, but this time as a *cordon sanitaire* under her own control. (Indeed, Mackinder had been accused of recommending a system of territorial defences for Russia.[100]) The settlement involved the effective displacement of Poland westwards, at German expense, and the incorporation of the historic marchlands within East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and neutral Austria. The Polish Ukraine, a much debated land, was drawn into the USSR (Mackinder had perhaps placed too much faith in Poland as a counterbalancing force: the Nazi–Soviet Pact occasioned a fifth partition); Czechoslovakia, through the ceding of Ruthenia (Transcarpathian Ukraine), was given a common frontier with the Soviet Union (the absence of this had assumed considerable significance at the time of the Munich crisis), as was Hungary, which, with Romania, had declared war on the USSR with the commencement of Barbarossa. Special care was taken over the northern portion of the former East Prussia, an historic launching ground for anti-Slav invasion;[101] with its port of Kaliningrad, formerly Königsberg, it became, significantly, a detached part of the Russian SFS Republic rather than being joined to neighbouring Lithuania. (Northern East Prussia and Ruthenia represented the only Soviet gains of territory never previously Russian.) Behind this protective tier, the new western boundary of the USSR coincided closely with the eastern frontier of Europe as defined geographically.[102] (The areal extent of the Soviet Union in 1945 was in fact less than that occupied by the Tsarist Russian Empire in 1914.) Germany herself was split along an ancient line, and the flawed nature of the concept of *Mitteleuropa* was once again exposed: such recurrent patterns constituted, in Mackinder's eyes, strong evidence for the potency of geographical forces.[103]

Hitler believed he could succeed where Napoleon had failed, but he encountered not only the traditional Russian obstacles to the invader – distance, climate, and the widening of the front eastwards – but also a state no longer fighting a European war, dependent on imports and maritime outlets (Lend-Lease notwithstanding): 'the Heartland is the greatest natural fortress on earth. For the first time in history it is manned by a garrison sufficient both in number and quality'.[104] Between July and November 1941, over 1,500 industrial enterprises were moved eastwards, to the Volga regions, Kazakhstan, the Urals, and Siberia; in due course the eastern

regions' aggregate war production reached two and a half times the total pre-war production of the whole of the USSR.[105] Hauner[106] poses the question of whether these industrial developments really amounted to the building of a new Soviet Heartland, or simply reflected security considerations, in the event amply justified. Earlier strategic decisions were indeed vindicated, notably that taken by the Sixteenth Party Congress in 1930 to develop an eastern metallurgical base (the Urals-Kuznetsk combine), which was seen as a socialist victory over representatives of the Weberian school of industrial location (who, in the west, championed spatial agglomeration in the cause of profit maximization): such saboteurs worked to facilitate 'the contemplated intervention in our country'.[107]

The Soviet Union emerged from the war as victor, although at enormous cost; as Mackinder had written in 1943,[108] she ranked as the greatest land power on the globe and the power 'in the strategically strongest defensive position'. He could also conclude, justifiably, and without hesitation, that the Heartland concept – which in territorial terms he defined more fully than before,[109] acknowledging that his criteria, when combined, did not permit of precise definition – was 'more valid and useful today than it was either twenty or forty years ago … For the first time in all history there is within this vast natural fortress a garrison adequate to deny entry to the German invader'.[110] Mackinder's conditional determinism was here exemplified: the outcome had not been the result of some static physical predetermination, but was the achievement of a society which had acknowledged the potency of geographical forces and pursued a consistent, resolute, and tenacious policy with regard to them. The 'new map of Scythia'[111] had passed beyond the 'first sketch'; the Heartland, now conceived in a strategic sense, was in the grasp of a society which, in combining autarky with autarchy, was capable of realizing its full potential. But a great deal remained to be done, especially given that much that had already been achieved had to be reconstructed before being taken on to a further phase. Not only had the Second World War, from the Soviet point of view, seemed to have been reverting, in its final stages, to yet another anti-Russian campaign on behalf of the western powers, but, also, the Soviet Union had again 'fallen behind' in that she was faced by an unravaged and advanced industrial giant, the United States, now the foremost power of the 'Trade-Dependent Maritime World', increasingly set against the 'Eurasian Continental World', as Mackinder's hypothesis came to be expressed in a modern form.[112]

Mackinder had taken pains to stress that the USSR occupied the strategically strongest *defensive* position. A Heartland power was not predetermined to be an expansionist or aggressive one; indeed, its real interests lay in autarky at home and neutrality in what came to be known (in a posthumous work by Spykman[113]) as the Rimland. Maritime powers, on the other hand, are highly dependent on potentially vulnerable sea communications and require active support and co-operation from those states upon whom they rely for resource supply, extension of their markets, and sites for military bases. As Mackinder[114] wrote, 'it is as much a law of policy for Russia to own nothing over seas as for Britain to be supreme on the ocean'. Thus the common term 'East–West rivalry' conceals the geostrategic

dichotomy, 'land–sea/centre–periphery'. The Heartland theory underlay the strategic opposition of the post-war years, embracing the Cold War, containment, the theory of deterrence, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons (although the rhetoric fails to do justice to Mackinder's thought[115]). Indeed, some (for example, Walters[116]) have interpreted the growth of technology expressed in air power and its extension, nuclear weaponry, as a response to a covert acknowledgement of the strategic superiority of the Heartland and a consequent attempt to counter it by denying any determinism implicit in it as a geographical construct. Resort here is often made to Amery's comment in the discussion following Mackinder's reading of his 1904 paper, that it 'will not matter whether they are in the centre of a continent or on an island; those people who have the industrial power and the power of invention and of science will be able to defeat all others', and when the sea and the railway are 'supplemented by the air as a means of locomotion … a great deal of this geographical distribution must lose its importance'.[117] (Interestingly, when this passage from the *Geographical Journal* report was quoted, correctly, in a wartime article on Mackinder's geopolitics contained in an American magazine, Mackinder emphatically denied, in a handwritten marginal annotation on a copy now held in the Oxford School of Geography archives, that Amery said this.[118]) The appeal of 'air isolationism'[119] and the value of air power as the 'key to survival'[120] – despite the major questions concerning its efficacy raised in connection with examples ranging from the strategic bombing offensive against Germany[121] to the Vietnam war,[122] and the greater damage done by aircraft to sea power rather than to land-power in World War Two – was carried into the sphere of the ultimate weapon of projectile warfare, the atomic bomb: in a full-scale nuclear war, geography would cease to matter. In Clausewitzian terms, however, nuclear weapons fail as a tool of warfare conceived as an extension of policy, the scenario being one of mutually assured destruction.

Mackinder's concern that the ultimate threat could come from a realized Heartland power which then went on to become an invincible sea-power,[123] was revived with the growth of the Soviet navy.[124] This appeared to herald the consummation of the traditional 'urge to the sea', but a crucial new dimension was added, as circumstances had changed: while oceanic access remained, as ever, restricted and disconnected, the USSR was not operating, as Russia had been, from an economic base dependent upon trade conducted through insecurely held maritime outlets, at the mercy of European neighbours. In a conversation reported to have taken place between Nixon and Khrushchev in 1959,[125] Khrushchev recognized that the Soviet Union's potential enemy would be highly dependent upon sea communications, which could be paralysed through the destruction of his navy; in this regard, long-range nuclear-powered submarines, capable of staying at sea for long periods, assumed a particular importance.[126]

This expansion of Soviet sea power might have been taken to signify the fruition of the USSR's designs on the Heartland. But in Mackinder's terms, it was premature: the development of the Heartland, despite the extraction of huge quantities of raw materials, the construction of roads, railways, pipelines, and

transmission lines, and the expansion of the industrial base, was by the end of the Soviet era by no means complete. Nor had a clear, unimpeded, and secure outlet to the open ocean been acquired and consolidated. Mackinder had spoken over-confidently about the future of railways in the Heartland,[127] but although the transport system was unfinished, so was the economic development – the 'vast economic world' – which it served: 'the two advance *pari passu*'.[128] The Heartland contains immense resources but also presents massive obstacles to its development, to which must be added a gamut of human problems, compounded by the rigorous and costly physical conditions: low standards of living and harsh lifestyles; the difficulty experienced in endeavouring to achieve permanent migration of manpower to the new towns and cities in Siberia; the slow growth rates of the Slavic populations, amounting to demographic stagnation; the failure of Marxism, with its emphasis upon class, to anticipate the potency of resurgent ethnic nationalism; the shortcomings of the bureaucratic centralization set up to run an immense, diverse, and complex land empire; the uneven state of technology (some advanced but much backward) within a cash-starved, sector-based economy; and, not least, a set of growing social and political movements making for destabilization of the established order. Added to all this was the immense burden of military expenditure, both in itself and in terms of the funds diverted from other sectors: a stated aim of the Reagan administration in the USA, backed by the military-industrial complex, was to force the Soviet Union into an arms race conducted on such a scale that the USSR would be unable to keep up, thereby precipitating internal economic, social, and political collapse. The arms race became itself a 'potent weapon in delaying the development of the Heartland',[129] and with the disintegration of the Soviet Union those who claimed victory in the Cold War might also conclude, on the face of it, that the Heartland, in theory and in practice, had been finally disposed of and laid to rest.

Epitaph or prospect? The Heartland in 'transition'

The argument of this chapter, when carried through to the present, points to the conclusion that the latest period in Russian history has not progressed to the stage deemed necessary for the ultimate testing of Mackinder's thesis. The conditions have simply not been fulfilled; but that is not to say that they never will be. Recent events can certainly be interpreted in Mackinderesque terms: as a consequence of a combination of internal failure – structural, ideological, and social – and external pressure, the attempt made by a twentieth-century society, propelled by an action-oriented ideology which drew upon a heritage of autocracy and communality, and directed by ruthless organizers, has, despite much suffering and self-denial, failed to sustain its campaign to realize the potentials of the country's geography. Yet the fundamentals remain; in 1904, Mackinder, with respect to Russia, expressed his view that it was not 'likely that any possible social revolution will alter her essential relations to the great geographical limits of her existence':[130] written before 1917, it remains true after 1991. His aim had not been to produce, in the Heartland

theory, an exclusive explanatory device, 'but to make a geographical formula into which you could fit any political balance'.[131] And in reflecting upon the 1904 paper forty years later, he said he had hoped that 'other "outlookers" would, with due readjustments, register the changes of values at successive later dates'.[132]

So what are the elements which make up the state of affairs prevailing a hundred years on? In attempting to identify and assess these, one of the most intriguing developments of the last decade has been the discussion of Mackinder's ideas by the Russians themselves. During the Soviet period, Mackinder, when he was mentioned at all in print, was associated with the standard dismissal of geopolitics as a bourgeois, reactionary, pseudo-scientific 'theory' based upon an unsavoury mixture of environmental determinism, social Darwinism, racism, and biological myths, employed principally to justify imperialist aggression, specifically German in its early stages and taken up by the United States after the war.[133] Successive entries in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, the rather deeper analysis offered by the *Soviet War Encyclopaedia*,[134] the treatment given in geographical textbooks[135] and articles,[136] and the very few volumes to contain the word 'geopolitics' in the title (such as that by the East German, Heyden[137]), set the deterministic amorality and geographical fatalism of geopolitics in direct opposition to the Marxist–Leninist theory of war. This was concerned with war as a product of imperialism, identifying the real causes of conflict as originating in society, economy, and the processes of historical materialism;[138] much of the thinking followed from an early paper by Wittfogel.[139] The official line, naturally, provides only part of the story; but while geographical factors were indeed acknowledged as being of importance in armed conflict[140] and the geostrategic situation of the USSR was keenly appreciated,[141] geopolitical approaches[142] and the application of Mackinder's ideas to Russia[143] were not prominent topics in the published literature. The sudden growth of interest in the last few years, at least in certain intellectual circles and political organizations – ordinary Russians are more concerned with the tribulations of daily existence[144] – has been very marked; there is no space here in which to begin to do justice to the rapidly accumulating body of material, both in print and carried on websites (see the excellent review by Kolossov and Turovsky 2001[145]). Nor is it possible to speculate more than briefly upon the possible reasons for this development, three of which, it has been suggested, may be the following: a retreat to the promises of a permanent geography in place of the disappointments of materialist history; the search for a new identity; and the reassurance provided by a belief in an 'eternal' role for Russia following the shock of her downfall from great power status.

To take an example from this new literature, *Geopolitics: A Textbook*, by N.A. Nartov, first published in Moscow in 2000, and exceeding 350 pages in length, claims to be the first textbook on geopolitics for Russian students in a variety of disciplines in higher education.[146] It offers comprehensive treatment of the theoretical foundations, the role of geopolitics in the modern world (with surveys of the various regions), and gives considerable prominence to Mackinder: extracts from the 1904 paper are reproduced in a Russian version ('Geograficheskaya os' istorii') within a supplement comprising 'texts from works of classical geopolitics

and famous geopoliticians of the present day', such as Zbigniew Brzezinski.[147] Other recent works on geopolitics include those by Sorokin (1996), Gadzhiyev (1997, 1998 and 2001), Mitrofanov (1997), Ravichandran (1999), and Kolosov and Mironenko (2002).[148]

Russia is, indeed, 'at the crossroads', and an historically familiar one: will she become a 'Eurasian power or a colony of the west'?[149] In both scenarios, geography, far from being rejected, assumes a central significance, and the momentum of the past, as historic configurations, dispositions, and forces are uncovered, revived, or rejuvenated, is very evident. The Eurasian movement of the 1920s, led by *émigré* intellectuals,[150] found expression in the (recently revived) writings of Trubetskoy (1920) and Savitskiy (1927), foreshadowed by Lamanskiy, with their nineteenth-century Slavophil and related forbears such as Danilevskiy (1871), for whom, as for Dostoyevskiy in the 1870s, attempts to make Russia European were false to her history, culture, and, not least, her geography: 'German bureaucracy's artificial focus, Saint Petersburg', should be destroyed, and a return made to Moscow or, even better, to Kiev.[151]

Eurasianism of this kind appeals to Russian nationalists who challenge the 'westerners' (*zapadniki*) and their belief in universal values, identifying instead (as did Mackinder, in their eyes) a special role for Russia. Included here are the advocates of the reunification of Russia with Belarus and Ukraine under the state religion of the Orthodox Church,[152] and controversial figures such as Aleksandr Dugin, who in his publication *Elementy* extensively cites Mackinder and the Heartland, in relation to his conception of the continental land-power role of Eurasia as a force to oppose the US 'Atlanticist' dominance of the new world order and the ultimate subjugation of Russia.[153]

Eurasian images and ideas are several and not confined to a single political programme,[154] but they share a fundamental rejection of any form of westernizing or European option for Russia. The policy of the early 1990s, directed at strengthening links with the west seemingly at any price, is condemned as precipitating the loss of Russian influence in eastern Europe with no reciprocal concessions being gained.[155] The eastward advance of NATO and the EU heralds the drawing of a new iron curtain separating 'cosmos' from 'chaos',[156] the prospect of which has caused several 'eastern European' states, Belarus and Ukraine included,[157] to attempt a rediscovery of their European credentials.[158] Russia, on the other hand, is deliberately peripheralized, according to this scenario, as a raw material source for the west (witness the pattern and composition of Russian exports and the manoeuvrings over such resources as Caspian oil), hampered in her development by a moribund industrial infrastructure and a polluted environment inhabited by an impoverished population. Meanwhile, a rich coterie, the members of which made their fortunes stealing state property and indulging in a variety of other lucrative illegal activities, flourish in an increasingly insecure, disordered, and crime-ridden social milieu.[159] The promotion of such an economic and political agenda by the west threatens to impose a 'cold peace',[160] especially if the historic geopolitical characteristics of the 'crush zone' are ignored: the act of forcing the

Soviet Union from eastern Europe – costly and troublesome as the tier often proved to be, from the Russian point of view – does not settle the strategic issue.[161]

All this is highly reminiscent of Mackinder's central themes and concerns: the perennial issue of the viability of the states of eastern Europe; renewed western penetration of Russia by economic as opposed to military means, reviving memories of geopolitical debate in Germany in particular, from Haushofer (and indeed long before) to *Ostpolitik*; the semi-colonial and, in the post-socialist era, perhaps now truly imperialistic nature of western attitudes to Russia; the likely consequences of the loss of global balance; the western (especially Anglo-American) tendency, despite many lessons, to confuse policy with morality and certainly to forget the need to relate democratic ideals to geographical reality; and the host of questions pertaining to individual territories in eastern Europe, and where their best interests are deemed to lie (not the least of them being Kaliningrad[162]). Who is to say that the much vaunted and indeed presumptuous 'transition' decreed for Russia is really to be to a market economy and a liberal democracy, assumed, yet again, by the west to represent the natural culmination of the process of economic and political development, despite the radically different experiences of the various regions of the 'third world' and the alternative models which have had to be constructed in consequence? The transition in the former Soviet Union has signally failed thus far, as western governments, gripped by 'neo-liberal hubris', have urged on Russia 'economic policies utterly unsuited to its history and circumstances'; little wonder, then, that Russia shows signs of reverting 'to all the troubled ambiguities of its historic relationship with the west'.[163]

If the European 'trap' is to be avoided, why should new ruthless organizers not commence yet another assault on the Heartland, by looking instead to the neglected Asian sphere[164] and seeking, as certain of the 'hard-line' Eurasianists urge (in association, it should be noted, with autocratic and totalitarian rather than liberalizing western political ideologies), the securing of the Heartland as a task of the first importance?[165] It is interesting, and in some respects astonishing, given western concern with independence, democracy, and notions of freedom in relation to the states of eastern Europe, how the Russian 'colonial presence' in Asia is taken for granted, perhaps at least partly on account of the geographical continuity of Eurasia and the contrasting perspectives, especially during decolonization, of the former sea-empires of the west, with their scattered dependencies.[166] Perhaps even the final precondition may, one day, be achieved, whereby an unchallenged tenant of the pivot region adds an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent. In this regard, a hundred years on, Mackinder's final sentence, raising the spectre of China, with her vast reserves of man-power, remains as tantalizing as ever.

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6

HALFORD MACKINDER, THE 'GEOGRAPHICAL PIVOT', AND BRITISH PERCEPTIONS OF CENTRAL ASIA

Sarah O'Hara, Michael Heffernan and Georgina Endfield

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, a series of global economic transformations (notably the shift in the energy base of industrial capitalism from coal and steam to oil, gas and electricity) as well as the related political reconfigurations (particularly the rise of new forms of confrontational nationalism) sparked off an anxious, characteristically *fin-de-siècle* debate about the likely shape of the global order in the coming twentieth century. The advent of a modern, increasingly global political economy and the emergence of cohesive, land-based and continental-scale nation states such as the USA posed obvious challenges to the older and smaller European imperial states whose power rested on widely dispersed trading empires.

In Britain, the fear of imperial eclipse was palpable. The ostentatious displays of imperial self-confidence, exemplified by the celebrations for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897, masked an increasingly pessimistic reading of Britain's future. The prospect of imperial over-stretch and the challenge posed by the seemingly inexorable rise of rival European and non-European powers caused widespread concern. Joseph Chamberlain's famous vision of Britain at the Fourth Colonial Conference in August 1902 as a 'Weary Titan that staggers under the too vast orb of his own fate' was not an isolated perspective.[1] The familiar loci of Britain's imperial power across the formal and informal empire – India, Africa and Latin America – seemed increasingly vulnerable to internal and external threat.

Sir Halford Mackinder's famous lecture on 'The Geographical Pivot of History', delivered to the Royal Geographical Society in London in January 1904, stated Edwardian anxieties about Britain's future in the new century.[2] Considered as a defining statement in the history of global geopolitics, Mackinder's address argued that the development and expansion of railway networks had shifted the balance of power away from seafaring imperial nations – most obviously Britain – towards

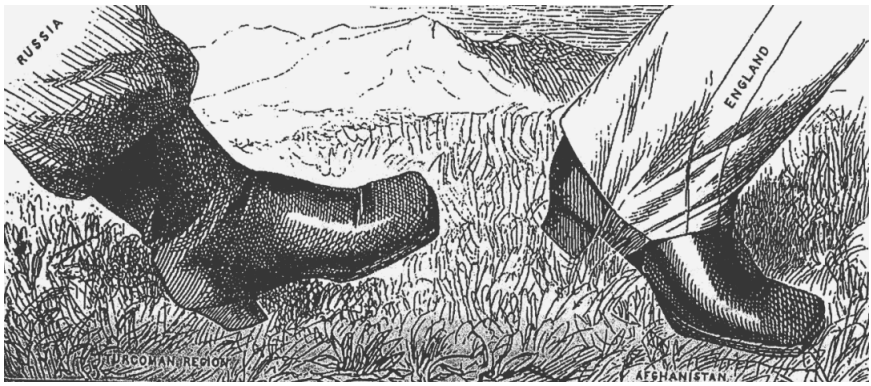

Figure 6.1 'Russia advancing upon Afghanistan, England retiring from it'

nations that were better positioned to exert land-based authority over continental interiors.[3] Such regions were inaccessible to the 'gun-boat' naval authority of the sea-faring colonial powers. Whichever powers controlled the world's landmasses would henceforth have access to the vast and largely untapped resource wealth of the continental interiors. Global dominance in the future would no longer depend on control of shipping lanes but would be determined by control and exploitation of the resources of continental interiors.[4] In Mackinder's view, Central Asia represented the world's Pivot zone and other powers – either Russia or the dreaded prospect of a Russo–German alliance – looked set to dominate Euro-Asia in the twentieth century.

Mackinder's first-hand knowledge of Central Asia was limited, as was his familiarity with the country he thought most likely to control Euro-Asia in the future. He visited Russia only once, when he was appointed the British High Commissioner in Southern Russia after World War I, some fifteen years after the publication of his 1904 lecture. He spent much of his Russian sojourn aboard a British warship anchored off the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, only going into the region he was by then calling the Heartland on one occasion.[5] Mackinder's novel insights about Central Asia were not based on extensive first-hand experience, therefore, and were derived from the work and observations of leading British authorities who had travelled in, and written about, the region. The most notable British writers on Central Asia in the late Victorian era were Sir Henry Rawlinson,[6] Sir Bartle Frere,[7] Lord Curzon[8] and Charles Marvin.[9] The analyses these writers provided differed in many respects but all agreed on the growing geo-strategic importance of Central Asia to Britain's imperial interests, and they sustained the great game of espionage and counter-espionage in the region between Britain and the expanding Russian Empire.[10]

British discussion of the geo-strategic importance of Central Asia took place in a variety of forums, within and beyond the corridors of political power. The region featured regularly in the national press and was widely debated in lectures, seminars and scientific papers delivered before major learned societies. One of the more

important was the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), perhaps the leading scientific-cum-political society in late Victorian and Edwardian London. Mackinder had been elected to the RGS in 1886, a year before his appointment to a Readership in Geography at the University of Oxford. At the RGS, Mackinder met a diverse fellowship – 'men with a general interest in the world and its affairs, officers from the army and navy, businessmen, academics, schoolteachers, diplomats, and colonial administrators'[11] – which included all the major British authorities on Central Asia. Under their influence, the RGS became an important repository for intelligence on the economic, political and military significance of Central Asia, and arguably the most important public venue in London for lectures and seminars on the region, many of which were subsequently published in the society's house journal.[12]

Drawing on published and unpublished material, including documents in the RGS archives and the Oriental and India Office Collection of the British Library, this essay examines some of the influences on Mackinder's thinking about Central Asia in the years before the 1904 address. Particular reference is paid to the three main tenets of Mackinder's thesis: resources, transport links, and accessibility.

Historical and geopolitical context

Russia's advance in Central Asia

Russia's advance into Asia began in the late 1500s. By the early 1700s, Russia controlled the northern region of the continent and had begun to turn her attention southwards. The tsar at this time, Peter the Great, made no secret of the fact that India was his ultimate goal as it was his belief that 'whoever shall reign there will be the real sovereign of the world' and in 1717 he launched the first of what was to become a series of campaigns that over the next 165 years saw the Central Asian region coming under tsarist control.[13] Russia's progress across the desert steppe was monitored in London and by the British authorities in India, who viewed Russia's expansion in Central Asia as a push towards their ultimate aim of taking India.[14] Until the 1830s, however, Russia's activities had no direct impact on Britain's interests. But in 1837 the situation changed dramatically when the shah of Persia, with unofficial support from the Russians, attacked Herat.[15] It was a young army officer, Henry Rawlinson, who alerted the British authorities to the Russian presence in the region. Rawlinson had been on his way to the shah's encampment on the road to Herat when he encountered a small group of soldiers wearing what he thought were European-style uniforms.[16] Having tried to make conversation with them, and finding that they shared no common language he went on his way with a deep suspicion. When he arrived at the encampment he immediately demanded, and received, an audience with the shah, who confirmed that the soldiers were Russians on their way to Kabul to meet with the Afghan ruler Dost Mohammed. Shortly afterwards the Russian and his Cossack escort rode into camp and it became clear to Rawlinson that the Russian was indeed on a

mission to Kabul.[17] Thus, despite having just completed the 700 mile journey from Tehran, Rawlinson immediately returned to the Persian capital to relay the news to the British authorities in London and Calcutta.

Although the shah's forces were eventually repulsed, Russia's role in events heightened tensions and prompted the British prime minister, Lord Palmerston, to write to the Russian foreign minister, Count Nesselrode, complaining that '… Russian agents in Persia and Afghanistan have lately been engaged in measures studiously concealed from the British Government and planned in a spirit unfriendly to Great Britain and for objects hostile to her interests.'[18] In reply Nesselrode stated that the tsar harboured no designs hostile to Great Britain and that the Russian ambassador to Tehran, Count Simonich, had overstepped his authority in direct opposition to the tsar and had now been recalled from his post.[19] Within months of the shah's failed attempt on Herat, Britain launched her own disastrous Afghan campaign[20] which in 1842 resulted in one of the most humiliating military defeats ever suffered by the British.[21] The Russian's on hearing of the British advance in Afghanistan, saw an opportunity to progress their own interests in Central Asian with Count Nesselrode ordering the ill-fated expedition against Khiva. The ruinous Afghan and Khivan campaigns brought to a temporary halt the active interference by both the British and the Russians, although it did not reduce the acquisitive tendencies of the two empires. Over the next three decades the Russians continued to advance southwards. In 1865 Tashkent was annexed and three years later the Russians took Samakhand, the latter proving the key to subjugating Bokhara,[22] and eventually in 1873, Khiva came under Russian control. At the same time the British were moving northwards taking Sind in 1843, Kashmir in 1846, three years later the Punjab and, in 1859, Baluchistan.

The hawks and the doves

By the 1860s Russia's advances and activities in Central Asia were much in the news and the Central Asian Question was the subject of debate in Britain. Two schools of thought emerged, the 'Forward School' led by the anti-Russian hawk, Henry Rawlinson, who believed that British interference in Afghanistan was essential for the future security of India, and the non-interventionist doves of the 'Lawrence School',[23] led by Sir John Lawrence, viceroy of India from 1863–69. The school opposed British expansion, believing that Afghanistan served as a buffer between British and Russian Empires and that the Indus River was India's natural border. Many adherents of the Lawrence School opined that British interests would best be served by ensuring the contentment of the Indian population.[24]

Rawlinson, a prolific essayist, wrote extensively on the Central Asian Question.[25] One of his most notable contributions being a lengthy memorandum written in 1868,[26] in which he argued that that Russia's intentions in Central Asia were entirely hostile to Britain and that British interference in Afghanistan was essential. He painted a graphic picture whereby Russia could easily take control of Britain's Indian Empire noting that:

> … if Russia were once established in full strength at Herat, and her communications were secured in one direction with Asterabad, through Meshed, in another with Khiva, through Merv and a third with Tashkend and Bokhara through Mymeneh and the passage of the Oxus, all the native forces of Asia would be inadequate to expel her from her position.[27]

The memorandum opened a prolonged debate on the subject with a series of minutes, notes and memoranda being written by high-ranking officials within the Indian administration.[28] John Lawrence, viceroy of India, in a stiff rebuttal to Rawlinson's ideas stated that '… I can not bring myself to see the formidable character of the danger with which we are said to be threatened by the presence of the Russians in Central Asia.'[29] But, while many commentators took exception to certain details in Rawlinson's memorandum there was according to Rawlinson 'a complete identity of opinion in favour of the leading features of the proposed new scheme of Afghan policy – namely, the substitution of friendly intervention for the "masterly inaction" of the proceeding period.'[30]

Sir Bartle Frere was equally as vocal as Rawlinson in his desire for a more vigorous British policy in Central Asia. In 1874 Frere, then President of the RGS, wrote a lengthy missive to Sir John Kaye regarding the Central Asian Question, which was subsequently printed and circulated amongst the members of the Council of India.[31] In it Frere applauded the fact that the policy of 'masterly inactivity' had at last been abandoned by former advocates who no longer 'turn their backs on obvious dangers that are rapidly approaching.' But, he argued that Britain needed to adopt an even more aggressive policy and that the establishment of a neutral zone would do little to stop the Russian advance. Like Rawlinson he believed that Britain needed to place agents in Herat, Kandahar and Kabul to prevent the Russians from gaining influence in the region, for if Russia got a foot in the door it could undermine Britain's control over the Indian population and the Russians would not have to physically invade India to destroy British rule.

Until the mid 1870s the opinions of Rawlinson and Frere were largely ignored by the incumbent Liberal government, but following the 1874 election, which brought Disraeli to office, the Forward School came to the fore. The appointment of Lord Lytton[32] as viceroy of India heralded a change in policy towards Afghanistan and shortly after his arrival in Calcutta he wrote to the Afghan emir informing him that the British intended to send a 'mission' to Kabul. The emir refused the mission entry. Although incensed by this Lytton bided his time for two years before sending his envoy, Field Marshall Sir Neville Chamberlain (1820–1902) to Afghanistan. The British delegation was refused entry,[33] at the same time a Russian mission was allowed to enter Kabul.[34] Lytton decided that action had to be taken and began preparations for the invasion of Afghanistan.

The threat of war prompted debate in England in the major newspapers and journals of the day. Russia's role in the region was analysed in depth by a largely anti-Russian press. Articles focused on Russia's activities and advances in the past and the views of authorities on the region, including Frere, Rawlinson,

Lawrence and Marvin were solicited and analysed.[35] British troops entered Afghanistan in late 1878 and from a military point of view the second Anglo–Afghan War was a triumph for Britain. Defeating the Afghan tribes, however, did not necessarily mean that the British controlled them, a situation which soon became apparent even to supporters of the Forward Policy. British troops suffered repeated attacks with the massacre of the British Mission in Kabul in September 1879 suggesting a repeat of the debacle of the first Anglo–Afghan war.

In Britain during a general election Gladstone used the situation in Afghanistan to play on the fears of the British electorate, lambasting Disraeli's foreign policy in Gladstone's Midlothian campaign. The ploy worked and in April 1880 the Liberals were returned to power. Within months British troops were recalled from Afghanistan,[36] and the Joint Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission set about delimiting the Afghan border.[37] Yet while Gladstone insisted that Russia posed little threat to India, four years later he found himself on the verge of declaring war on Russia when Russian forces threatened to annex a part of Afghanistan.[38]

Herat: the key to India?

Throughout the 1870s and early 1880s there was discussion of the implications of Russia taking the Merv oasis. It was argued that once in control of Merv, Russia would have direct access to Herat, and ultimately India.[39] Not everyone subscribed to this view. Edmund O'Donovan, a special correspondent for the *Daily News*, spent several years travelling through the region, including five months as a 'guest' of the Tekke Turkmen at Merv in 1880, and subsequently published two volumes about his adventures which he promoted in speaking engagements.[40] O'Donovan's lecture to the RGS in March 1882 concluded that while Merv was important in relation to Herat, there were other routes, notably via Tejend, by which the city could be reached. He argued that the Russian's might have a civilising effect on the people of the region.[41] O'Donovan's views provoked much comment and in the subsequent debate Rawlinson argued that while O'Donovan saw no necessity in attributing hostile views to the Russian government and that in general their governments in Khiva, Samakhand and Khojend were superior to those that had previously existed, that politicians could 'not be exclusively guided by humanitarian considerations. They had to look mainly after national interests, so it was quite legitimate for Englishmen to watch the Russian movements with interest and vigilance.'[42] Another member of the audience, Colonel St. John, went further arguing that O'Donovan had 'undervalued the purely strategical situation of Merv',[43] while Colonel Sir Lewis Pelly argued that if he were a Russian officer he would press the tsar to use all justifiable means to get hold of Herat.[44]

When Russia did annex Merv two years later there was outrage in Britain prompting a new debate on the Central Asia Question. The Russian and British empires which only 165 years ago had been separated by thousands of miles of desert steppe were now at each others back door. Significantly Russia had reached a point where it could easily take Herat. If this happened Russia would hold an

unassailable position in the region as it was widely believed in military circles that the Herat Valley was 'the only place in this part of Central Asia where a large body of men could be fed, and any one holding possession of Herat would have the most commanding influence in the affairs of Afghanistan and Persia'[45] and by default India.

One of the most prominent commentators on the subject was Charles Marvin a correspondent for the *Morning Post* who was fluent in Russian and had travelled widely throughout the Russian empire.[46] During his many years working in the region he became personally acquainted with numerous high-ranking officials and his insights into the Russian psyche was regarded by many as second to none.[47] Starting in 1880, Marvin published a prodigious stream of material covering amongst other things commerce, the oil industry, Russian railway developments and most importantly Russia's military advance.[48] A common theme throughout all his work was the need for Britain to adopt a vigorous policy aimed at averting Russian encroachment in Central Asia. In the wake of Russia's seizure of Merv, Marvin published a short pamphlet outlining its implication, which was circulated to members of parliament both prior to and during an emergency debate on the subject. In it he detailed the consequence of Russia's actions noting that the:

> conquest of Merv is something more than the annexation of a mid-desert oasis. It means the complete junction of the military forces of the Caucasus (nearly 150,000 men in times of peace) and Turkestan (27,000) … the annexation of Akhal, the absorption of 100,000 of the best irregular cavalry in the world, at a weeks march from the city of Herat.

In a much larger and far more detailed piece published in late 1884 Marvin launched an attack on what he called the 'appalling stupidity' of 'The past and present policy of Mr. Gladstone's government of making a Chinese wall of Afghanistan to keep out Russia.' Marvin's prophecy was borne out in early 1885, when Russian forces attacked the oasis of Panjdeh located upstream of Merv. Britain's reaction was an immediate mobilisation of her troops, but the two sides managed to reach a diplomatic solution whereby the Russians agreed to withdraw from their furthest point of advance in return for Panjdeh. A year later the two sides came to an agreement on the demarcation of the permanent northern frontier for Afghanistan,[49] under which Afghanistan ceded a significant amount of territory to the Russians.

Mackinder's three Rs: resources, railways and remoteness

It was against this backdrop of events that Mackinder presented his simple and highly pessimistic assessment of Britain's position with respect to the newly unfolding global order. To Mackinder there were three issues of critical importance: control of resources, transport infrastructure and inaccessibility. It was the combination of these three factors that gave the Heartland importance.

Resources

> The spaces within the Russian Empire and Mongolia are so vast, and their potentialities in population, wheat, cotton, fuel and metals so incalculably great, that it is inevitable that a vast economic world, more or less apart, will there develop inaccessible to oceanic commerce.[50]

There had long been interest in Central Asia's economic potential and not only from Russia. In 1558, for example, the British merchant Anthony Jenkinson visited Bokhara and Tashkent to investigate the possibility of establishing British trade links[51] and by the seventeenth century a number of British companies were operating in the region.[52] With Russia's advance into Central Asia, reports of the region's mineral wealth began to emerge. Copper ore was discovered in the Altai region in 1723 with further finds of lead, silver and gold. In 1771 the Dzhezkazgan copper deposits, one of the richest in the world, were discovered in the heart of the Kazakh steppe, which is also home to the massive Karaganda coalfield discovered in 1833.[53] Oil was also found in abundance and for many centuries travellers passing through the southern Caucasus had commented on the occurrence of oil seepages and the presence of 'eternal pillars of fire' in the Baku region of modern day Azerbaijan. The late 1800s saw oil emerging as a key commodity, and gaining control of both the production and export of Baku's oil became a major objective of the rapidly expanding oil business of the time.[54] By 1900 Baku was the premier oil-producing region of the world accounting for more than 50 per cent of global production.[55]

Mackinder was clearly aware of the immensity of Baku's oil industry as well as the vast scale of mineral and agricultural resources elsewhere in Central Asia. An increasing number of books and articles were being written about the region[56] and much a considerable body of information had begun to be published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*. In a paper published in 1886, for example, Colonel Stewart noted that 'The whole country from the north-eastern corner of the Black Sea through the Caucasus to Baku on the Caspian Sea, is full of petroleum, which is found at certain points such as Baku in almost unlimited quantities.' A few years later Captain Yate published his account of the Tashkent Exhibition held in the summer of 1890.[57] Yate, commented that the exhibition was of interest because it gave some indication of the progress that Russia was making in Central Asia. He also noted that attention was being paid by the Russians to the internal development of the region, which he argued might be seen as a precursor to external extension. In the meantime, however, Russia needed to make its Central Asian colonies pay and consequently attention focused on the development of agricultural, manufacturing, pastoral and mining industries. The growth of the region's irrigation system was viewed by Yate as being particularly important and he considered the construction of various canals and water diversion projects as central to Russia's plans in the region.[58] Significantly, Yate notes that the Oxus[59] could and should be used for this purpose commenting that there was talk of building a canal from Charjui on the left bank of the Oxus to Bairam Ali.[60]

The realisation that Central Asia contained vast and untapped resources was seen as significant in Britain. In his 1884 tome on the Baku oil industry, Charles Marvin noted that 'Russians themselves are now finding out the resources they possess in the Caspian region. They have looked so far ahead in the direction of India, that many advantages existing under their own noses have remained unseen.'[61] The commercial importance of Russia's Central Asian colonies was recognised by Curzon, who travelled through Central Asia in 1888 taking extensive notes about production capabilities, prices and commercial development in the region.[62] On his return to Britain, he published a series of articles in the *Manchester Chronicle* and embarked on a lecture tour. A common theme in his material being the threat that Russia posed to Britain. Mackinder attended a lecture in September 1889 when Curzon addressed the British Association in Newcastle.[63] The subject was 'British and Russian Commercial Competition in Central Asia'.[64] Curzon stated that in recent years the trade routes of Central Asia had passed from the hands of the British into those of Russia and that new trade routes, favourable to Russia and unfavourable to Britain, were being developed. As a result 'money is being taken from the pockets of Bombay and Manchester and transferred to the pockets of Nizni Novogorod and Moscow.'[65] Curzon highlighted the issue of taxes and tariffs, arguing that the imposition of punitive tariffs by the Russians on goods imported from India into Central Asia had virtually brought trade to a halt. Significantly, however, he argued that the key to Russia's growing importance in the region was the development of the railways stating that 'the pivot upon which my argument hangs and upon which the newly achieved superiority of Russia (is) in the main dependent, is the now complete Transcaspian railway.'[66]

Railways

> But trans-continental railways are now transmuting the condition of land-power, and nowhere can they have such effect as in the closed heart-land of Euro-Asia.[67]

The late 1800s was one of the most prolific periods of railway building across the globe, particularly in Russia. Between 1866 and 1900 the Russians built over 30,000 miles of railway line and during the period 1893 to 1897 new railway was being built at a rate of 1,625 miles a year.[68] Although many of the railways served European Russia, the longest routes linked Moscow with colonies in Asia. The rationale for these railways was much discussed in newspapers and magazines with many commentators highlighting the strategic military importance of Imperial Russia's rapidly expanding railway network.[69] In addition to their military significance the new rail routes were a means to develop the remote areas of Russia's empire. Fares along the routes were designed to promote development and to encourage peasant families from European Russia to emigrate to the virgin lands of the interior.[70] The construction of the Transcaucasus railway commenced in the early 1870s and by 1882 the oil fields of Baku on the Caspian Coast were linked

to the port of Poti on the Black Sea Coast. The Transcaspian railway was built in the late 1880s with construction of the Orenburg–Tashkent line commencing in 1900, while the Trans-Siberian railway linking Moscow to the Pacific Ocean was begun in the 1890s and completed in 1905.

The development of the Imperial Russian railway network was watched with suspicion in Britain.[71] The Transcaspian railway was considered to have immense implications for Britain and when the line was officially opened in May 1888, the 'the name of General Annenkoff was flashed to all quarters of the globe as that of the man who had successfully accomplished a feat till lately declared to be impossible'.[72] The completion of the railway meant that with the exception of two breaks, the mountains of the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, there was a rail line linking St. Petersburg, on the Baltic Coast, to Samarkand at the heart of the Eurasian continent. Russia could now get troops to the north-west frontier of the British Empire within days rather than weeks, fundamentally changing Russia's military position.[73]

Curzon travelled along the Transcaspian line when he visited the region in September and October 1888 and he was impressed with what he saw. At his lecture at the RGS in March 1889 he spoke about the Transcaspian Railway commenting on the speed at which the railway had been constructed. He noted:

> apart form the local lack of material, due to the appalling dearth of the country, it is possibly the easiest and simplest railway that was ever built. The region which it traverses is as flat as a billiard table for almost its entire distance.[74]

Curzon's lecture focused on issues of security and he commented that the 'military and strategical consequences of the line are so obvious as to be perceptible even to a civilian.'[75] The railway, Curzon said, gave Russia a commercial advantage in Central Asia and increased Russia's presence in the region. It had implications for Russia's challenge to Britain's position in India stating 'It will thus be seen that from either direction, General Annenkoff's railway has prodigiously increased the military strength of Russia, in as much as it has multiplied and magnified her capacity to strike.'[76]

Remoteness

> Is not the pivot region of the world's politics that vast area of Euro-Asia which is inaccessible to ships, but in antiquity lay open to the horse-riding nomads, and is today about to be covered with a network of railways?[77]

The development of the railway network gave Russia access to Central Asia's resource wealth and unified the empire's continental landmass. A number of scholars argued that the balance of power was shifting from maritime nations to

large continental-sized states. Writing in the early 1880s, for example, the Cambridge historian J.R. Seeley commented that '… if it be true that a larger type of state than any hitherto known is springing up in the world, is not this a serious consideration for those states which rise only to the old level of magnitude?' Seeley went on to argue that '… Russia and the United States will surpass in power the states now called great …'[78] This issue was addressed at the First Colonial Conference in 1887 where it was argued that a federated British Empire was required to counter the growing strength of the continental powers, notably Russia, Germany and the United States.[79]

The construction of railways gave Russia access to the resource wealth of the continental interior and, because of distance from the ocean, meant it was not vulnerable to attack from the sea. The issue of India's vulnerability had been raised by Frere, who in his 1874 letter to Sir John Kaye had argued that the protection of India's seaboard needed to be reassessed as the opening of the Suez Canal had altered Britain's naval position in the region. As such a 'well directed naval expedition might now establish a hostile force on our Indian coasts' and that while 'Hitherto the Viceroy has little need for thinking of his navy … in the next war he will have to make it his chief concern.'[80] Frere's views were re-emphasised 15 years later by Curzon who noted:

> A further contrast is presented by the relative security or insecurity of the two dominions. Many and different enemies have it in their power to wreak mischief upon India. With an extensive and for the most part defenceless seaboard, she is exposed to hostile navies. Her commerce finds a hundred outlets, not one of which is safe from attack …

Curzon reasons that because of remoteness Central Asia was not vulnerable to attack from the sea and:

> … the Russian Empire in Central Asia is impregnable. Every avenue of approach is in her own hands: there is no enemy at her gate. No Armada can threaten where there are no seas; no hostile army can operate at such a gigantic distance from her base. England can do her no positive injury. Her commerce is overland and can not be touched; her communications are secure and can not be severed.[81]

The manner in which Russia colonised Central Asia was viewed as significant. Curzon noted that the vast majority of the British who went to India did so for a fixed period of time and having served their time retired back to Britain. By contrast, Russians migrated to Central Asia and stayed. As a result, towns, once viewed as strongholds of Persia, Georgia and Turkey, had become like any other Russian town. Moreover, while the number of British living in India would remain unchanged the Russian population in Central Asia would increase. Consequently, British rule in India would become more tenuous and for Britain …

> it will be beyond the power of any mortal man to expel Russia from the Caspian. Therein lies the great significance of the Russian Advance. Russia, as she settles down in Central Asia, becomes more and more unassailable. England, on the contrary remains just as vulnerable as ever.[82]

Conclusion

Halford Mackinder's 1904 Pivot paper was an elegantly expressed argument based on simple, fundamental, geographical principles. The novelty of Mackinder's analysis rested on his ability to think in expansive, global terms about the past, the present and the future. His focus on Central Asia was far less original, however, and merely re-articulated a long-standing and widely shared British concern about the possible expansion of Russian influence in the region, and the alarming implications this carried for the future of India – the jewel in the British imperial crown. As the foregoing analysis has demonstrated, Mackinder's identification of Central Asia as the core region that would henceforth determine the world's future political order, and his specific concerns with transport, access and resource exploitation, were clearly foreshadowed in pre-existing writings about the region's geo-economic and geopolitical importance. Mackinder's genius was to cut through the mass of detailed information that had been amassed on Central Asia and develop a clear, geographical theory, about the region's global significance. In so doing, he highlighted how marginal Britain was likely to become in a future twentieth century world, and how much effort would be required to preserve the British empire and British influence in these uncertain circumstances. Neither a hawk nor a dove in respect of British action in Central Asia itself, Mackinder was the ultimate geographical realist whose insightful observations may yet be proved correct.

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Notes

1 Chamberlain – who became Colonial Secretary in Lord Salisbury's 1895 cabinet – was the leading advocate of imperial preference, a specifically British manifestation of a more general late nineteenth century enthusiasm for autarkic economic nationalism. Chamberlain rejected the long-cherished doctrine of free trade in favour of an economically integrated empire protected from foreign goods and produce by an external tariff wall. For a detailed study of Chamberlain's politics, see Richard Jay, *Joseph Chamberlain: A Political Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) and for a brief but perceptive summary of his influence, see Robert K. Massie,

Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War (New York: Ballantine, 1991), pp. 325–36. Chamberlain's speech at the 1902 Colonial Conference also called for a single Council of the Empire.

2 H.J. Mackinder, 'The Geographical Pivot of History', *Geographical Journal*, 23 (1904), pp. 421–42.

3 For reviews of Mackinder's 1904 lecture in the context of the period, and in relation to other theorists of 'global closure', see M. Heffernan, 'Fin de siècle, fin du monde? On the origins of European geopolitics, 1890–1920', in Dodds, K. and Atkinson D. (eds), *Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 27–51; G. Kearns, 'Closed space and political practice: Frederick Jackson Turner and Halford Mackinder', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 21 (1984) 23–34; G. Kearns, 'Fin de siècle geopolitics: Mackinder, Hobson and theories of global closure', in P.J. Taylor (ed.), *Political Geography of the Twentieth Century: A Global Analysis* (London: Longman, 1993), pp. 9–30.

4 H.J. Mackinder, *Britain and the British Seas* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1902), p. 358.

5 Mackinder's developed his 'Pivot' paper into the Heartland thesis in, *Democratic Ideals and Realities: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (London: Constable & Co., 1919). He was appointed British High Commissioner in Southern Russia by Lord Curzon in late 1919, and visited the region in December 1919 and early January 1920. In his brief excursion onto Russian territory he met General Denikin, commander of the White Russian forces. See M. Hauner, *What is Asia to Us? Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 191; B.W. Blouet, *Sir Halford Mackinder – 1861–1947: Some New Perspectives* (School of Geography, Oxford, Research Paper 13) p. 13; and more generally W.H. Parker, *Mackinder: Geography as an Aid to Statecraft* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

6 Henry Rawlinson joined the British East India Company in 1827 at the age of 17. In 1833 he was sent to Persia to help re-organise the shah's troops and in 1840 became the political agent at Kandahar, a position he held for three years. He was later the political agent to Ottoman Arabia based in Baghdad. During his time in the region he became an expert on the a previously undeciphered cuneiform script, and published numerous scholarly works on the subject. He returned to England in 1855 and became heavily involved in political and diplomatic life. G. Rawlinson, *Memoir of Henry Creswicke Rawlinson* (London: Longman, 1898).

7 Bartle Frere was a British colonial administrator who spent over 30 years in India. He served as the chief commissioner of Sind and governor of Bombay before returning to England in 1867. He was president of the RGS in 1873–4. Appointed governor of the Cape Colony and high commissioner of British South Africa in 1877, Frere had to cope with Boer discontent and Zulu unrest. Intent on breaking the military power of the Zulus, he precipitated the Zulu War in 1878 which resulted in his recall to England. J. Martineau, *The Life and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. Sir Bartle Frere* (London: J. Murray, 1895); F. Emery, 'Geography and Imperialism: the role of Sir Bartle Frere (1815–84)', *Geographical Journal*, 150 (1984), pp. 342–50.

8 George Nathaniel Curzon was a prominent statesman of the late 1800s and early 1900s. He travelled extensively throughout Central Asia and Persia and was viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905. D. Gilmour, *Curzon* (London: John Murray, 1994) and A.S. Goudie, 'George Nathaniel Curzon: Superior Geographer', *Geographical Journal*, 146 (1980), pp. 203–9.

9 Charles Marvin was a correspondent for the *Morning Post* and spent many years in Central Asia writing articles and books on the region.

10 P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); K.E. Meyer and S.B. Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia* (Perseus Book Group: Counterpoint Press, 1999).

11 B.W. Blouet, *Halford Mackinder: A Biography* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1987), p. 33.

12 Rawlinson and Frere succeeded one another as RGS President in the early 1870s and Curzon served in same capacity between 1911 and 1914.

13 Cited in a confidential report written by the India Office in 1874 *Historical Summary of the Central Asian Question*. RGS/IBG Archives H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3.

14 The overwhelming importance of India in the British imperial imagination, and its central role in shaping British policy towards all parts of the empire and the wider world, was brilliantly developed in R. Robinson, J. Gallagher, and A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1965), a revised version appeared in 1981. The controversy sparked by their analysis is reviewed in W. Roger Louis (ed.), *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976).

15 Herat at this point was not part of Afghanistan.

16 The leader of the group was Captain Ivan Vitkervich, the aide-de-camp to the governor of Orenburg.

17 It also became clear to Rawlinson that Captain Vitkervich was fluent in a number of languages that he had pretended not to understand when they had first met. Meyer and Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows*, pp. 84–5.

18 Viscount Palmerston's Note, 26 October 1838, cited in *Historical Summary of the Central Asian Question*. RGS/IBG Archives H. C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3.

19 The Russian authorities also wash their hands of Vitkervitch's activities with Nesselrode stating that the only Vitkevitch he knew of was an adventurer who had recently been 'engaged in some unorthodox intrigues in Caubul and Caundihar'. Meyer and Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows*, p. 106. On hearing that he had been tossed aside by the Russian authorities Vitkervitch committed suicide, *Historical Summary of the Central Asian Question*. RGS/IBG Archives H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3: p. 5.

20 The first Anglo–Afghan War lasted from 1839–1842. According to Lord Melbourne, the attack on Afghanistan was '… *a decisive move and may bring on great events, but I believe necessary. This is no less than the question who is to be master of Central Asia*!' cited in a letter to the *Times*, 4 April, 1878. p.10.

21 J. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), 2 volumes.

22 *Historical Summary of the Central Asian Question*, note p. 26, describes how the Russian forces took control of water supplies in their efforts to take towns and cities. Once in control of Samarkand all the Russian authorities needed to do was cut the supply of water to the downstream city of Bokhara to bring about surrender. This tactic has been used at various stages in Central Asian history. Ghengis Khan used it to bring about the fall of many settlements when he invaded Central Asia in the early 1200s. G. Herrmann and A. Petersen *The Ancient Cities of Merv, Turkmenistan* (London, International Merv Project, Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 1997).

23 The term 'Lawrence School' is used in a minute by Sir W.R. Mansfield, Commander in Chief of India, dated 1 January 1869. RGS/IBG Archives, H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3.

24 Memorandum by Sir J. Lawrence 25 November 1868 RGS/IBG Archives H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3.

25 A number of his articles were published in 1875 (during Rawlinson's second term as president of the RGS), entitled *England and Russia in the East: A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Position in Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875).

26 A copy of the memorandum is included in Rawlinson's 1875 volume and in a footnote to the piece he comments that it had originally been written for a parliamentary motion calling attention to the state of affairs in Central Asia, but for a variety of reasons it had not been presented. Instead he submitted it to the Secretary of State for India who sent it to the authorities in Calcutta for consideration.

27 H.C. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East: A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Position in Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875), pp. 286–7.

28 A copy of the various memoranda and notes can be found in the Rawlinson papers RGS/IBG Archives. H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3.

29 Memorandum by Sir J. Lawrence, 25 November 1868, RGS/IBG Archives, H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3.

30 H.C. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East: A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Position in Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 264.

31 Letter to Sir John Kaye from Sir Bartle Frere, 12 June 1874. RGS/IBG Archives, H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection 20/3; Sir (Lord) John Lawrence, Memorandum on the Central Asian Question 4 November 1874. RGS/IBG Archives, H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection 20/3.

32 When Disraeili came to power Lord Northbrook was viceroy of India. Northbrook resisted attempts by the government to reverse Lawrence's non-interventionist policy, and resigned office rather than accept orders from ministers whose judgement he believed to be distorted by Russophobia. Following Lytton's appointment as viceroy, the Secretary of State for India asked Bartle Frere to prepare a new memorandum for Lytton's consideration on the Central Asian Question. The memorandum did not arrive before Lytton's departure to India, however, the two met at Suez and following discussion on the issue Lytton commented that he had been startled that Frere's opinion exactly coincided with his own. Meyer and Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows*, p. 178.

33 *The Times*, 23 September 1878, p. 9.

34 Rumours of the Russian delegation's arrival in Kabul appeared in *The Times* in mid August and were confirmed in late August, *The Times*, 15 August 1878, p. 9, *The Times*, 27 August 1878, p. 9.

35 *The Times*, 18 November 1878, p. 9; *The Times*, 27 November, 1878 p. 9; *The Times*, 26 February, 1879, p. 11; *The Times*, 4 March 1879, p. 10; *The Times*, 6 March 1879, p. 6.

36 Yet while Gladstone opposed the Afghan war and ordered the removal of British troops from Afghanistan, Britain continued to dictate its foreign policy.

37 H.C. Rawlinson*, Secret Memorandum on the Russo–Persia–Afghan Border*, 27 August 1883. RGS/IBG Archives H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3.

38 W.K. Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan: A Study of Political Development in Central and Southern Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953); S.A. Baynard, 'Historical Setting', in R.F. Nyrop and S.A. Seekins (eds), *Afghanistan: A Country Study* (Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army; US Government Printing Office, 1986).

39 C. Marvin, *The Russian Annexation of Merv: What it Means and What it Must Lead To* (London: W.H. Allen, 1884).

40 *The Daily News* was considered to be the pre-eminent liberal organ and mouthpiece of nineteenth-century Britain. At the time that O'Donovan was writing the paper was edited by the ardent Gladstonian Frank Hill.

41 O'Donovan delivered his lecturer to the RGS at the evening meeting of 27 March 1882. A copy of the lecture, 'Merv and its Surroundings' can be found in, *The Country of the Turkomans: An Anthology of Exploration from the Royal Geographical Society* (Ogus Press and the Royal Geographical Society, 1978), pp. 193–214.

42 Ibid., p. 210.

43 Ibid., p. 212.

44 Ibid., p. 212.

45 C.E. Stewart, 'The Herat Valley and the Persian Border, from the Hari-Rud to Sistan', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, VIII (1886), pp. 138–53. Stewart read his paper to the RGS early 1886. In the paper he made reference to the region's vast petroleum wealth noting that it had helped facilitate the development of Russia's railway network and that given the speed at which Russia was laying track across the region, Britain needed to consider the level of provision on her territories. The lecture prompted much discussion particularly on Herat's strategic importance. Rawlinson commented that he entirely agreed with Colonel Stewart's assessment of the importance of Herat, however, he did not believe that the British should extend the railway further towards Herat until Britain controlled all of Afghanistan.

46 *The Morning Post* was aligned with the Conservatives and was proponent of the Forward movement.

47 Marvin's works were widely reviewed and discussed in the press and he was considered by many to be the leading authority of the time on the Central Asian Question; see, for example, the *United Service Gazette*, 5 January 1884.

48 C. Marvin, *The Railway Race to Herat: An Account of the Russian Railway to Herat and India* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1885).
49 The Soviet Union and Afghanistan were still discussing boundary agreements over 50 years later signing two treaties the first in 1946 and the second in 1958.
50 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 434.
51 Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation* (Glasgow, 1903–1905), volumes II, III.
52 J. Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea* (London: Mr. Dodsley, 1753), 4 volumes.
53 R.A. Pierce, *Russian Central Asia 1867–1917: A Study in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California, 1960).
54 D. Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (UK: Simon & Schuster, 1991), pp. 58–72, 121–33; R.W. Tolf, *The Russian Rockefellers: The Saga of the Nobel Family and the Russian Oil Industry* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1976).
55 H. Hassmann, *Oil in the Soviet Union: History, Geography, Problems* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953).
56 A survey of the literature published in the RGS *Proceedings* provides an indication of the increasing volume of information on Central Asia.
57 A.C. Yate, 'The Tashkent Exhibition, 1890', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XIII (1891), pp. 21–7.
58 Indeed once subsumed into the Russian Empire teams of agricultural and engineering experts were sent to Central Asia to assess its agricultural potential, particularly for large-scale cotton cultivation. Based on their reports it was estimated that between 2.2 and 2.5 million hectares of land were under irrigation although it was obvious from the widespread remains of ancient irrigation systems that this area could be substantially increased; see for example N. Petrov, *Ob irrigatsiia I ee znachenie v Turkestane* (Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 1884).
59 The name by which the Amu Darya was known.
60 Plans to divert the waters from the Oxus to irrigate the Transcaspian region were not fully realised until the 1950s with the construction of the Kara Kum Canal which today irrigates c. 1 million hectares on land in Turkmenistan. T. Hannan and S.L. O'Hara. *Managing Turkmenistan's Kara Kum Canal: Problems and Prospects, Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, 39 (1998), pp. 225–35.
61 C. Marvin, *The Region of the Eternal Fire: An Account of a Journey to the Petroleum Region of the Caspian in 1883* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1884), pp. 324–5.
62 Curzon's notebooks from this visit can be found in the Curzon papers housed in the OIOC of the British Library. The collection contains a significant amount of material relating to Central Asia including newspaper clippings, secret reports and translation of books from the Russian. MSSEUR F111/28, MSS EUR F11/20, MSS EUR F112/609.
63 M. Hauner, *What is Asia to Us? Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 41
64 A handwritten copy of this lecture can be found in Curzon's papers housed in the BL London. MSS Eur F111/20.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 434.
68 J.N. Westward, *A History of Russian Railways* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), pp. 59–129.
69 *The Times*, 4 April, 1879, p.11; G.N. Curzon 'The Transcaspian Railway', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, II (1889), pp. 273–95.
70 Until the mid-1880s there was no tariff system on Russian railways, and because of the existence of government guarantees of capital which meant that investors were ensured a return on their investment even if the railways were unprofitable, tariffs were set at as low a rate as possible. The implications of this were immense and not only distorted local and regional trade, but exposed the government to significant financial risk. In an effort to address these issues the

Russian government took it upon itself to set tariffs and to achieve the aims of developing and colonising far-flung areas of the massive empire. Westward, *Russian Railways*, pp. 59–129.

71 Ibid.

72 *The Times*, 4 April, 1879, p.11; G. N. Curzon, 'The Transcaspian Railway', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, II (1889), pp. 273–95.

73 G.N. Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo Russian Question* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1889), p. 1.

74 The lecture was read at the RGS on 11 March 1889 and was the first time that Curzon had spoken in public and according to Sir Richard Temple, MP 'never had a lecture been more effectively delivered or better illustrated'. G.N. Curzon, 'The Transcaspian Railway', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, II (1889), pp. 273–95.

75 He further commented that the 'prodigious oil fields of Baku' (ibid., p. 280), meant that the railway and its infrastructure can be fuelled at a cheap cost.

76 Ibid., p. 292.

77 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 434.

78 J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London : Macmillan, 1883), p. 301.

79 B. Blouet, 'The maritime origins of Mackinder's heartland thesis', Paper read at the Rocky Mountain Social Science Annual Conference, Salt Lake City (1972). A revised version of this paper can be found in the RGS archives, *Blouet, B.W. LBR. MSS*.

80 Letter to Sir John Kaye from Sir Bartle Frere, 12 June 1874, RGS/IBG Archives, H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection 20/3; Sir (Lord) John Lawrence, Memorandum on the Central Asian Question 4 November 1874; RGS/IBG Archives, H.C. Rawlinson Special Collection 20/3.

81 G. Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo Russian Question* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1889), pp. 398–9.

82 C. Marvin, *The Region of the Eternal Fire: An Account of a Journey to the Petroleum Region of the Caspian in 1883* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1884), pp. 324–5.

7

TRADING STATES, TERRITORIAL STATES, AND TECHNOLOGY

Mackinder's contribution to the discourse on states and polities

Peter J. Hugill

The importance of Mackinder's early twentieth-century contribution to the debate on states and polities hinges on three modern discourses: on duality (land power versus sea power); on the world-system; and on the changing role of technology. Mackinder's argument that technology seriously altered the geopolitical relations between the dual state types is most important to his analysis in the Pivot paper of 1904. From the development of the maritime trading state in its modern, capitalist form in the late 1400s until the late 1800s territorial and trading states occupied mutually almost exclusive geographical spaces. The rapid acceleration of certain forms of technology in the second half of the 1800s ended that mutual exclusivity, brought the territorial and trading state types into increasing conflict, and persuaded Mackinder to propose a future geopolitical struggle based on a territorial state's rapidly increasing ability to control certain defined geographical spaces. In both his major theoretical works, 'The Geographical Pivot of History' (1904)[1] and, in more developed form, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919),[2] Mackinder utilised duality, world-systems and technology to arrive at his model of geopolitical struggle. The model has been generally oversimplified in the literature as suggesting that land power was about to replace sea power and that whatever state ruled the area of Eurasia variously described by Mackinder as the Pivot or the Heartland would come to rule the world. He certainly claimed that the era of dominance of the world by the maritime states, which he called the Columbian epoch, seemed over.[3] My goal here is to recover the sophistication of Mackinder's argument, to embed it in the rapidly changing technology of the first two decades of the twentieth century, and to suggest what lessons it may have for geopolitics in the first part of the twenty-first century.

Duality

In the early 1970s American historian Edward Whiting Fox became well known for his explanation of the duality of French politics.[4] Fox's thesis was that there

have been, historically, two distinct polities within the French state: one, given to warmaking and statemaking, a territorial polity committed to tribute taking and control of agrarian resources through landward expansion. The other, a maritime polity, was committed to control of global trade routes through maritime expansion. It was urban, tax generating, and commercial. The duality of French politics, Fox argued, could best be understood as an ongoing, never-resolved clash between these polities over control of the apparatus of the French state. The notion that there were territorial polities and trading polities, pursuing different goals, sometimes controlling states, often in geopolitical opposition and, as was the case with France, competing for political control of the same state apparatus, began to enter social science discourse. Fox's ideas spawned a book of essays in his honour, with authors applying Fox's thesis to other states,[5] and informed the work of Charles Tilly on European expansion for the past thousand years.[6] Other authors have referred to Fox in their elaboration of the nature of the trading state[7] and on the complex nature of states embodying both types of polity.[8]

Tilly's particular contribution to the discourse on duality comes in his paper in honour of Fox in Genovese and Hochberg.[9] In that paper Tilly created a simple matrix to indicate how Fox's model described the ways in which different state types have projected their power spatially. Fox's implicit model noted that communications and control were easy over land for relatively short distances, but hard over water. Conversely, commerce was easy over water for very long distances, but hard over land for anything but the shortest. Fox's model, of course, drew heavily on the understanding of historical geographers that in 'pre-industrial situations, extensive overland shipment of anything as bulky as grain has proved … prohibitively expensive'.[10] Tilly notes that

> At a European scale, water-transport and land-transport economies did contrast sharply until the nineteenth century. Water transport and intensive commercialization did reinforce each other. Landlocked cities – Madrid and Berlin are the most salient examples – faced severe practical limitations to their food supplies and grew only by exercising very extensive control over the food supply of their hinterlands.[11]

Tilly's analysis proceeds largely from his argument for European exceptionalism. After 1500 a specific type of state and state system began to emerge in Europe. Agents of these states 'carried on six major activities in varying combinations: 1 Warmaking … 2 Statemaking … 3 Protection … 4 Production … 5 Distribution … 6 Extraction'.[12] Warmaking and statemaking tended to imply the military control of contiguous territories. Production and distribution tended to imply capitalistic control of routes and nodes. 'European statemaking and capitalism constituted two sides of a dialectical process'.[13] This is a more nuanced approach to duality than that of Fox but lacks discussion of the potential for geopolitical conflict between state types, the increasingly crucial role of technology in the way the agents of a given state pursued their preferred strategies, and the need to cheaply

and effectively control fractious regions that could interfere with the flows and nodes crucial to trading states.

Fox's duality thesis was predated by that of Halford Mackinder and is simply a special, albeit important, case of the geopolitical theory advanced by Mackinder in his Pivot paper of 1904. In the paper Mackinder placed particular stress on the inability of maritime states to project naval power into continental interiors. Although ships could move anywhere on the oceans of the world their ability to project power inland was set by the range of their guns, a point Mackinder would make more fully in *Democratic Ideals and Reality.*[14] In the Pivot paper Mackinder suggested that the powerful, land-based states being made possible by the new technologies of the last half of the 1800s – railroads, the telegraph, and bureaucratic governmental systems – would be able, removed from the limited naval reach of the maritime states, to use the huge resources of the continental interiors to build fleets that were even greater than those of such existing maritime powers as Britain, at which point 'the Empire of the world would be in sight'.[15] From the theoretical point of view of duality this was a statement of the relative shift in the balance of geopolitical power between trading and territorial states, a shift in power driven by technological change.

In *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919), Mackinder described a classic case of duality without defining it as such. Imperial Germany was an example of a state torn between the geopolitical objectives of its trading and territorial polities. Mackinder analysed German strategy in World War I as divided between the aims of the Junker class to acquire territory to the east and the aims of the merchant class to acquire trade routes overseas. Germany lost the war because

> Berlin committed a fundamental mistake; she fought on two fronts without fully making up her mind on which front she meant to win … Berlin had not decided between her political objectives – Hamburg and overseas dominion, or Bagdad [sic] and the Heartland – and therefore her strategical aim was uncertain.[16]

Mackinder used *Democratic Ideals and Reality* to restate the arguments of the Pivot paper at length, to refine the theoretical position he had taken in 1904, and to expand on that position in two chapters that occupy 86 of the book's 201 pages, Chapter 3, 'The Seaman's Point of View' and Chapter 4, 'The Landsman's Point of View.' The book is perhaps most famous for his restatement of the ideas advanced in the Pivot paper into the Heartland thesis, epitomised by the jingle where he notes that any territorial state that can control East Europe has the potential, on the basis of geography, to control the Heartland, the world-island, and, ultimately, the world.[17] In Figure 25 Mackinder made plain the geographical limits of the power of a maritime trading state against a territorial state by mapping the 'boundary of the Heartland when Mediterranean sea power enters the Black Sea and when land power advances from the steppes to the Taurus and Dinaric Alps'.[18] This limitation, together with the technological changes of his lifetime, Mackinder saw

as ensuring the continuing rise of territorial states. In Figure 26 he mapped 'the World-Island united, as it soon will be, by railways, and by aeroplane routes'.[19] What he failed to see in 1919 was the possibility that air power could expand the military reach of the trading states into the Heartland. That point is developed in the technology section of this essay, as air power was in the process of restoring the geopolitical balance in favour of the trading polities and states against the territorial.

The world-system

In 1974 Immanuel Wallerstein first used the term 'world-system' to apply to the development of an increasingly global, capitalistic system of production with its origins in the Europe of the late 1400s. An important part of Wallerstein's model lay in his contrasting 'world-empires' such as China or Rome with the more fluid, less hierarchical world-system focused on control of the flows and nodes of the capitalist world-economy. This Wallerstein identified as first clearly emerging in the Europe of the 'long sixteenth century.' Implicit in his model was the origin of that capitalist world-economy in such trading states as Portugal, Holland, and Britain. Equally implicit was that world-empires were quintessentially territorial states.

In his 1989 essay in honour of Fox, Wallerstein clarified this position with regard to Fox's concept of duality, competing state strategies, and France's long-term role in the development of the European state system. Wallerstein notes four attempts to create a world-empire focused on Europe: 1. 'the (putative) Carolingian world-empire', 2. the Hapsburg empire, 3. the empire of Louis XIV, and 4. Napoleon Bonaparte's empire.[20] In the two French attempts the principal struggle was between the trading and territorial states, as France embraced a territorial strategy after her navy was decisively defeated by the British and Dutch at La Hogue (or Barfleur) in 1692 in full view of the French army[21] and as Britain shifted increasingly to a trading state strategy modelled on that of the Dutch. As Wallerstein notes:

> France's decision to orient her strategy to continental Europe had larger consequences. The strategies of the French and British states within the interstate system came to diverge sharply. Given the mixture of interests of those who controlled the state-machinery and those accumulators of capital located in that state, and given the inevitably ambiguous relation between the two groups, two alternate strategies were possible: to move toward changing the capitalist world-economy into a world-empire; or to move toward achieving hegemony in this capitalist world-economy and its interstate system.[22]

We must, of course, add four more attempts by European powers to create world-empires after the French failures in 3 and 4 above. The fifth attempt was a rather unremarked thrust by Russia that focused on India and the declining Ottoman Empire in the mid-1800s, although it did result in several local wars, the most

serious of which was in the Crimea (1854–1856). The sixth attempt at a European-centred world-empire was that of Wilhelmine Germany, the seventh that of the Third Reich, and the eighth that of the USSR. Attempts five through seven to create a European centred world-empire, like the two French attempts, erupted into either European or world-wide wars in which the trading states, especially Britain, but latterly the United States, took the lead in curbing the power of the territorial states. The last attempt sparked a global Cold War in which the nuclear powers avoided direct confrontation but fought extensively through surrogates. The wars of Louis XIV, the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War, World War I and Word War II, and the Cold War can be seen as geopolitical struggles between archetypal states: between territorial states trending towards founding world-empires and trading states trending towards capitalist hegemony within the world-system, wars the trading states have always won. France's shift after two defeats from embracing a policy of world-empire to one of generally co-operating with the hegemonic power in the world-economy is noteworthy, as is the similar German shift after its two defeated attempts. The jury remains out on Russia, but two Russian attempts at world-empire have been defeated and the extent to which Germany and Russia have thus far followed the French model is notable.

As Mackinder observed, 'Germany under the Kaiserdom aimed at a world-empire', although the potential of Russia to do likewise was never far from his mind since the history of attempt five was part of his education.[23] Blouet notes that the Pivot paper was likely a response to the suggestion by H.G. Wells in 1902 that a single world state would soon emerge. As Blouet comments, 'it would be a small step for the geographer to ask, "Where is the likely seat of power of such a state?"'[24] Mackinder, like Wells, was from its founding in 1902 on, a member of the Co-Efficients Dining Club, which met monthly in London to discuss imperial issues. At their meeting of 27 April, 1903, the Co-Efficients were clear that both Russia and Germany posed threats to Britain but they:

> had difficulty deciding whether Germany or Russia was the problem. A few months later Mackinder wrote the Pivot paper and conceptually overcame the choice of Germany or Russia as the major threat by suggesting that in the heart of Eurasia there was a strategic area which, if controlled by one power or alliance, would give that force long-term advantages.[25]

World War I, which, 'let us never forget, began as a German effort to subdue the Slavs who were in revolt against Berlin'[26] was, in Mackinder's reading, a struggle between Germany and Russia for control of the Heartland, with all that implied for the geopolitical balance of power. As he presciently noted:

> Unless you would lay up trouble for the future, you cannot now accept any outcome of the war which does not finally dispose of the issue between German and Slav in East Europe. You must have a balance as between

> German and Slav, and true independence of each. You cannot afford to leave such a condition of affairs in East Europe and the Heartland, as would offer scope for ambition in the future, for you have escaped too narrowly from the recent danger.[27]

The solution he put forward was to create a 'Middle Tier of really independent states between Germany and Russia … supported by the outer nations of the World League … [to] remove the temptation and opening to world-empire,'[28] a solution not really arrived at until the end of the Cold War. Previous to that the ambitions of the territorial states had been curbed by Dutch and British sea power and the classic aims of a trading state.

> The naval warfare which culminated in the battle of Trafalgar had the effect of dividing the stream of the world's history into two separate currents for nearly a century. Britain enveloped Europe with her sea-power, but … she took no serious part in the politics of the European peninsula … In the nineteenth century Britain did what she liked upon the ocean, for the United States were not yet powerful, and Europe was fully occupied with its wars. Shipping and markets were the objective of the nation of shopkeepers under the regime of the Manchester school of political thought.[29]

Although the British trading state 'enveloped the world-promontory' with its sea power, Britain came into conflict with Russia, the aspiring Heartland power of the time, when Russia 'knocked at the landward gates of the Indies' in the first Afghan War of 1839 and again when Russia sought to 'issue from the Heartland into the west' via the straits of Constantinople in 1854. By this time France had embraced the world-economy politics of the trading state and co-operated with Britain in attacking the Russian supported Khedive of Egypt in Syria in 1840 and supporting the Turks against the Russian attack on them on the Danube at the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854.[30]

Yet it was Prussia, not Russia, that would emerge as the principal territorial state of the late 1800s and 1900s, and it was the Prussian attempt to construct, for a sixth time, a European centred world-empire that most concerned Mackinder. For Mackinder the problem arose because two Germanic polities were, after the Napoleonic Wars, combined into one state. For Mackinder this meant the deadly combination of a state straddling the political divide between west and east Europe. 'After Waterloo … Prussia obtained a detached territory in the old Germany of the West, which territory was divided into the two provinces of the Rhineland and Westphalia'.[31] The 'liberal Rhineland', by which Mackinder meant that it was a trading polity, liberal in a Mancunian sense, thus came inevitably into conflict with 'the conservative Brandenburg of Berlin', a classic territorial polity. The fact that this 'struggle was postponed for a time owing to the exhaustion of Europe' should not obscure its centrality.[32]

Wallerstein's description of the different internal and external political alliances pursued by world-empires and world-economies is an eerie echo of Mackinder.

> A move toward a world-empire requires the direct absorption of the foreign elites, first through dynastic links, then through subordination, eventually through conquest. A move toward hegemony in the interstate system requires creation of conditions in which the foreign elites, kept politically and culturally at a distance, find it in their own interest to operate in the interest of the hegemonic power. One is a policy of intense, hot links with passion, sympathy, and hatred. The other is a policy of intricate, impersonal, cool links with mild distaste and interested indifference.[33]
>
> In West Europe there are two principal elements, the Romance and the Teutonic. As far as the two chief nations, Britain and France, are concerned there can be in modern times no question of conquest of one by the other … So far, also, as the Teutonic element along the Rhine is concerned, there was certainly in the past no deep-seated hostility to the French … In East Europe there are also two principal elements, the Teutonic and the Slav, but no equilibrium has been established between them … The key to the whole situation…is the German claim to dominance … Vienna and Berlin … stand already within territory that was Slav in the earlier Middle Ages … East Europe has not consisted, like West Europe, of a group of peoples independent of one another, and – until Alsace was taken by Prussia – without serious frontier questions between them; East Europe has been a great triple organization of German dominance over a mainly Slavonic population.[34]

By 1919 Mackinder could paint an intricate picture of the manoeuvring of an increasingly powerful Prussian dominated German state against a weakening Russia, culminating in the punitive terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk under which 'the German element would have once again ruled in these lands of Courland and Livonia'.[35] The question becomes, how could the Prussian polity have come to dominate Germany and how did a Russia that dominated the Heartland in mid-century decline so precipitately? The answer lies in the technological shifts of the late 1800s and the differential adoption of those new technologies by the Prussian state and its German successor and by Russia.

Technology

The development of more powerful territorial states in the late 1800s was not merely a result of improved transportation and communications, however much those improvements facilitated the change. It was also a result of the greatly enlarged role of the state in everyday affairs, especially as states became major employers. Civilian police forces, compulsory education systems to promote basic

literacy, increasingly sophisticated education systems to promote science-based education at the university level, and the development of social welfare programmes all contributed. These are software technologies that usually enable the implementation of the more commonly studied and understood hardware technologies.[36] It is not accurate to say that Mackinder paid any overt attention to such a reading of technology, but in *Democratic Ideals and Reality* he was aware of the complexity of modern societies and their dependence on software as well as hardware technologies.

> This modern reality of human control over nature, apart from which democratic ideals would be futile, is not wholly due to the advance of scientific knowledge and invention. The greater control which man now wields is conditional … Human riches and comparative security are based to-day on the division and co-ordination of labour, and on the constant repair of the complicated plant which has replaced the simple tools of primitive society. In other words, the output of modern wealth is conditional on the maintenance of our social organisation and capital. Society is a Going Concern and no small part of our well-being may be compared with the intangible 'goodwill' of a business. The owner of a business depends on the habits of his customers no less than on the regular running of the machinery in his factory; both must be kept in repair, and when in repair they have the value of the Going Concern; but should the business stop, they have merely a break-up value …[37]

What Mackinder labelled as 'the habits of customers' were in some measure the software technologies that program societies: the habit of civil order, education in tastes and desires, research into new ways of manipulating the physical world to create hitherto unimagined goods and services. Mackinder identified two sorts of Going Concern, one driven by *laissez-faire* policies, the other by people he described as organisers: 'in the sphere of politics the organiser views men as existing for the state – for the "Leviathan" of the Stuart philosopher Hobbes. But the democratic idealist barely tolerates the state as a necessary evil, for it limits freedom'.[38]

Mackinder's analysis of the evolution of the German state notes the close, indeed pioneering, relationship between the state and the software technologies of social management that would develop as the Nineteenth Century wore on:

> In the very winter of Jena the philosopher Fichte came to lecture in Berlin, while it was still in the occupation of the French … Fichte taught the philosophy of patriotism at a time when the German universities were devoted to the abstract worship of knowledge and art. In the next few years, between 1806 and 1813, was established that close connection between the army, the bureaucracy, and the schools, or, in other words, between the aims of government and the needs of education, which

> constituted the essence and perverse strength of the Prussian system. Universal military service was correlated with universal compulsory schooling, inaugurated in Prussia two generations before the English Education Act of 1870; the University of Berlin, with a brilliant professoriate, was established as a sister to the Great General Staff. Thus knowledge in Prussia was no longer pursued mainly for its own sake, but as a means to an end, and that end was the success of a state which had experienced bitter disaster.[39]

Despite the obvious claims of Prussia to primacy here, it is hard to pin down in which state this development of complex, interrelated hard- and software technological systems really began, since all the core industrialised states played their part. Civilian policing began in Britain, compulsory basic education in Prussia and the northern states of America, science-based university education and social welfare programmes in Prussia again. Each expansion in state function was an innovation rapidly diffused and enthusiastically adopted elsewhere. As Mann has noted, by the late 1800s the percentage of a state's population employed by the state in the core industrialised states, including its military, did not differ greatly, and had risen inexorably from the mid-1800s on.[40] The old liberal, British, mid-nineteenth century trading-state ideal of the state as a 'night watchman' was long gone by 1904.

A major state function to which Mann gives little importance in the arena of employment, and one that was central to the American and German states, but not the British, was in the economic arena. In 1862 America, under the control of a Republican Congress, imposed heavy tariffs on imported goods. Under Bismarck, and after unification, Germany followed suit in 1872. Both American and German tariffs exemplify the rise of polities pursuing territorial agendas to dominance within a state. In America the Republicans, as the Party of Protection, were a cadre party devoted to the interests of a small class of wealthy industrialists whose principal interests were the protection of the huge American domestic market from older established or more innovative, thus cheaper or more efficient, producers. Hamilton had codified this early in the history of the republic as a way of defending infant manufactures, in which he had the support of the Philadelphia school of protectionists.[41] Within America the liberal, trading-state polity would eventually attempt, albeit unsuccessfully and largely for the wrong reasons, to physically break away. The central importance given by American historians to the issue of slavery clouds the fact that the American Civil War was about many other things, one of which was the role of the state in the economy. Clause 8 of the Constitution of the Confederate States of America explicitly forbad the protection of industry, essentially mandating a trading-state economic policy.

The return of America to a trading-state economic policy after the Bretton Woods Conference of 1944 and American hegemonic victory in World War II should not obscure a division of America into two distinct polities that lasted some eighty years. The America political divisions between north and south

somewhat mirrored the trading state – territorial state split, at least until the Democrats were able to rebuild their party from a regional, outcast and cadre party to a national mass-party on the basis of the depression induced need to expand the power of the state in American life. President Nixon's reconstitution of the Republican Party from cadre to mass-party in the 1960s ensured that from that point on a single polity would drive America as a classic, if born again, trading state.

In Germany the roots of the territorial state ran much deeper and persisted much longer. In World War I the aims of the territorial dominated those of the trading polity. Germany had a series of territorial aims in World War I aimed in part at controlling its powerful neighbours to the east and west, in part at gaining resources.[42] Mitteleuropa, a tariff-protected customs union, was intended to bring France into the German sphere economically. To the east the goal was 'to weaken Russia permanently by depriving her of the territory on her western border',[43] a goal seemingly achieved under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918. The push east was part of German irredentism, a policy Mackinder remarked upon when he mapped the three fingers of German expansion into the Slavic lands as well as numerous outliers.[44] German territorial goals in Asia Minor were to be pursued via the completion of the Berlin to Baghdad railway and by 1915 were focused on Mesopotamian oil. A band of colonies across central sub-Saharan Africa, 'Mittelafrika', would supply tropical and sub-tropical resources, especially cotton. Although Fischer terms German war aims as nothing less than *Imperium Germanicum* 'at the beginning and in the middle of 1918 when German self-confidence was at its peak',[45] the territorial aims of the Third Reich were even more grandiose than those of the Wilhelmine Germany that went down to defeat in November of 1918.

The more startling of Hitler's policies were his abandonment of trade in favour of the conquest of vaster territories than those Wilhelm had dreamed of and the creation of technologically driven autarky. To achieve the first, Hitler's geopoliticians proposed pan-regions as temporary 'substitutes for the ideal but at present unattainable autarkic world dominion'.[46] These regions, three or four in number, would have run from pole to pole and comprised a variety of climatic regions to ensure the availability of a wide range of tropical and sub-tropical resources. America would have dominated Pan-America, Germany Eurafrica, Russia Pan-Russia, and Japan East Asia and Australasia. Russia, of course, moved in and out of the model depending on the political climate in Germany.[47] The achievement of the second, technologically driven autarky, presumed that German chemists and technologists could find alternatives to natural resources. This process had begun with the remarkable efflorescence of organic chemistry in the Wilhelmine universities, an efflorescence that had produced synthetic dye-stuffs, opium, and sugar. Under the Nazis German universities and research laboratories began to synthesise cotton substitutes, rubber and oil. German research prowess produced a technologically driven substitute for the traditional world-system that did not require access to the surplus production of large amounts of territory.[48]

Mackinder's focus was also on the role of new hardware technologies. In his landmark article of 1904 he noted:

> Trans-continental railways are now transmuting the conditions of land-power, and nowhere can they have such effect as in the closed heartland of Euro-Asia … The Russian army in Manchuria is as significant evidence of mobile land-power as the British army in South Africa was of sea-power … Is not the pivot region of the world's politics that vast area of Euro-Asia which is inaccessible to ships, but in antiquity lay open to the horse-riding nomads, and is to-day about to be covered with a network of railways?[49]

In *Democratic Ideals and Reality* Mackinder elaborated on this. 'To-day armies have at their disposal not only the Transcontinental Railway but also the motor-car. They have too, the aeroplane, which is of a boomerang nature, a weapon of land-power as against sea-power'.[50] Here Mackinder's imagination let him down. He mapped air routes in Eurasia as simply paralleling railroads and he saw air power as a threat to the trading states, not an opportunity for them to restore their primacy over the territorial states.

The technologies of air and aerospace power

Many of the problems identified by Mackinder in 1904 as likely to cause the decline of the trading states can be resolved by the technologies of air power. A problem is the lack of any coherent set of statements with regard to the utility of air power approximating Mahan's, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History.*[51] Edgerton has argued the case for 'the basic strategy of the English state as one relying on technology as a substitute for manpower, and using the technology to attack enemy civil populations and industry, rather than armies'.[52] This is true as far as it goes, and it certainly describes Britain's historic use of sea power to blockade enemy states, reduce their civilian populations to starvation, and encourage them to sue for peace. For example, Germany was suffering from severe food shortages by late 1918 that contributed to the urban revolts, fleet mutiny, and the general collapse of November.[53] Boyne has attempted to approximate Mahan's statement in *The Influence of Air Power upon History.*[54] One failing of Boyne's work is that he makes no clear distinction between strategic and tactical air power, the former air power for its own sake, the latter subject to the needs of the army, and he says even less about the use of air power to cheaply control fractious regions that are disturbing the interests of trading states. From the point of view of the trading state, all three of these are important, with strategic power usually dominant and the need to ensure the safety of trade routes and flows always in mind. From the point of view of the territorial state only tactical air power is of consequence.

Mackinder's failure came, perhaps, because his vision of air power was set by the first great prophet of air power and his old acquaintance from the Co-Efficients,

H.G. Wells.[55] Yet by 1919 the failure of Wells' gloomy prophecies in his 1908 novel, *The War in the Air*, was obvious, the future of air power was under discussion, and its three principal proponents were marshalling arguments. As Boyne notes, none of the three proponents of air power realised how hard it would be to apply air power and how much would have to be spent to develop the needed technologies. In the five factors laid out by Boyne the political will to use air power has been as important as technology.[56] In fact, Boyne does not go far enough. The failure of any territorial state to successfully use air power beyond the tactical level indicates that the successful use of air power is driven even more by the geopolitical imagination of the state than by its political will. Germany displayed no lack of will but Britain, beleaguered after 1934 by the threat of Hitler's rapidly growing Luftwaffe, had the geopolitical imagination as well as the will to create, despite an initially far inferior base in electronics, the world's first electronics based air defence system.[57] Britain went on from that to develop the first effective radar controlled night fighters, effective electronic defence against the Luftwaffe's electronic attack guidance system, and an effective set of electronic attack guidance systems that would be used by both British and American strategic bombers. The Third Reich simply spent too much of its effort on tactical air power.

At a practical level tactical air power is used to support the army. Short-range dive-bombers, light bombers, and fighter-bombers attacked opposing troops on the ground. No philosopher arose to propound this idea, but it was well developed in practice toward the end of World War I. Germany, in particular, came to embrace tactical air power in the concept of *blitzkrieg*, 'lightning war', using attack airplanes and tanks co-ordinated by wireless to destroy opposing troops. The Soviet and the United States armies embraced tactical air power with success during World War II. Tactical air power is, of course, the logical use of air power for the military in a territorial state. The Luftwaffe and the Red Air Force were, however, entirely tactical air forces, whereas the United States Army Air Corps, embedded within a state moving back in the 1930s to its trading state roots, had both tactical and strategic components.

Of the three great proponents of air power identified by Boyne, the Italian, Guilio Douhet, remained closest to Wells' chilling 1908 vision of a world bombed back into the Dark Ages. Wells argued in 1908 that air war would destroy civil society through the collapse of infrastructure and the credit system, and that famine and plague would follow: life would become 'an affair of pigs and hens and small needs and little economies and children until … all the life of the Scientific Age became … no more than the fading memory of a dream'.[58] Wells' view, like Douhet's and many who followed, was that the bomber would be an irresistible force that would penetrate any defence: British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin expressed this in 1932 as 'the bomber will always get through.' Douhet believed that massive bombing of cities would break civilian will to resist and force governments to sue for peace, an experiment conducted unsuccessfully over Britain by the Germans in World War I and World War II and over Nazi Germany by Britain and, eventually, America in World War II. This lack of success came from

improvements in electronics, notably radar but also better wireless, that favoured the defence, but it also came from better engine and airframe technologies that produced a generation of fast-climbing, heavily armed defensive fighters that were much faster than the bombers they attacked. Bomber crews paid heavy prices over Britain and Germany in World War II for this set of technical changes. Douhet's ideas were finally vindicated over Japan by America in World War II when two nuclear bombs were deployed after a series of massive fire-bombing raids had destroyed most of Japan's other cities in the almost total absence of an effective Japanese fighter defence. As Boyne notes, this was the first time any power had achieved absolute air supremacy, and such absolute air supremacy required the total destruction of fighter defence.[59] The age of strategic air power in the sense that Douhet envisioned it arrived over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The second major proponent of air power was the head of Britain's Royal Air Force after World War I, Major-General Hugh Trenchard. To prevent the re-integration of the air force into the army, a policy to cut government spending, Trenchard argued that the best use of air power would be to police fractious but economically important frontier regions much more cheaply than could the army. After World War I Britain had assumed a major role in Mesopotamia, a region that had become strategically vital to Britain as the major source of oil for its battlefleet.

> 'The rebellion in Mesopotamia in 1920 … cost [the British army] 2,000 casualties and about £100,000,000 to subdue … Churchill … took the bold step of giving the responsibility for the protection of Transjordan and Mesopotamia from external incursions, and for the maintenance of law and order internally, to the Royal Air Force' to save 'men, materials, and money'.[60]

The main use of Trenchard's air force was thus to police Iraq. 'Air policing, "control without occupation", was the military concomitant of political rule [in Mesopotamia] through a collaborative Sunni elite'.[61]

Trenchard did not focus only on 'control without occupation', although it dominated the Royal Air Force in his era. He spent his limited funds on bases and training, and on the two-seat fighters and short-range bombers that made 'control without occupation' work. He almost totally ignored defensive fighters. For reasons that are unclear the experiment in the air control of Iraq, though successful, was not repeated elsewhere in the Empire. Trenchard retired in 1929, the world collapsed into the Great Depression, and in the 1930s Britain's strategic interests had re-focused to Europe with the rise of Hitler. Although Trenchard's vision was not strategic in the sense of the other two proponents, it was directly in line with the aims of a trading state: exerting weak control over a considerable distance to protect the routes and flows central to commercial interests. Modern precision-guided munitions have allowed even more development of the technique of 'control without occupation'. Although army generals continue to maintain, accurately, that air forces cannot occupy territory, the geopolitical aims of a trading state do not always

require occupation to control a territory in a way acceptable to a trading state. Trading states use 'control without occupation' to command transfer points, routes, and flows. This task is now easily and cheaply performed by air power.

The third great pioneering proponent of air power was American Brigadier-General William Mitchell. Like his mentor, Trenchard, Mitchell stressed the vastly reduced cost of air compared to conventional power: he once told a congressional committee that '1,000 bombardment airplanes can be built and operated for about the price of one battleship'.[62] Although he did not ignore the need for tactical air power, Mitchell's obsession was with accurate bombing of strategic targets rather than Douhetian-style terror bombing of cities. Mitchell advocated the creation of an independent American air force to match that of Britain. After his court-martial in 1925 and his resignation from the air service in 1926 Mitchell lost power, but his influence lived on through officers he served with during his career, dangerously so in one regard. Mitchell was a firm believer in the notion that massed formations of bombers with heavy defensive armament would be able to fight their way through to a target and out again with acceptable losses, a variant of 'the bomber will always get through' argument. The appalling losses suffered by the 'self-defending' bombers that Mitchell's acolytes in the United States Army Air Force sent over Nazi Germany in 1943 demonstrated the flaws in his technical understanding. Mitchell's belief in the possibility of precision bombing has, of course, been vindicated by the development of precision guided weapons which allow surgical strikes by individual weapons, whether cruise missiles or free-falling bombs, with an accuracy of a metre or so. An opposing state's leaders and command and control centres can be surgically removed if they can be accurately located.

It was no accident that trading states embraced air power, both the strategic version and 'control without occupation'. Such power was the logical successor to sea power in its ability to project power considerable distances and to defend critical nodes and routes. But whereas sea power was limited to controlling sea routes and coastal bases by the distance naval guns could range inland, strategic air power has displayed no such limits. Although the range of aircraft relative to the load they can carry is a function of technology, that technology developed fast.

Despite some halting German attempts during World War I the development of strategic bombers fell to the trading states. In many ways modern strategic bombers are like the old battleships. They are expensive to develop and procure and require sophisticated technologies, but they can remain in service a very long time. The British built the world's first genuine strategic bomber, the Handley Page V/1500, with the range to bomb Berlin from bases in Britain, putting it in service in November 1918, just as World War I ended.[63] In April 1941, well before Pearl Harbor, the United States Army Air Corps, 'spurred by Nazi Germany's spectacular campaigns at the outset of World War II' and fearing that 'the loss of Britain would leave the United States without European allies and with no bases outside the Western Hemisphere,' issued a request for proposals (RFP) for an intercontinental bomber able to bomb Germany from American soil. The RFP

matured for a bomber with 10,000 miles range carrying a 10,000 pound bomb load.[64] The resulting Convair B-36 was late in coming because both Germany and Japan were within range of bombers based in Britain or on the islands off Japan's coast.

By the end of World War II it was clear that the rapidly developing technologies of jet engines and swept wings were fast changing the technological basis for air power. The United States Air Force allowed Boeing considerable design latitude to build one of the world's greatest bombers, the 8-jet B-52, as fast as any jet fighter of its period, with a range the same as or better than the B-36, and still in front-line service 50 years later. In 1962 a B-52H shattered all previous distance records by flying 12,532.28 miles from Japan to Spain without refuelling,[65] demonstrating that it could reach anywhere in Eurasia from anywhere else. As air power matured into aerospace power[66] range became planetary but defence against the crewed bomber improved markedly. The lesson of World War II seemed to be that bombers had to fly so fast and high that no fighter could reach them. The B-52 had successfully done this for many years but 31 B-52s would be lost in the Vietnam War between 1965 and 1973, 18 to ground defences, six of them to surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) in 1972 over Hanoi.[67] SAMs restored the supremacy of the defence. Intercontinental ballistic missiles ushered in a period dominated by missiles for offence as well as defence.

The increasing success of SAMs caused the cancellation in 1969 of the fastest, highest flying intercontinental bomber ever built, the North American XB-70, and seemed to signal that the future of air war had fallen into the hands of nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles and the disciples of Douhet. Despite the deployment of nuclear weapons in such bombers as the B-52 the only use of crewed bombers in the Cold War was non-nuclear, in surgical strikes and 'control without occupation'. In 1970 the development of a new generation of crewed bombers began in America. These were stealth aircraft designed to be very difficult to 'see' with radar and other sensors and thus to defend against. Although data on the Northrop B-2 stealth bomber rolled out in 1988 are still scanty they clearly suggest 'its ability to inflict more damage at greater range with non-nuclear weapons than any other weapon'.[68] Operational deployment in America's recent wars suggests the same.

Other than the classic see-saw deployment of superior offence and superior defence, one other problem has always plagued strategic bombing: locating and hitting the target. Although American air power advocates, such as Mitchell, both dreamed of precision attacks and pursued the technology to achieve them in the form of the Norden bombsight, real precision had to await aerospace power because it depends on the global positioning system (GPS) using geosynchronous satellites to locate targets on earth's surface to within a metre or so. The Norden bombsight was the single most expensive American government military project before the Manhattan project that produced nuclear weapons and it was a terrible failure. Although it operated well from a plane flying straight and level in clear skies, such behaviour was near-suicidal over a well-defended target, and most targets,

especially those in Germany and Japan in World War II, were obscured by the smoke of industrial processes or by cloud cover.[69] Although the Germans, British and Americans radically improved ground- or aircraft-based electronic means of identifying targets in World War II, the best of these technologies was accurate only to 50 metres and could be used by only one plane every 15 minutes or so. The vast majority of German, British and American bombs were dropped on city-sized targets for essentially Douhetian aims. Nuclear weapons followed Douhetian principles even more clearly. They required little precision, and their installation on missiles effectively denied the defence any chance to prevent their hitting a target. The doctrine of mutually assured destruction that arose in the Cold War clearly favoured the trading states since it was an essentially cheap technology that ensured that a territorial state could not use its superior ability to project power overland to overwhelm its neighbouring states.

Mitchell's dream of precision bombing became reality with the technological advances of the 1980s: stealth technology for crewed bombers, the development of GPS, and the introduction of very small jet engines to power cruise missiles. In World War II the Germans had launched large numbers of crude cruise missiles at London in 1944, the V-1 powered by a pulse-jet. Defence against it had been reasonably easy.[70] The first successful cruise missile, the Raytheon Tomahawk, was deployed in the Gulf War of 1991 and has been used extensively ever since. It can be targeted accurately on a specific building, even a specific part of a building, up to 1,500 miles from a launch site or mobile launch vehicle. In the past few years the same GPS technology used by cruise missiles has been applied to guide free-falling bombs, large numbers of which can be delivered by conventional or stealth bombers. It seems that the (stealth) bomber, the cruise missile, and the bomb itself are still going to get through.

One hundred years after Mackinder forecast the demise of the maritime, trading states and the end of the Columbian epoch, the goals of airpower's visionaries, Douhet, Mitchell and Trenchard, have all been reached. Air power is, as Trenchard and Mitchell argued, cheap, especially as it requires little exposure of human operators to danger. Further, it makes use via GPS and computers of one of the most significant and well-developed technologies of any modern trading state, electronics and electronic communications. As long as the trading states have no desire to occupy territory, merely to control flows and nodes, the air power developed in the trading states in the late twentieth century and now being deployed has restored the global geopolitical balance of power in favour of the trading states. Just as sea power did at the height of the Columbian epoch, aerospace power today allows weak control at great, now planetary distances.

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8

IRELAND IN *BRITAIN AND THE BRITISH SEAS*

Geoffrey R. Sloan

A hundred years is a long time in strategic history. It is a testament to the integrity of Sir Halford Mackinder's strategic thinking that so much of what he had to say is still seen as having a contemporary relevance. This is despite his ideas having had a phoenix-like existence in the post-1945 period, as far as academic communities in Britain and America are concerned. Professor Colin Gray has succinctly evaluated the rare talent that he brought to bear in terms of geopolitical analysis when he suggests in his chapter in this book that Mackinder 'got the really big things right enough'. The big things as far as Mackinder's strategic writing is concerned are usually perceived as the three versions of the Heartland Theory. However, the aim of this chapter is to focus on an almost forgotten aspect of Mackinder's work, which he also got right enough, the geopolitics of Anglo–Irish relations. This relationship can be described as being close but tortuous. Furthermore, this relationship has a longevity which, is at least as impressive as the Heartland theory. The aim of this chapter to raise a number of important questions concerning the geopolitics of Anglo–Irish relations. First, to what degree does geopolitics, a theory of spatial relations and historical causation, provide a way of evaluating both past and future developments in this relationship? Second, if it is accepted that Mackinder's ideas have this utility in that they can facilitate both description and prescription, what sort of roles are fulfilled? Finally, is there any evidence that the geopolitical ideas of Mackinder concerning Anglo–Irish relations has moulded the perceptions and actions of policy makers both in the past and in the present?

In terms of answering the first question it can be suggested that Mackinder's almost forgotten classic geopolitical work, *Britain and the British Seas*, first published in 1902, provides a means of facilitating both a description of and a prescription about the future parameters of the Anglo–Irish relationship.

To address the second question of analysis it will be argued that *Britain and the British Seas* and some of the subsequent articles that he wrote, plus his contribution to debates in the House of Commons between 1910 and 1922 fulfil three roles. The first is an interpretative one. It suggests a view of Anglo–Irish relations that is shaped by the geographical configuration of the British Isles. Second, the

geopolitics of Anglo–Irish relations can be interpreted as a policy science. This view maintains that policy-makers wish to achieve a particular objective. For that objective to be fulfilled certain geopolitical perspectives, or theories, have to be taken into consideration, as they are part of the most effective available means of realising those objectives under existing political circumstances. In short, geopolitics provides what could be described as a technical prescription for the most appropriate way of fulfilling an objective. Third, geopolitics can be viewed as an appendage of political propaganda. Geopolitical ideas are merely a convenient way to justify political action taken on other grounds. The intended effect is to give coherence to certain political aims. Viewed in this way political objectives are achieved through the manipulation of geographical configurations.

To answer the third question concerning the extent, if any, that Mackinder's geopolitical ideas has moulded the perceptions and actions of policy makers it is important to put forward a number of inter-related propositions. It can be argued that politics is a medium through which geographical configuration and geographical patterns of political history may become relevant, in that geopolitical perceptions can account for much of the interaction between states. Recently it has even led to the creation of a new school of thought in geopolitics known as critical geopolitics:

> critical geopolitics highlights the constructivist element within geopolitics and geopolitical understandings. Geography, as critical geopolitics argues, is not purely an objective physical reality; it is also the product of a range of non-physical influences and perceptions. It is an on-going process, the means by which the state makes sense of its territorial setting.[1]

What this new school omits to acknowledge is that Mackinder had integrated this post-modern perspective into his analytical framework as early as 1919:

> The influence of geographical conditions upon human activities had depended … not merely on the realities as we now know them to be, and to have been, but in even greater degree on what men imagined in regard to them … Each century has had its own geographical perspective.[2]

Before conducting an examination of Mackinder's writings on Anglo–Irish relations it is important to outline briefly the core elements of any geopolitical analysis. First, an essential part of geopolitical analysis is an examination of the component parts of any geographical region. This is undertaken for the purpose of reaching a clearer understanding of the whole. The specific geographical areas can thus be seen as being the building bricks. Second, it is the patterns and structures that they make in combination which are the principle interests of geopolitical investigations. In other words geopolitics is the connecting bridge between geography and international relations, a combination of conditioning influence and the changing meaning of geographical conditions.

The initial point that can be made about Mackinder's geopolitical analysis of Anglo–Irish relations is that he facilitates an understanding of Ireland's geopolitical importance in both a British and a European context, and to what extent, if any, it was affected by changes in transport and weapons technology. Mackinder first addresses the geopolitical relevance of Ireland in his book, *Britain and the British Seas*. One of the objectives of the book is to put the historical development of the British Isles in a European context and to sketch out a theory of spatial relationships and historical causation which suggest the political relevance of the geographical configuration of the British Isles. Furthermore, Mackinder draws attention to the view that Britain's political predominance is a question not just of having power in the sense of armed forces, reserves of manpower and industrial capacity, but also of the geographical structure of the field within which that power is exercised. Ireland is a part of the structure of the field that Mackinder examines.

His departure point for this geographical examination of the British Isles as a whole is the south-east of England:

> the most significant feature of British geography was not the limitless ocean, but the approach of the south eastern corner of the islands to within sight of the continent. Kent was the window by which England looked into the great world, and the foreground of that world, visible from Dover Castle, had no ordinary character.[3]

The key feature that Mackinder identified opposite Kent was the existence of a 'linguistic frontier'. This is the frontier between the Romance and Teutonic peoples.[4] The geographical proximity of this frontier has, according to Mackinder, clear implications for Britain:

> To the Teutons – 'Easterlings' and Norsemen – England owes her Civil institutions and her language; to the people's of the west and south, her Christianity and her scholarship. Two distinct streams of ethical and artistic influence converged upon the island from the Rhine delta and from the estuary of the Seine.[5]

Mackinder argues that there are two geopolitical qualities that Britain possessed that were complementary, rather than antagonistic: insularity and universality. The strategic and political implications of this geopolitical reality were two-fold. Britain was strategically impregnable when properly defended, but also open to stimulus from the rest of the world. Thus Britain could advance with the rest of Europe, yet avoid the tyranny that has often emerged from Europe.

Furthermore, it was argued that in the modern world the unity of the ocean is a fact of great political importance, as it underpins the dominant value of sea power. One of the key points in Mackinder's thesis was that Britain was part of Europe yet not in Europe. Thus it had been able through sea power and a lack of land frontiers to defend and expand its economic and political power overseas. These two pivotal points were summarised by Mackinder in the following way:

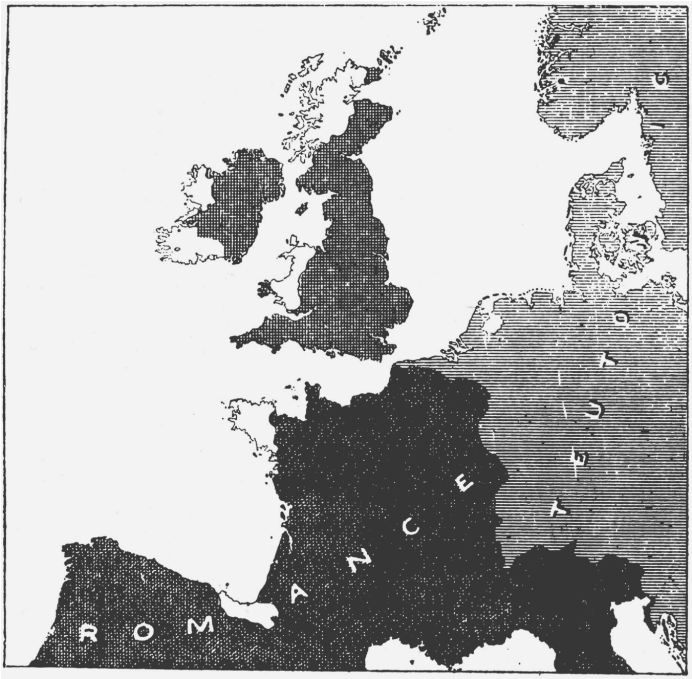

Figure 8.1 The linguistic frontier between the Teutonic and Romance peoples

Source: Mackinder 1902, by permission of Oxford University Press.

> great consequences lie in the simple statements that Britain is an island group, set in the ocean, but off the shore of the great continent; that the opposing shores are indented; and that the domain of the two historic roles come down to the sea precisely at the narrowest strait between the mainland and the island.[6]

In terms of analysis Mackinder articulates a geopolitical perspective to show how Anglo–Irish relations has been shaped by the geographical configuration of the British Isles. He also attempted to discern the extent to which the physical geography provides a strategic context for the exercise of military power. Mackinder's grasp of the relationship is both perceptive and illuminating. The first feature to which attention is drawn is the opposition between the south-eastern and the north-western parts of the British Isles, or as Mackinder describes it, the 'inner and outer faces of the land'. The physical geography of these two forces are outlined succinctly:

> Beyond, on the oceanic side, between the Scilly Isles and the Orkneys, is a great curve of jagged coastline, broken into promontories and islands. More than five thousand out of five thousand five hundred islets said to be contained in the British archipelago are set, along its north-western

> border. The contrast suggests that presented by the islandless, merely enlarged Atlantic coast of Patagonia and the Fjorded Pacific coast guarded by innumerable islands.[7]

The second feature which is underlined are two sea channels on the oceanic side of the British Isles. They are the North Channel and the St George's Channel. They separate Ireland from the British Isles and reduce the main island to a long comparatively narrow strip, which has produced two nations – the Scottish and the English.

The third feature that Mackinder outlines in the area of sea to the south and west of the British Isles.

> Brittany, Cornwall, the south of Ireland, the southern peninsula of Wales, even the Northern and smaller Welsh peninsula form a group of promontories thrust oceanward – westward and southward – along somewhat convergent lines. Between them the ocean penetrates on the one hand through the English Channel into the narrow seas, on the other hand, in the case of Ireland, through the St George's channel into the Irish Sea … the Bristol Channel branches from St George's Channel dividing Wales from Cornwall, or as it used to be called, West Wales. The ocean-ways from all the world, except north-eastern Europe, converge from west and south upon the sea-area off the mouths of the channels. Here therefore, to the south of Ireland and to the west of Cornwall and Brittany is the marine antechamber of Britain.[8]

The final element in Mackinder's geopolitical analysis is what he describes as the Inland Sea of Britain. He is referring to the Irish Sea, but he interprets this sea not as a natural barrier of separation, but rather as a channel of communication:

> The seas which divide Ireland from Great Britain are truly inland waters. They penetrate through the mountainous oceanic border of Britain to the plains of the interior, and in certain parts present long stretches of flat shore, as in Lancashire and to the north of Dublin. The Irish Sea is a British Mediterranean and land girt quadrilateral wholly British,[9] whose four sides are England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. It is not un-important to note that the second entry from the ocean to the Irish Sea, the North or St Patrick's Channel which completes the insulation of Ireland, is not merely British on both sides, but also remote from all foreign shores. It is set midway along the 'back of Britain', a private entry as it were to Liverpool and Glasgow.[10]

Of the four elements which Mackinder outlines, three are concerned with the configuration of seas, channels and oceans, and one with land geography. Ireland is an integral part of this geopolitical perspective. It constitutes part of the oceanic

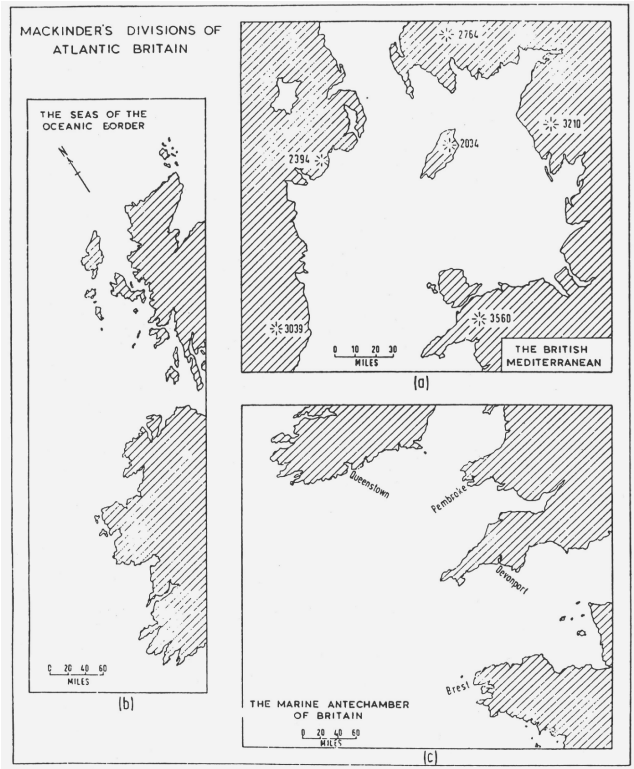

Figure 8.2 Mackinder's divisions of Atlantic Britain

Source: E.G. Bowen 'Britain and the British seas', in D. Moore (ed.) *The Irish Sea Province in History and Archaeology*, 1970, by permission of the Cambrian Archaeological Association, Cardiff.

border of Britain which stretches from Cape Clear on the west coast of Ireland to the Orkney Islands in Scotland. This oceanic border is configured for the most part by an archipelago of islands, and alternating with peninsulas. Having identified the key geopolitical features Mackinder then attempted to apply a degree of both cultural and strategic analysis, and therefore provide a link between the spatial relations and historical causation. The first aspect he draws attention to is the extent to which certain characteristics are a consequence of geographic configuration:

> Provinces which are insular or peninsular, breed on obstinate provincialism unknown in the merely historical or administrative division of a great plain; and this rooted provincialism, rather than finished cosmopolitanism, is a source of the varied initiatives without which liberty would lose half its significance.[11]

The second factor relates to the strategic dimension of Anglo–Irish relations, and the degree to which the defence of the British Isles was and is predicated on the ability to command the sea:

> The defence of Britain resolves itself into three problems: (1) the retention of the command of the sea, or rather, of the power of taking that command should occasion demand it; (2) the defence of Great Britain should the command of the sea be temporarily lost; and (3) the separate defence of Ireland in the same contingency, for under such a condition the prompt and certain reinforcement of the army in Ireland would not be practicable.[12]

He then argues that the limited radius of action of modern fleets due to the need to replenish fuel supplies meant that the regions of Britain most threatened are those: 'About the continental angle of Britain and the Channel entries.'[13]

Mackinder also alludes to what could be described as the strategic paradox of Ireland's geopolitical relationship to the rest of the British Isles; both isolation yet facilitating defence in depth:

> It must be observed that the isolation of Ireland, although weakening the United Kingdom by an additional problem of defence, allows of an alternative approach from the Western Ocean to Liverpool and Glasgow, in a quarter remote from Brest and Corunna. The great traffic passing from the south-west up the English, the Bristol and the St George's Channels might be diverted to the North Channel, should circumstances make that course desirable.[14]

This prescriptive evaluation of Mackinder demonstrated what could be called geopolitical prescience, in that 38 years after this comment was made in July 1940, the Admiralty was forced to abandon the Marine Antechamber of Britain as a route for Atlantic convoys. Furthermore, a decision was made to mine the St George's Channel in late July and early August 1940. However it did not prevent a crisis occurring in terms of merchant shipping losses in the Battle of the Atlantic. Between July and October 1940 a total of 282 ships were sunk off the north-west approaches of Ireland. This represented a total of 1,489,795 tons of merchant shipping. The U-boat commanders called it 'happy time'. In September 1940 alone, 295,335 tons of shipping was sunk by U-boats operating off the Irish coast. In fact German U-boats had been operating inside Irish territorial waters from October 1939.[15]

What Mackinder's writing in 1902 showed, and what subsequent events confirmed was his grasp of what could be described as the geography of warfare at sea. This has a focus on accessibility and mobility. Relative movement dominates the strategy of the sea, speed of advance and radius of action are the most important factors in naval strategy. The post-1945 addition has been the impact of radar on the range of target identification and the range of fire. Speed of advance is dependent

on propulsion systems. Significantly radius of action is a synthesis of transport technology and geopolitics. The latter is related directly to the geographical locations of bases.

Mackinder recognised in 1902 this point very clearly with respect to the sea areas west of Ireland, and the geographical configuration of the west coast, and the strategic implications if access were to be denied to Britain:

> The exercise ground of the Navy, on the other hand, is often to the west of Ireland, clear of the steam lines of commerce, in waters where seamanship may be learned in oceanic weather. Here a remarkable series of havens gives abundant shelter – Loughs Foyle and Swilly, Blacksod and Clew Bay, Dingle Bay, Kenmare River, and Bantry Bay (Berehaven). If Britain were for a time to lose command of the seas, these harbours on the remote edge of the land, away from all the great centres of population, might become nests of hostile cruisers.[16]

The prescience of Mackinder's comments are remarkable when compared to a statement made by Admiral Godt, Chief of Staff, U-boat Operational Control, between 1941 and 1945 when he was captured and interviewed by British naval intelligence after the war. He stated that:

> The waters west of Eire were at any rate at times, 'dead ground' where British anti-U-boat forces both surface and air were considerably weaker than elsewhere, so that U-boats found conditions where the crews could rest and where repairs could be carried out. Even Eire's territorial waters … were successfully used on several occasions by damaged U-boats for repairs and return passage. Eire offered a definite base for the German Intelligence service … towards the end of the war considerable information about British anti-U-boat minefields reached Germany by this means.[17]

This situation had come about because Britain in 1938 gave up, just before the start of the Second World War, the three reserved ports of Spike Island, Berehaven, and Lough Swilly. Mackinder certainly saw the first two of these ports as having an obvious bearing on the defence of the sea lines of communications where they entered the St George's Channel.

The third aspect that Mackinder examines is the link between history, culture and strategy. This trinity of relationships still lies at the heart of Anglo–Irish relations today.

Mackinder took an impressively naunced approach by outlining the patterns of geographical relationships that were replicated in both Britain and Ireland and the symmetry of geographical configuration that applied to these two parts of the British Isles. The first geographic symmetry that he commented on was the one between Scotland and Ireland:

> For the Scottish and Irish plains, although continuous, are set within isolated mountain groups, between which the larger areas of lowland are connected by lowland straits. Only in one part of Ireland is there a stretch of plain without sight of the mountains. For fifty miles to the north of Dublin the coasts of the Irish Sea are low.[18]

A similar symmetry was discernible, Mackinder argued, in the upland areas:

> The more considerable of the divided hill-groups are in Donegal – opposite to the Scottish Highlands, in Down – in prolongation of the Southern Scottish Uplands, in Wicklow – over against the Welsh Upland, in Tippeary – by the Lower Shannon, in the Atlantic border of Connaught, and in Munster – where the parallel ridges project seaward, forming the characteristic fringe of promontories to the north-west of Cape Clear.[19]

The third and final symmetry that Mackinder alluded to is the juxtoposition of two entry and exit points from the large plains of both Ireland and England:

> It is important, however, to note that the shore of Ireland north of Dublin – the only considerable stretch of low lying coast in that island – lies precisely opposite to the Midland Gate of England.[20]

What is instructive about the three geographical symmetries that are referred to, is the way in which he then goes on to illustrate a critical point of geopolitical analysis. That social movements, and in this he included changes in transport and weapons technology, have at all times played around essentially the same physical features. He reaches back into history to illuminate a key aspect of this synthesis:

> the Goidels or Scots entered Ireland through the Dublin coastal gate, and first settled in the middle land of the plain, known later as Meath. Thence they extended into Ulster, a branch of them occupying the little territory of Dalriad in the north of County Antrim. It was the Dalriad Scots who crossed to Argyll, and passing thence, by Glenmore and over Drumallon, gradually conquered and celticised the Picts of the eastern Highlands.[21]

This geopolitical weave and weft is illustrated by the fact that the medieval Latin name for Irishmen was Scotus! More importantly *Britain and the British Seas* can be described as a classic theory of spatial relations and historical causation which provides a way of evaluating both past and future developments in the Anglo–Irish relationship. In short the geopolitics of the British Isles is a product of a continuous history, both geographical and human.

What Mackinder could not have predicted were three important developments. The first was the ideological assault that Irish republicanism would launch on these geographical patterns of political history he had so eloquently outlined. It

centred around geographical determinism. Specifically, core belief that because Ireland is *ipso facto* an island, it follows that Ireland is pre-ordained by nature to be politically united into one entity separated from Britain. Second, the extent to which Mackinder's geopolitical ideas would surface in contributions he made in the House of Commons while he was an MP between 1910 and 1922. The third dimension is the degree to which a number of British governments since 1968 can be said to have embraced what can be described as a variant of this geographical determinism.

An example of Mackinder's contribution to the political discussion surrounding Ireland can be seen in May 1912 when the Second Reading of the Government of Ireland Act was being debated. He attacked the policy of the then-Liberal government with respect to the proposed measures of Home Rule.

> We say there are only two courses open to you in regard to Ireland on the one hand, we say you can maintain the Union and pass legislation to increase the ever-increasing prosperity going on in Ireland, and, on the other, we say the only other course open to you is to hand Ireland over the the Irish … We hold that view. On the other side of the House, you hold the view there is a third possible course, and that is to give with one hand and to hold back with the other. We say it passes the ingenuity of man to devise any system which will enable you successfully to carry out your policy of granting a certain amount of freedom, but not complete freedom.[22]

During another debate in March 1913 on the Parliament Act, Mackinder attempts to point out to the then prime minister Asquith that extent to which geography and history had made notions of a single majority and a single minority political fallacy:

> He [Asquith] said that there was a great majority in that nation that required Home Rule. He totally omitted the fact repeated so often in the House that one is almost ashamed to repeat it again, that this is not a case of a majority and a minority in a single community. It is the expression of the opinion of two communities, each of which in its own region in Ireland has the majority.[23]

It was the political implications of this reality of two distinct cultural regions that led Mackinder to point out the unworkability of any proposed scheme of Home Rule.

The prescience of his comments were born out by the experience of Lloyd George who in a series of letters exchanged between himself and Eamon de Valera, between 10 August and 12 September 1921, attempted with little success to impress upon de Valera the importance, from Britain's point of view that Dominion Home Rule had to be qualified by the maintenance of the geopolitical unity of the British

Isles due to the paradox of Ireland's geographical location: both isolation from Europe and proximity to Great Britain.

> The geographical propinquity of Ireland to the British Isles is a fundamental fact. The history of the two islands for many centuries, however it is read, is sufficient proof that their destinies are indissoluably linked … when you, as the chosen representative of Irish national ideas, come to speak with me, I made one condition only, of which our proposals plainly stated the effect – that Ireland should recognise the force of geographical and historical facts. It is those facts which govern the problem of British and Irish relations. If they did not exist, there would be no problem to discuss.[24]

De Valera for his part never acknowledged the validity of this penetrating geopolitical analysis. When he received, in a letter dated 26 August, another cogent analysis of the relationship between Ireland and Great Britain based on historical experience and geographic configuration from Lloyd George, his reply was evasive: 'I shall refrain, therefore, from commenting on the fallacious historical references in your last communication'[25]. It can be suggested that Lloyd George was attempting to give an interpretive perspective of the geopolitics of Anglo–Irish relations. It was one where geography had been a conditioning influence in the past, and would continue to be a conditioning influence in the future. The problem was that de Valera refused to acknowledge these geopolitical realities. Instead what emerges from the Irish side is a geographical determinism that becomes a convenient way to justify political terrorism and to facilitate succession from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Mackinder's analysis of the strategic realities influencing the British Isles was not a part of thinking in Eire (Ireland) even in World War II with Europe under the threat of Nazi hegemony.

Notes

1 B. Loo, 'Geography and Strategic Stability', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 26, I (March, 2003), p. 159.
2 H.J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (London: Constable, 1919), p. 38.
3 Mackinder, *Britain and The British Seas* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920), p. 10.
4 Mackinder uses the word race in his original text, reflecting the usage of his generation.
5 Mackinder, *Britain and the British Seas*, p. 10.
6 Ibid., p. 12.
7 Ibid., p. 14.
8 Ibid., p. 19–20.
9 It is important to stress that Mackinder wrote this comment in 1902.
10 Mackinder, *Britain and the British Seas*, pp. 20–1.
11 Ibid., p. 15.
12 Ibid., p. 310.
13 Ibid., p. 311.
14 Ibid., p. 311.

15 Letter from Captain Greig RN to Rear-Admiral J.H. Godfrey RN, 9 November 1939, DO 130/7.
16 Mackinder, *Britain and The British Seas*, p. 20–1.
17 Interview with Admiral Godt, Flensberg, 22 August 1945, Adm 116/5631.
18 Mackinder, *Britain and the British Seas*, p. 20–1.
19 Ibid., p. 61.
20 Ibid., p. 61.
21 Ibid., p. 189.
22 Hansard, 2 May 1912, Col 2131.
23 Hansard, 12 March 1913, Col 280.
24 Lloyd George to de Valera, 13 August 1921, F/14/6/15, Lloyd George Papers, House of Lords Library.
25 De Valera to Lloyd George, 30 August 1921, F/14/6/18, Lloyd George Papers, House of Lords Library.

9

HALFORD MACKINDER AND THE GEOGRAPHICAL PIVOT OF HISTORY

A brief assessment

Klaus Dodds

Halford Mackinder's paper 'The geographical pivot of history' was arguably one of the most influential to be presented at the Royal Geographical Society. The significance of the paper lies in the argumentative content and the timing of the presentation. This brief assessment from the critical geopolitics perspective seeks to situate the paper in the context of its intellectual production.

At the start of the twentieth century, Mackinder was an established figure within British academic geography.[1] He had taught at Oxford University and would later become the Director of the London School of Economics and then a Member of Parliament. As an advocate of a 'new geography' based on academic synthesis rather than simply exploration and discovery, he believed (alongside other geographical contemporaries such as Vaughan Cornish) that British citizenry needed to possess a modified global outlook.[2] Presented in January 1904, the Pivot paper coincided with a world that was in the process of changing in dramatic fashion.

First, the British Empire, which had been expanding by 100,000 square miles a year earlier in the nineteenth century, was being challenged by the geo-economic power of the United States and Germany. In terms of world manufacturing output, the US had expanded its share from 14 per cent in 1880 to 32 per cent by 1913. Even by 1904, therefore, it was clear that the UK's privileged position was not assured.[3]

Second, the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century witnessed an extraordinary increase in travel, contact and mobility as the invention of the telegraph and the radio presented new opportunities for movement and contact. As Mackinder claimed in his Pivot paper, one consequence of this enhanced capacity for movement was that the world's colonial powers and the world's first 'post-colonial state' (the United States) were increasingly having to operate in a world where there were few spaces (barring Antarctica) available for further acts of colonization.[4] Four years after its publication, Britain made its first

claim to the Antarctic Peninsula and surrounding islands via letters patent.[5] By the end of the First World War, a revised claim consolidated Britain's imperial foothold in the far south.

Third, the airplane and the railway had created new opportunities for travel, and the strategic deployment of armed forces besides contributing to further rounds of time-space compression.

Fourth, the domestic life of countries such as the UK was being altered by further democratization and the gradual empowerment of women within the domestic and public spheres. The enfranchisement of new sections of the populace inevitably raised issues relating to legitimacy and social order. Like many imperialists, Mackinder believed that these new citizens had to be educated about the prevailing realities of the British Empire and Britain's place within that global enterprise.[6]

While the Pivot paper has been justifiably examined as global in outlook, it is also necessary to acknowledge that its preoccupations were shaped by a culture of 'geopolitical panic' within Europe. In the late nineteenth century, 'invasion scare' novels, such as General Cesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) and Erskine Childers' *Riddle of the Sands* (1903) sold well in Britain often predicated on the assumption that perfidious Germany was planning to launch a surprise assault on an exposed England.

> Look first at this map of Germany … and you can see the whole thing … Here's this huge empire stretching half over central Europe – an empire growing like wildfire, I believe, in people, and wealth, and everything. They have licked the French and the Austrians and are the greatest military power in Europe … but what I am concerned with is their sea power … They've got no colonies to speak of, and *must* have them, like us. They can't get them or keep them, and they can't protect their huge commerce without naval strength. The command of the sea is *the* thing nowadays …[7]

Economic protectionism combined with imperial clashes within and beyond Europe meant that the fragile relationships between Britain, France, Germany and Russia were not just being played out in seemingly remote Africa, Latin America and/or Asia. Other geographers such as Vaughan Cornish were deeply concerned that Britain was poorly equipped and intellectually ill-prepared for a clash that might have global ramifications.[8] Vaughan Cornish and Halford Mackinder were clearly troubled as they constructed their global views in the early part of the twentieth century.

Mackinder's world-view was firmly rooted in the overlapping white, male, imperial and academic spaces of metropolitan London. Re-reading his paper, it appears to the contemporary reader extraordinarily Euro-centric in its depictions and preoccupations. The Pivot paper typifies a new strand of geopolitical thinking that, by the second half of the twentieth century, would simply be part of the taken-

for-granted. When Mackinder presented his paper to the Royal Geographical Society, he spoke at a time when many of the 'blank spaces' on European maps and representations of the globe were being filled. As such his evocation of the 'stage of the whole world'[9] is significant in that it points to a confidence in Mackinder that allowed him to talk authoritatively of a global setting. Empowered by the burgeoning stores of geographical knowledge, Mackinder's world-view was informed by a belief that it was possible to enjoy a synoptic view previously reserved for the Gods. This is how Mackinder describes his view in the Pivot paper:

> … in the present decade we are for the first time in a position to attempt, with some degree of completeness, a correlation between the larger geographical and the larger historical generalizations. For the first time we can perceive something of the real proportion of features and events on the stage of the whole world, and may seek a formula which shall express certain aspects, at any rate, of geographical causation in universal history. If we are fortunate, that formula should have a practical value as setting into perspective some of the competing forces in current international politics.[10]

Despite his dislike of the term Geopolitics, the new word signified a capacity to view international politics against a deeply inter-connected global stage.

What is striking for later generations of critical geopolitical writers is the manner in which these claims to a detached vision of the world are articulated. For those of us, informed by various incarnations of post-colonial theory and or post-modern approaches to knowledge construction, Mackinder's world-view seems arrogant and unreflective. We find little to no explicit recognition that his view of the world might be contestable or even shaped by a series of prevailing intellectual, social, economic and gendered contexts. The production of knowledge about international politics is never neutral or value-free. Critical geopolitical writers consider it imperative to explore how Mackinder's world-view, expressed in the Pivot paper, was constructed in the first place. The relationship between power and knowledge would be at the heart of such a critical analysis. We might pose a counter-factual question: how would this paper have been different if it had been written and presented in a colonial city such as Kingston, Lagos, or Singapore?

The Pivot paper is deeply memorable in part because of its visual representation of 'The Natural Seats of Power' on a world map using a Mercator projection. The Natural Seats of Power map divided the world into:

> Pivot area: wholly continental
> Outer Crescent: wholly oceanic
> Inner or Marginal Crescent: partly continental, partly oceanic.

North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula are simply labelled 'Desert'. That part of the Arctic Ocean guarding the northern flank of the Pivot is an 'icy sea'. Antarctica

was not represented on the map as, in 1904, little was known of its shape and surface area and on a Mercator projection it becomes a huge, unending landmass that would have detracted from the visual impact that Mackinder was trying to achieve. As an interpretation of the world, the Mercator projection inevitably privileges the Euro-Asian continental landmass and dramatically reduces the visual significance of Africa, Latin America and India. Unsurprisingly, therefore, labels such as 'Land of the Outer or Insular Crescent' seem, at first sight, justifiable precisely because the map is centred on Europe. Maps and map projections are never neutral or value-free mechanisms for representing the world. Moreover, the politics of labelling vast tracts of the earth into a few basic categories contributes to a narrowed understanding of the earth's diverse geographies. 'The Natural Seats of Power' map sacrificed nuance in favour of a simplified big picture, which became a hallmark of subsequent orthodox geopolitical theorizing.

Taken together, Mackinder's global vision and accompanying maps inform a grand narrative centred on the exploits of imperial powers such as Britain, Russia and the United States. Mackinder believed that the Pivot (equivalent to the former Soviet Union but also encompassing parts of contemporary central Asian states such as Pakistan and east Asian states such as China) was absolutely critical in determining the future of world politics on account of its access to resources and strategic location. Traditional sea-based powers such as Britain and the United States would have to respond to this new challenge if they wished to retain geopolitical and geo-economic hegemony. Geography allied with technological advancement was held to possess an extraordinary capacity to shape historical epochs. In the post-Columbian era (named after the European explorer Christopher Columbus), technological developments such as the railways, and later the aeroplane which Mackinder did not evaluate in terms of strategic impact, provided new opportunities for continental powers such as Germany and Russia to alter the balance of power with sea powers such as Britain. Mackinder's advice to British policy makers was simple: if you wish to secure Britain's imperial power then ensure that no form of strategic and or military alliance between Russia and Germany enters into force.[11]

Despite Mackinder's limited influence on contemporary British foreign policy, his Pivot paper provided a model for subsequent orthodox geopolitical theorizing. Its appeal is not hard to decipher – Mackinder combined a grand narrative, visually appealing maps, a god's eye view of the world and a simple policy recommendation. It reflected the hopes, fears and anxieties of an era dominated by a concern that European hegemony and the position of the British empire was under threat. Critical geopolitical writers remain sceptical as to the possibility of ever constructing a world-view untouched by the conceits and prejudices of authors. While many critical geopolitical writers are interested in contemporary discourses surrounding globalization, they seek to explore the contested geographies of inequalities and difference rather than seek to formulate policy advice for states and their elites. For this group of scholars, Mackinder's legacy is awkward in that it is held to have shaped a particular approach to geopolitics that remains problematic.[12] Indeed

much of the contemporary geopolitical theorising to be found in the United States in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks on the United States seems similar in nature to Mackinder's Pivot paper – in this case simple geographical labels such as 'Axis of Evil' have replaced the 'Inner Crescent'.

Notes

1 B.W. Blouet, *Halford Mackinder: A Biography* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 1987); G. Ó. Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 1996), especially Chapters 1 and 3.
2 K. Dodds, 'Eugenics, fantasies of empire and inverted whiggism: an essay on the political geography of Vaughan Cornish', *Political Geography*, 13 (1994), pp. 85–99.
3 H.J. Mackinder, *Britain and the British Seas* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1902) pp. 341–51; N. Ferguson, *Colossus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2004)
4 H.J. Mackinder, 'The Geographical Pivot of History,' *Geographical Journal*, 23 (1904), pp. 421–42.
5 K. Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002).
6 Dodds, Fantasies of empire; G.Ó. Tuathail, S. Dalby and P. Routledge (eds), *The Geopolitics Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998).
7 E. Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service Recently Achieved* (New York: David McKay Co., 1977), p. 65. Originally published 1903. T. Richards, *The Imperial Archive* (London: Verso, 193), pp. 123–44.
8 D. Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane* (London: Macmillan, 1991).
9 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 421.
10 Mackinder, 'Pivot', pp. 421–2. This passage was reproduced by Mackinder in 'The Round World and the Winning of the Peace', *Foreign Affairs*, 21, 4 (1943), p. 596.
11 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 436.
12 M. Heffernan, 'Fin de siécle, fin de monde? On the origins of European geopolitics 1890–1920', in K. Dodds and D. Atkinson (eds), *Geopolitical Traditions* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 27–51. For a discussion of Mackinder's Contemporary Salience see P. Kennedy, 'The pivot of history', *The Guardian*, 19 June 2004, p. 23.

10

THE GEOGRAPHICAL PIVOT OF OUTER SPACE

Everett Carl Dolman

From the vantage of a stable orbit in outer space, the Earth is seen in rich fullness, an aspect that was only available conceptually before the first images taken from manned space missions. In these stills, the Earth is a solitary, delicate sphere, hovering vulnerably in the empty vastness of space. This grandest of all human outlooks affirms one of the many great achievements of Sir Halford Mackinder and the modern geopolitical theorists: recognition that the study of politics and history could not be nationally isolationist in its perspective. For them, the whole of the Earth was a conceptual unity, and upon it they envisioned a single political arena. Each national unit was an integral part of the whole. The actions of one state could influence many, if not all other states, and the original state was in turn influenced by the actions and reactions of those others. This holistic approach was revolutionary, and pushed the politico–geographic paradigm to lofty new heights.

Classical geopolitical theory thus amplified the realist centrality of state and regional rivalries. It was a study focused on scarcity and conflict. Its operational propositions were that geography favored certain groups and technologies, and that through knowledge of these time-dependant geographic and geopolitical characteristics states could hope to gain military and economic advantages over others. Hence, the prescription for all rational statesmen was that the most favorable territory should be seized or controlled. At the very least, states could hope to prevent another from gaining advantage by blocking access to those locations. The logic was so compelling that states wishing to remain sovereign *must* do so, and at a minimum prevent other states from gaining control of vital strategic spatial locations, pathways, and choke points. The first function of the geopolitical strategist, then, was to identify these key topographies and resource concentrations.

With the perspective gleaned from outer space, topographic features effectively disappear. The Earth's surface appears smoother than a billiard ball. Only the continents juxtaposed amid vast oceans hold significant meaning. With this appreciation of scale, the important geopolitical features of Earth – or for that matter of any celestial body – are chiefly its mass (for determinations of gravitational pull), orbit, and relation to other space phenomena. This pushes the

geopolitical paradigm along a logical path, and to date it may be the *purest* form of geopolitical analysis, converging entirely on elements of space and scale.

Nothing has changed but the view, and this, too, was one of Mackinder's insights. Geography, he averred, has been a constant in humanity's relatively brief civilized experience. With limited and localized exceptions, the face of the Earth remained indifferent to the cyclical rise and fall of states and empires. But the perceived and real importance of topographical features like mountain ranges, coastlines, and forests, and the uneven distribution of natural resources did change over time, as technology and science rolled back spatial ignorance and brought all peoples closer through advances in transportation. And this perception must periodically be assessed, for: 'Each century has its own geographical perspective.'[1] The interplay of an expanding human condition overlaid on the static physical environment did more than explain the macro-dynamics of history; it reshaped the past and defined the present. In so doing, it influenced the future. '[A]s we live through each new epoch, we see all the past and all the present with new eyes and from new standpoints.'[2] So, just past the cusp of the twenty-first century, Sir Halford Mackinder would no doubt find it appropriate that we re-examine the geographical pivot.

A century later

Mackinder's vantage in 1904 was the midpoint of the modern age. Coal-fired steam power was at its apex, dominant on sea and rail, and not quite poised to give way to the age of internal combustion. But Mackinder did not limit his interplay of history and geography with politics to extant technologies. For him the principal issue was not the rise of one side or the other to some emerging or particular form of power. The overriding concern was power writ large, and the overarching imperative for the political leadership was to balance that power, whatever its form.

In the post-Columbian age, Mackinder argued, the world had conceptually shrunk until it could be analyzed as a single closed political system. The political actions of society in one state or region, 'instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos, [would] be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe.'[3] Today, well into the space and information age, the world is more complexly interconnected than ever, but the distribution of natural resources about the Earth is a more equivocal factor in the calculation of state power. This is because the political system has been expanded and reopened. The vast potential wealth of space, the advantages of maneuverability and firepower for offensive military operations that this new high ground offers, and near-instantaneous transmission of information reshape the grand vision of Mackinder and provide heuristic avenues for investigation.

The worldview concepts Mackinder employed continue to resonate when cast in the newly opened space system. Harshly criticized for his reliance on a distorted Mercator map projection, which erroneously aggrandized the physical size of his

heart-land (or 'geographical pivot'), when seen from a vantage in outer space the strategic centrality of the Eurasian core with its concentric bands of competing inner and outer crescents is invigorated (see Figure 10.1).[4] With the limb of the Earth visible, projections of air and space movement are prompted, and a need for an expanded view is readily apparent (as at Figure 10.2).

The space view is so stimulating, so effortlessly incorporated into the lineage of geopolitical thought, it is curious that Mackinder's theories have not already been transferred into strategic space theory. Some of the discrepancy can be accounted for by the astonishing paucity of strategic space theory of any kind.[5] Much of the rest is perhaps due to misunderstandings springing from the early debates over the validity of Mackinder's work. For example, it is a common criticism that the advent of air power destroyed Mackinder's position.[6] This argument is weak, as particular technology that conferred power-dominance was never seminal to Mackinder's theory of the historic progression of oscillating power. Nonetheless, Mackinder did profess that the age of rail power was imminent, and that its arrival would shift the balance to land power states that would maximize the advantage of interior lines.[7] This highly touted misstep did tend to distract the reader. To be sure, rail power was vital to the mobilization plans of the great powers in World War I, but within two decades of the Pivot article, visionaries were advocating the coming of the age of air, not rail power.[8]

Mackinder was hardly ignorant of airplanes, and certainly not the potential they offered for longer-range bombardment, observation, and transportation in war. But like most of his contemporaries, he did not anticipate the massive increases of range, precision, and lift capability that air power would achieve. Mackinder believed that air power would become a valuable component of military organization, of course, but by no means a foundation for national power equal to land or sea. Geoffrey Parker writes that as late as 1919 Mackinder viewed aircraft as just another augmentation of land power, 'an "amphibious cavalry" capable of interfering with maritime communications.'[9] An excellent martial tool, perhaps, but not one capable of independent and decisive campaigns.

Italy's Giulio Douhet, America's William Mitchell, and England's Hugh Trenchard saw little merit in Mackinder's land- and sea-centric model.[10] They foresaw that air power would be the *ultima ratio* of modern war, and any combination of strictly land or sea power would inevitably give way to it. Even these seemingly contrary views were deeply based in geographic reality, and can be seen in retrospect as the logical heirs of the Mackinderian paradigm.[11] Advantages in mobility and spatial efficiency are the keys to the air power dominant models, no less so for space power ones, regardless of their source. In Mackinder's words:

> The revolution commenced by the great mariners of the Columbian generation endowed Christendom with the widest possible mobility of power, *short of a winged mobility*. The one and continuous ocean enveloping the divided and insular lands is, of course, the geographical

Figure 10.1 Mackinder's world view

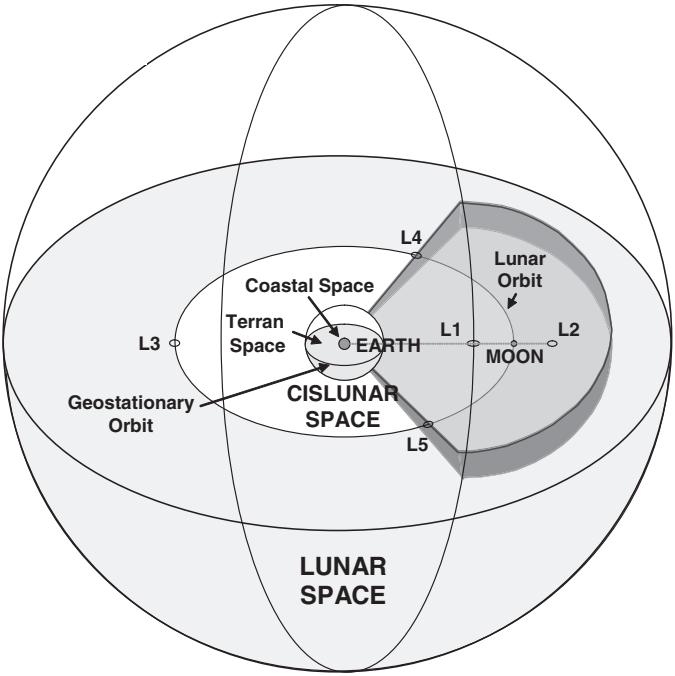

Figure 10.2 Earth–moon space

> condition of ultimate unity in the command of the sea, and of the whole theory of modern naval strategy as propounded by such writers as Captain Mahan and Mr. Spencer Wilkinson.[12]

Mackinder did not anticipate air power's imminent arrival. He believed it had a long way to go before it was mature enough to compete head on with sea or land power, and this was a reasonable attitude at the time. Even today, air power's capacity is hotly debated.[13] Can air power alone win a war? Can a state base strategic defense on air power primarily? Mackinder should be forgiven for shortcomings on this issue.

A lack of technological foreshadowing is but one of the many criticisms of Mackinder's thesis, and yet the enduring value of his work is evident in the continuing debate. Nicholas Spykman faulted Mackinder on two primary points; 1) he over-emphasized the potential power of the Heartland, and 2) the dynamic between land power and maritime power was oversimplified.[14] Spykman's remedy was to propose minor alterations of Mackinder's dictums and terminology, and to echo the calls for a focus on the post-World War II peace and American leadership (with Britain) that Mackinder advocated in 1919 and 1943.[15] Robert Strausz-Hupe complained that Mahan's and Mackinder's theories were deterministic, and preferred to downplay geography's role to the status of strategic influence – again what appears to be a misconstruction of Mackinder's basic point.[16] Saul Cohen has modified the basic model to account for 'gateway states … uniquely suited to further world peace … in geopolitical regionality.'[17] Gateway states are 'located largely along the borders of the world's geostrategic realms and its geopolitical regions,' including the Baltic States in East Europe; Tibet, Kashmir, and North Burma in South Asia; and Quebec in North America.[18]

Nipping at the margins does little to strike down a theory and much to fine-tune it. The more we delve into the strategic essence of Mackinder's work, the more useful a model for space it becomes. Perhaps the lack of practical application itself provides a clue as to why Mackinder has not been appropriated into space theory. It is not because the methods and means Mackinder and other geopolitical theorists employed are not applicable to outer space (they are), but because the main concern of Mackinder and the classical geopoliticians 'had been the description and interpretation of the *state* as a spatial phenomenon', and this was altogether too much to bear for the idealistic space professionals.[19] The basic assumptions of the harshly realist geopoliticians were simply, summarily rejected. The state with its monopoly on violence had no place in the mental construct of humanity's triumphal entrance into space. It was to be left behind, and with it, all of the excesses it entailed. War would be a social relic, for only the most advanced peoples could set sail on this new ocean. The best and brightest would go forth; one people united in their scientific quest.

Possibly, because of space flight's direct association with ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programs in its developmental stage, a chord of universal terror was struck as anxiety took hold over rationality. It quickly became politically

incorrect to suggest anything but cooperation and peaceful exploitation when speaking of outer space, for fear of the stark alternatives. Cooperation, in reference to space development, became unassailable. Without a doubt, it was thought by space policymakers and enthusiasts, cooperation in space would become the salvation of humanity, rescuing it from precipitous descent into oblivion. As soon as all people came to realize that humankind's destiny was a shared one, then peace and cooperation would be inexorable, and inevitable.

But the state has not withered away. The rhetoric of harmony and cooperation that attends popular versions of humanity's entry into outer space simply belies the historical record. Despite an ongoing effort to make the cosmos an international commons (the so-called 'province of mankind'), expansion into near-Earth space came not as the accommodating effort of many nations joined as one, but rather as an integral component of an overall strategy applied by wary super-states attempting to ensure their political survival.[20] The technique these combatants chose was classically Mackinderian. If the most vital territory cannot be seized and controlled, then it is imperative to ensure that no other can do so. This construct is an extension of primarily nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories of global geopolitics into the vast context of the human conquest of outer space. In a more general interpretation, it is the application of the prominent and refined realist vision of state competition into outer space policy.

For Cold War diplomats steeped in the tradition of balance-of-power politics and political intrigue, the practical value of declaring space a human commons was clear. The riches of space and the full advantages of space control were unknown. Since neither superpower could be sure of the coming capabilities of the other, it seemed prudent to do everything possible to hinder the dominance of the other – specifically, to declare space the unilateral province of all peoples while working feverishly to acquire the technological means and legal justifications to gain dominant control of it. The rhetoric of space cooperation became a cover to buy time. For non-superpower states harboring future ambitions in space, it was equally important to keep the playing field open until they were ready and able to seize an advantageous position of their own.

Transferring Mackinder's pivot to outer space

Following Mackinder, this is part of 'an attempt, with some degree of completeness, [of] a correlation between the larger geographical and the larger historical generalizations … [to] seek a formula which shall express certain aspects, at any rate, of geographical causation in universal history. If we are fortunate, that formula should have a practical value.'[21] By taking the basic tenets of Mackinder's theory and applying them to physical and political landscape of outer space, two complementary arguments are plain: 1) the notion of a spatial/geographic basis for state power remains viable in the space and information age, and 2) space power theory is a consistent and logical successor of sea, land, and air power theory. The relationship between geography and power has long been evident, but

it is not until the modern era with the work of Mackinder and Mahan that a pure form of *geostrategy* – manipulation of the knowledge of this relationship to enhance the power of a specific state – emerges.[22]

From the historical record, it is possible to draw out distinctions for a model of space geopolitics, *astropolitics*, defined as the study of the interplay between outer space terrain and technology and its effect on the development of political and military policy and strategy. Applying that understanding to the identification of critical terrestrial and outer space locations, the control of which can provide military and political dominance of outer space, or at a minimum can insure against the same dominance by a potential opponent state, is termed *astrostrategy*.

The technology of astropolitical concern is that which enables spaceflight – rockets, satellites, and the like. In this conception, spaceflight parallels Mackinder's views on the rise of rail power. As a newly viable transportation and information technology, space asset deployment has the potential to alter the political and military relationships of the traditional world and regional powers. Control of a global space network gives the advantages of strategic mobility – quick redeployment of military assets, efficient and continuous monitoring of all fronts, and not insignificantly, a nationalistic sense of unification – from what has traditionally been seen as a classic *exterior* line position.

Mackinder readily acknowledged the historical importance of sea power on the rise and demise of the post-Columbian system, but foresaw the end of naval dominance with the advent of the railroad. This emerging capacity would allow the efficient consolidation of the Eurasian landmass and the emergence of a huge potential state, an impregnable land power, that could not be defeated from the sea. In time, the vast natural resources of the Heartland state would allow it to gain access to the sea and to construct a navy that, for sheer numbers alone, could overwhelm the peripheral sea powers. Inevitably, the world would be a single empire ruled from its natural core. Should a spacefaring state seize and control the critical gateways to the vast potential wealth of solar system, and monopolize the strategic military advantages in doing so, it could build a terrestrial dominance that would surely give rise to a one-world government.

To be sure, Mackinder blanched at accusations of political inevitability: '… I have no wish to stray into materialism. Man and not nature initiates, but nature in large measure controls.'[23] The key historical dynamics for Mackinder had been changes in transportation technology, and the importance of military mobility. When the horse had been domesticated and bred to allow for the unnatural weight of a rider, the primacy of cavalry could be envisioned. Add to this the development of the stirrup, which for the first time provided horse-mounted soldiers the leverage necessary to give a lance or sword thrust the striking power that infantry warriors could achieve on foot, and the medieval dominance of chivalric knights, then the central steppe 'hordes', was assured. Grand improvements in sailing technologies allowed the seafaring states of Europe to encircle the central Heartland, and efficiently patrol its borders by shifting power back and forth as necessary to contain the potential of the mighty interior. With the advantages of the new maritime

technologies, the efficiency and speed of exterior sea movement effectively trumped the cavalry-based advantage of interior lines enjoyed by the steppe raiders. The advent of steam power and its application to both the railroad and waterborne transportation had the counter-intuitive effect of initially accelerating this naval dominant condition, as the first short-range railroads and river steamboats simply fed goods and supplies that were hitherto inaccessible into coastal ports for oceanic commerce.[24] As the railroads grew to transcontinental scope, however, Mackinder saw that the balance of power was shifting back again to land, specifically to the Heartland.

Until the railroad, sea power's advantage was its virtual monopoly on force projection over the world's most efficient trade routes. Railroads, Mackinder reasoned, would fundamentally alter the global trade pattern and allow the land-based powers of Eurasia to regain the dominance they held when cavalry reigned supreme. Mackinder believed the history of civilization was in fact a cyclical tale of alternating dominance by land and sea powers, and that a change to land dominance was currently underway.[25] The Heartland, a natural fortress impervious to deep power projection from the sea and endowed with the resources necessary to build a monolithic military force, eventually would consolidate under a single state that would conquer the world. The Outer Crescent powers were natural allies who's best hope for retarding the development of a Heartland power was through maintaining strict control of the sea and encouraging continuous warfare among the fragmented heartland and inner crescent states. The *first* concern of the Outer Crescent states was preemption of a powerful, consolidated eastern European state, one that could control and dominate the flat, open plain of the steppes, a natural gateway to the vast potential of the Heartland. This region had to be kept fragmented at all cost, for: '*Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland. Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island. Who rules the World Island commands the World*.'[26]

Crucial to Mackinder's strategy was the notion that if a state could not physically control the critical keys to geodetermined power, *then it must deny control of those areas to its adversaries*. To the astrostrategist, the parallel is all too obvious. The resource potential of space is so vast that should any one state gain effective control of it, that state could dictate the political, military, and economic fates of all terrestrial governments. The incentive for territorial occupation and control is thus very high, subordinate only to the requirement that no *competing* state gain effective control of space. Thus, specific territory in space that enhances state power will be contested.

Identifying the geographical constants of outer space: topography

As previously stated, the first function of the geopolitical strategist is to identify key topographies and resource concentrations. What appears at first a featureless void is in fact a rich vista of gravitational mountains and valleys, oceans and

rivers of resources and energy alternately dispersed and concentrated, broadly strewn danger zones of deadly radiation, and precisely placed peculiarities of astrodynamics. Without a rudimentary knowledge of the motion of bodies in space, in essence an understanding of the mechanics of orbits, it is difficult to make sense of the geographic panorama of outer space. Despite the appearance of an open and unbounded cosmos, the movement of spacecraft, and thus the routes they must follow for efficient and profitable exploitation, are severely limited. Hence, they can be mapped.

An orbit is the path of a spacecraft or satellite caught in the grip of gravity. The importance of this concept is simply that spacecraft in stable orbits expend very little fuel. The preferred flight path for all spacecraft (and natural satellites) will therefore be a stable orbit, specifically limited to a precise operational trajectory. With this knowledge, we can begin to see space as a demarcated and bounded domain. The orbit of an Earth satellite, however, is never perfectly circular due to natural forces that cause fluctuations in movement, which are called perturbations. The lower the altitude of a spacecraft, the more significant the friction caused by the atmosphere. The effect is critical for near-Earth space operations as satellites in a circular orbit with a period (one complete revolution) of less than 93 minutes require large amounts of fuel to make orbital corrections necessary to maintain spacing, distance, and velocity. Satellites in circular orbits with an orbital period greater than 101 minutes are essentially unaffected by the atmosphere, and require relatively few attitude adjustments, consequently saving fuel and extending the useful life of the satellite. Orbits below about 160 km altitude (or an orbital period of 87.5 minutes) are theoretically possible, but not practically achievable due to accumulating atmospheric drag.

Perturbations also come from the bulge at the Earth's equator caused by the centrifugal force of its over 1,000-mph rotation, which means the Earth's gravitational pull is not constant. The Earth is flattened slightly at the poles and distended at the equator, a phenomenon that creates small deviations in the flight path of a ballistic missile. Other perturbations, increasingly significant as one moves away from the Earth, are the gravitational fields of the Sun, Moon, and other celestial bodies, radiation collecting in concentric gravitational bands around the Earth, and the effects of solar radiation including solar flares, and the impacts of meteors and debris that strike the satellite at hypervelocity (see Figures 10.3 and 10.4). Because of these, no orbit is perfect and all spacecraft must have some fuel to occasionally make corrections. The useful life of a spacecraft is, therefore, a *function of its fuel capacity and orbital stability*.

We can now see that space is analogous to the 'wide commons' of the sea described by Alfred Thayer Mahan, the American maritime geostrategist who influenced Mackinder. The terrestrial oceans, 'over which men may pass in all directions,' eventually reveal 'some well-worn paths [that emerge for] controlling reasons.'[27] These paths became the international lanes of commerce and critical chokepoints of the open oceans. Outer space, too, appears at first as a wide common over which spacecraft may pass in any direction, and to an extent this is so, but

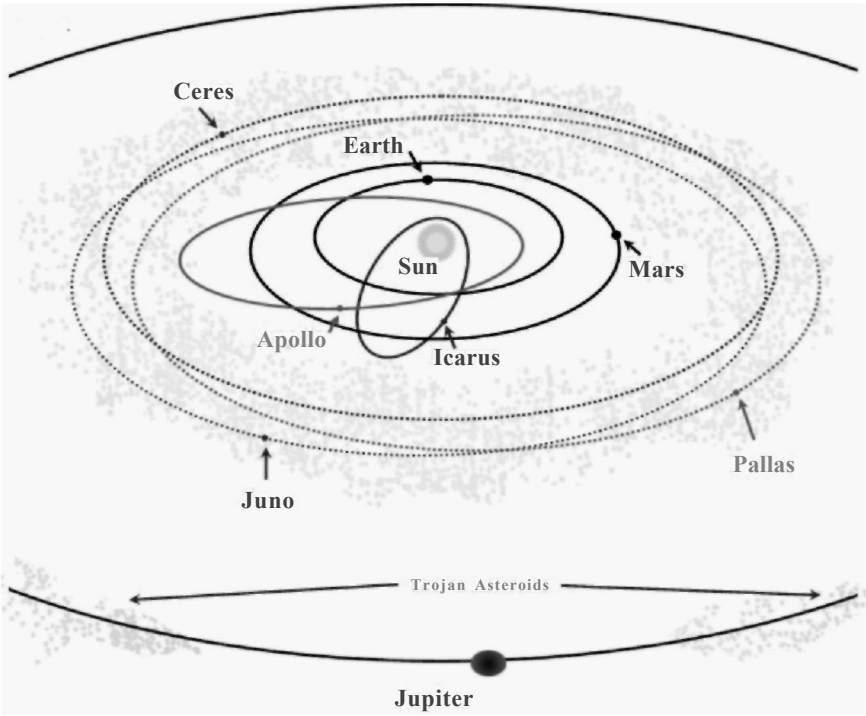

Figure 10.3 Sun–Jovian space showing asteroid belt distribution

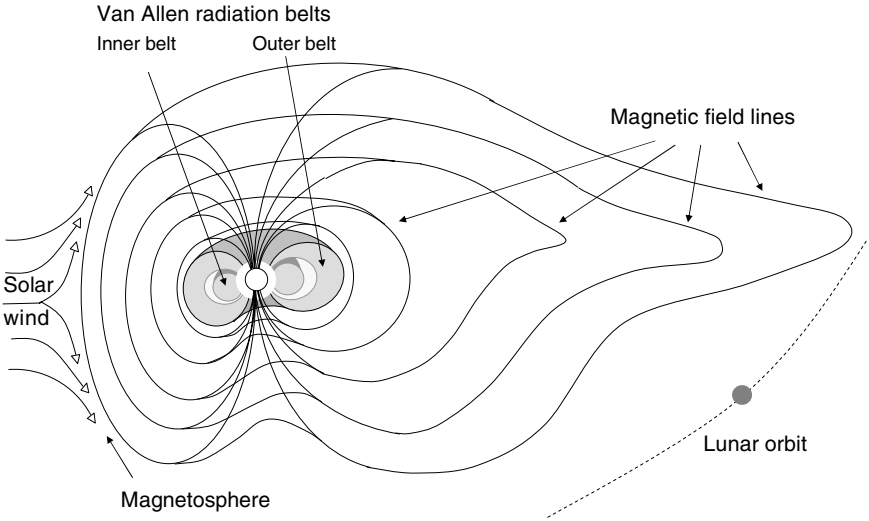

Figure 10.4 Near-Earth space showing radiation and magnetic belts

efficient travel in space requires adherence to specific and economically attractive lanes of orbital movement, specific routes that are easy to project.

In the age of sail, wind and current – their appearance, prevalence, or lack thereof – were the determining factors in trans-oceanic travel. In rail travel, gradient is the determining limitation in transcontinental planning. In space, gravity is the most important factor in both understanding and traversing its topography. Gravity dictates prudent travel and strategic asset placement. The unseen undulations of outer space terrain (the hills and valleys of space) are more properly referred to as gravity wells. Depiction of this terrain is difficult, but a reasonable portrayal is that of a weight sinking into a taughtly stretched sheet of thin rubber: the more massive the body, the deeper the well (Figure 10.5). Travel or practical distance in space is less a function of linear distance than of effort or work expended to get from point A to point B. Traveling 35,000 km from the surface of the Earth, for example, requires 22 times as much effort as traveling a similar distance from the surface of the Moon, as the Earth's gravity well is 22 times deeper.

In space-faring terms, the important measure of work is propulsive effort required to change a velocity vector, or the total velocity required to get from point A to point B. The total velocity effort (also called Δv or Delta V) is the key to understanding the reality of space travel and the efficient movement of goods. In another example of effective distance in space versus linear distance, it is much cheaper in terms of Δv to propel a spacecraft from the Moon to Mars (56 million km at the closest orbital point) than to propel the same spacecraft from the Earth to the Moon (just 385,000 km).

The Δv to go from low Earth orbit (LEO, an orbit just above the atmosphere) to lunar orbit is 4100 m/s, which is only 300 m/s more than to go to geosynchronous orbit (35,800 km). Indeed, most of the effort of space travel near the Earth is spent in getting 100 km or so off the Earth, that is, into LEO. More revealing, to go from low Earth orbit to lunar orbit takes about five days, but requires less than half the

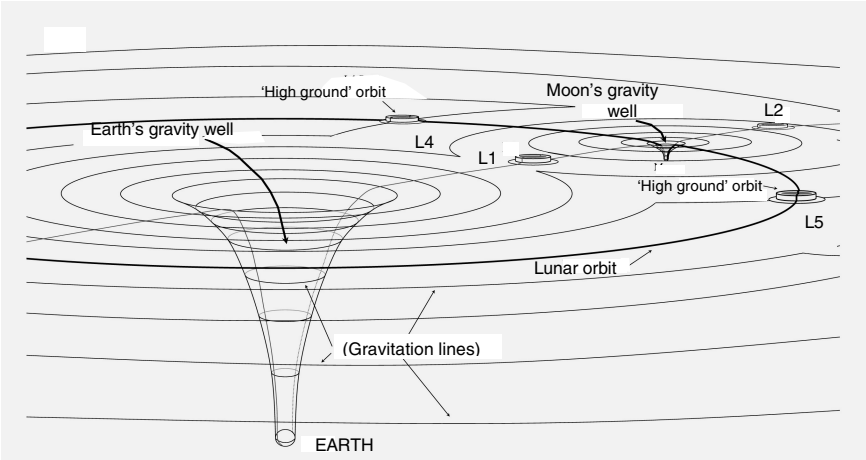

Figure 10.5 Earth–moon (cislunar) space showing gravitational terrain

effort needed to go from the Earth's surface to low orbit. In outer space, it can easily be the case that specific points far apart in distance (and time) are quite close together in terms of the propulsive effort required to move from one to the other.

Since a spacecraft in stable orbit expends no fuel, and is therefore in the most advantageous Δv configuration, the most efficient travel in space can then be envisioned as a transfer from one stable orbit to another. Using this logic, in space we can find specific orbits and transit routes that because of their advantages in fuel efficiency create natural corridors of movement and commerce. Space, like the sea, can potentially be traversed in any direction, but because of gravity wells and the forbidding cost of getting fuel to orbit, over time space faring nations will develop specific pathways of heaviest traffic.

Orbital maneuvers can be performed at any point, but in order to conserve fuel, there are certain points at which thrust ought to be applied. The most efficient way to get from orbit A to orbit B (the proper language of space travel) is the *Hohmann Transfer* (see Figure 10.6). This maneuver is a two-step change in Δv. Engines are first fired to accelerate the spacecraft into a higher elliptical orbit (or decelerate into a lower one). When the target orbit is intersected, the engines fire again to circularize and stabilize the final orbit. I have depicted a Hohmann transfer orbit from medium to geosynchronous orbit, but the same logic is used in all transfers including low-Earth orbit to geostationary, planetary movement, even interception of comets from Earth launch facilities. So called 'fast transfers,' in which the rules of orbital mechanics are ignored and a spacecraft simply expends fuel throughout its flight path, are of course possible, but require such an expenditure of Δv they will be done only if fuel is abundant (functionally without cost) or time is critical. This is the outer space equivalent of 'sailing the long way round,' however, and it can make business unprofitable and military losses unacceptable. Given the vital necessity to conserve fuel and increase the productive lives of spacecraft, *the future*

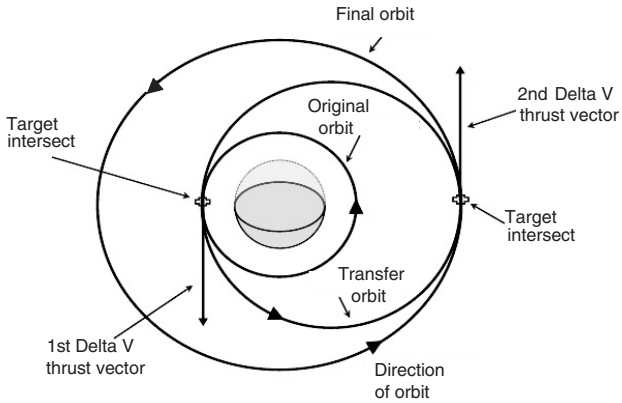

Figure 10.6 Hohmann transfer orbit

lanes of commerce and military lines of communications in space will be the Hohmann transfer orbits between stable spaceports.

Mackinder agreed that a prudent state could avoid garrisoning all the seas in order to dominate them, it would not even have to garrison the whole of the commerce lanes. Only the critical point locations along these lanes need be controlled. A small but highly trained and equipped force carefully deployed to control the bottlenecks or choke points of the major sea-lanes would suffice. The notion fit precisely in Mackinder's vision. Control of these few geographically determined locations would guarantee dominance over military movement and world trade to the overseeing state.

The Hohmann transfer establishes the equivalent of the lane of commerce for space. Domination of space will come through efficient control of specific outer space strategic narrows or choke points along these lanes. The primary and first readily identifiable strategic narrow is low-Earth orbit. This tight band of operational space contains the bulk of humankind's satellites, a majority of which are military platforms or have military utility. This is also the realm of current anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons technology and operations, including the now-dated US F-15 launched satellite interceptor and the massive Russian proximity blast co-orbital ASAT. Within this narrow belt are the current and projected permanently manned space stations, and all space shuttle operations. Only by traveling through it can one access the vastness of the universe.

Control of near-Earth space not only guarantees long-term control of the outer reaches of space, it provides a near-term advantage on the terrestrial battlefield. From early warning and detection of missile and force movements to target planning and battle damage assessment, space-based intelligence gathering assets have already proven themselves legitimate combat force multipliers. With its recent performance in Afghanistan and Iraq, space warfare has emerged from the embryonic stage and is now in infancy. Global positioning satellite (GPS) precision-guided weapons (PGMs), for example, provide an economy of force unprecedented in air warfare. During Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), a single aircraft and one PGM could achieve the same battle damage result as a 1000-plane raid with over 9000 bombs in World War II – destruction of the target – without the associated massive collateral damage or loss of friendly aircraft and crews inevitable in the latter operation.[28] In future wars involving at least one *major* military power, space-support will be the decisive factor as nations rely ever more heavily on the force multiplying effect of 'the new high ground.'

Given the parameters and missions identified above, currently useful terrestrial orbits can be clustered into four generally recognized categories based on altitude and mission utility (see Figure 10.7). The first encompasses *low altitude orbits*, 150 to 800 km above the surface of the Earth. These are particularly useful for Earth reconnaissance (military observation to include photographic, imaging, and radar satellites, and resource management satellites that can take a variety of multispectral images) and manned flight missions. These altitudes allow for 14 to 16 complete orbits per day. Low altitude orbits have the added advantage that

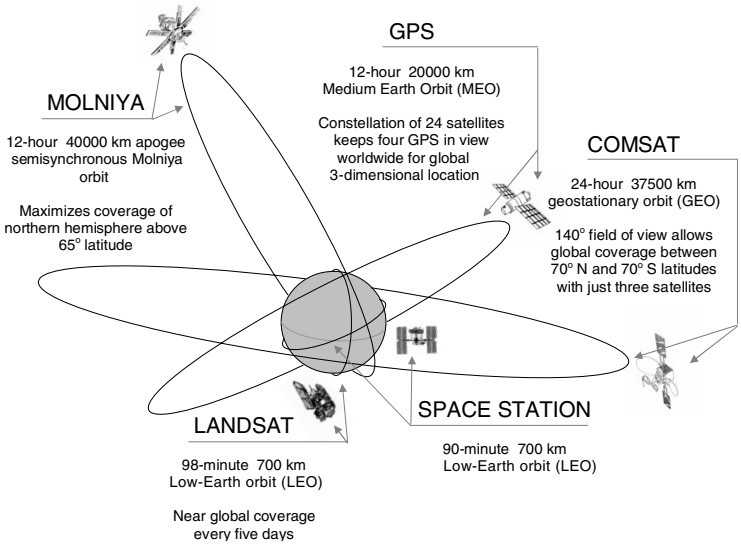

Figure 10.7 Typical near-Earth orbits

satellites can be placed into them with cheaper and less sophisticated two-stage rockets. Orbits with a period in excess of 225 minutes (above 800 km) require at least a third stage boost to achieve final orbit.

Medium altitude orbits, the second category, range from 800 to 35,000 km in altitude and allow for 2 to 14 orbits per day. These are generally circular or low eccentricity orbits that support linked satellite networks. Currently, navigational satellites such as the US GPS that fix terrestrial positions through the triangulation of at least three satellites in view dominate this orbit, though increasingly high-speed global telecommunications networks are envisioned in operation here. The third category, *high altitude orbits*, at least 35,000 km, provide maximum continuous coverage of the Earth with a minimum of satellites in orbit. Satellites at high altitude orbit the Earth no more than once per day. When the orbital period is identical to one full rotation of the Earth, a *geosynchronous* orbit is achieved. A geosynchronous orbit with a 0° inclination (placed directly above the equator) appears fixed in the sky from any point on Earth. This is called a *geostationary* orbit. Just three satellites at geostationary orbit, carefully placed equidistant from each other, can view the entire planet up to approximately 70° north or south latitude (the angle of view above 70° makes a direct line of sight to geostationary satellites unworkable). Since the satellites do not appear to move, fixed antennae can easily and continuously access them. Global communications and weather satellites are typically placed in this orbit.

For those latitudes above 70°, the advantage of long dwell time over target provided by a geostationary orbit is absent. This is simply because the limb or horizon of the Earth is not functionally visible. The angle of direct view is too

oblique. One technique to overcome this deficiency is to use the fourth orbital category, the *highly elliptical orbit*. This orbit is described as highly eccentric with a perigee as low as 250 km and an apogee of up to 700,000 km. Placed in a highly inclined orbit with apogee at 36–40,000 km, the satellite appears to dwell over the upper latitudes for several hours, making this a particularly useful orbit for communications satellites servicing Arctic and Antarctic regions. At the furthest distance of apogee, the satellite appears to be barely moving relative to the surface of the Earth. When networked in the same orbit, one behind the other with equally spaced right ascensions, a minimum of three satellites can continuously access a single high latitude ground station. The Russians have made the greatest use of this semisynchronous 12-hour orbit, and it is now routinely referred to as a *Molniya* type orbit, after the Molniya series communications and weather spacecraft that use it. A highly elliptical orbit with apogee at over 700,000 km can have a period of more than a month, and is especially useful for scientific missions that study comets, asteroids, solar and cosmic radiation, and other space phenomena.

Perhaps the most intriguing point locations useful for strategic or commercial bases in Earth-Moon space are the gravitational anomalies known as Lagrange libration points, named for the eighteenth-century French mathematician who first postulated their existence.[29] Lagrange calculated there were five specific points in space where the gravitational effects of the Earth and Moon would cancel each other out (see Figures 10.8 and 10.9). An object fixed at one of these points (or more accurately stated, in tight orbit around one of these points) would remain permanently stable, with no expenditure of fuel. The enticing property of libration points is that they maintain a fixed relation with respect to the Earth and Moon. In practice, due to perturbations in the space environment including solar flares, orbital drift and wobble, and micrometeorites, only two of the Lagrange points are effectively stable – L4 and L5. The potential military and commercial value of a point in space that is virtually stable is highly speculative, but with immense promise. A stable point in space with no gravity well would be the most useful and efficient launch position imaginable. Such a position could also be an extraordinarily efficient manufacturing and production site, as the purity and quality of commodities created in a zero-gravity vacuum could be near perfect. The occupation and control of these points is of such vital importance that an advocacy group called the L-5 Society was formed to influence national policymakers (since absorbed into the National Space Society, where many of its former members are now officers). In theory, libration points exist wherever two or more gravitational fields interact.

Identifying the geographical constants of outer space: resource concentrations

The ultimate wealth of space is highly speculative, but there seems little doubt that the total of valuable resources just in the inner solar system greatly outweighs any imaginable concentration on the Earth itself. The Moon is a fine example. Although difficult to be sure of the exact content because of the absence of

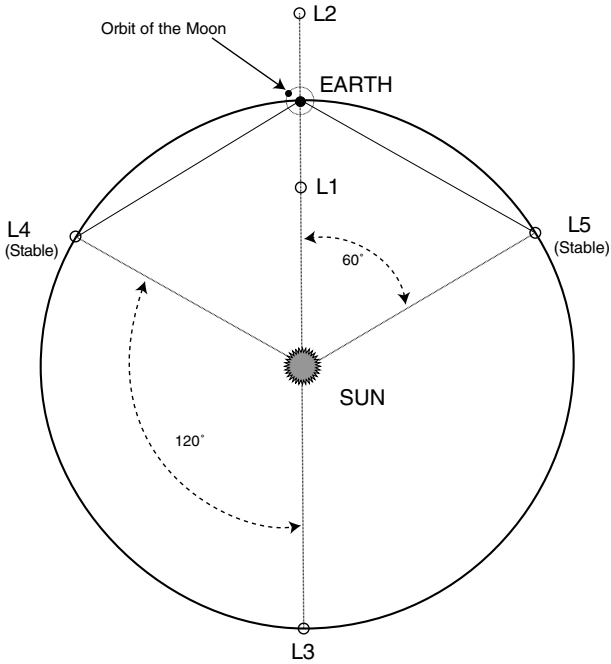

Figure 10.8 Sun–Earth space libration points

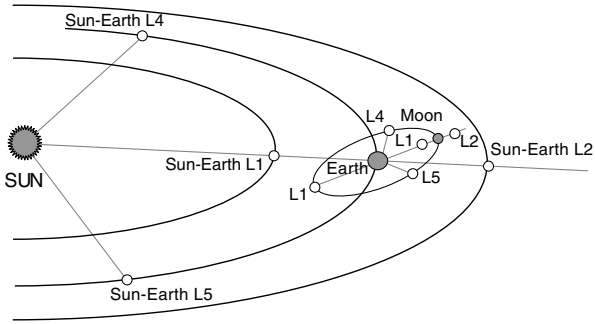

Figure 10.9 Near solar space

hydrologic processes, exploration may reveal concentrations of valuable minerals. Much of the Moon consists of minerals which are abundant on Earth, and thus appears to present limited scope for development through ordinary mineral mining.[30] Still, the Moon is rich in aluminum, titanium, iron, calcium, and silicon. Iron is in virtually pure form, and could be used immediately. Titanium and aluminum are 'found in ores not commonly refined on Earth, [and would require] new methods of extraction.'[31] Silicon is necessary for the construction of

photovoltaic solar cells, a needed source of cheap energy for space operations. Abundant oxygen for colonies and fuel can be extracted from the lunar soil simply by heating it – water from impacting comets is presumed to have collected in the permanently shadowed edges of craters – and this resource can be exploited given current technology. With all this, the most likely exploitation of Moon mining would involve extraction of oxygen and hydrogen for life support and spacecraft fuel; production of glasses, ceramics, and radiation shielding from the lunar regolith; and the mining of helium-3 gas (scarce on Earth but comparatively abundant on the Moon) for use as an ideal fuel in prospective fusion reactors. Low but appreciable gravity and proximity to Earth suggest that the Moon would be useful as a platform for industrial activities using the lunar regolith – unconsolidated debris overlying bedrock – and materials brought from elsewhere in the solar system. Because of its lower gravity, it would also be an excellent staging base for secondary exploration of the solar system.

Lunar regolith and helium-3 appear evenly distributed across the surface of the Moon, but several geographic factors could determine the relative value of lunar territory. These include possible concentrations of valuable minerals, level terrain that would allow for easier mining of regolith or helium-3 in the lunar maria (dark lowlands), and positions on the 'dark side' of the Moon, hidden from terrestrial monitoring but also shielded from the electronic noise of Earth, and thus superior for some kinds of scientific research.

Geographic differences between Mars and the Moon point to greater differences in the relative value of different territory. Hydrologic processes on Mars, absent on the Moon, will have created concentrations of valuable minerals that might provide the basis for a conventional mining industry.[32] Unfortunately, the distance between the Earth and Mars, and the energy required to move mass to escape velocity from Mars, will constrain the near-term development of mineral mining there. In terms of potential for the development of mining industries, Mars suffers from poor location while the Moon suffers from the scarcity of exploitable minerals.

But, in addition to concentrations of minerals, the Martian regolith offers an immense quantity of iron oxide deposits distributed evenly across the planetary surface that might be used as feedstock for steel production and radiation shielding.[33] While Mars is only a third the size of the Earth, the absence of oceans means that the surface area of Mars is approximately equal to that of the surface land area of Earth. Although cratered highlands comprise about two-thirds of the Martian surface, the craters exhibit more degradation, and level areas between craters are more common and larger than is the case for the cratered highlands of the Moon, and both highlands and lowlands might be exploited.[34] But, far more of the discussion of exploiting resources on Mars has focused on the extraction of water, oxygen, and hydrogen from water and carbon dioxide ices, permafrost, and carbon dioxide and nitrogen in the atmosphere for use as spacecraft fuel and life support. The concentration of ices and permafrost at the poles are likely to make them the most valuable territory on Mars in the near term. Martian north polar surface ice covers a markedly larger area and is deeper than Martian south polar

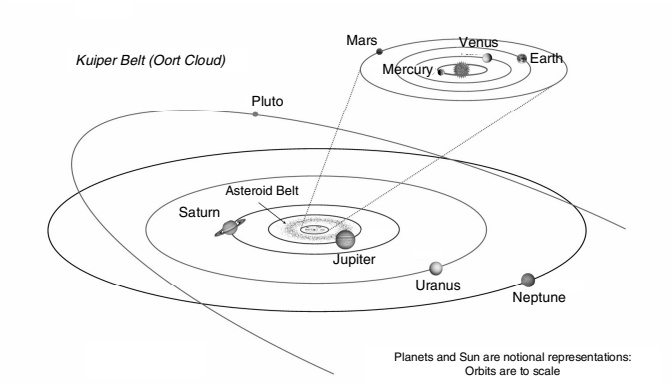

Figure 10.10 Solar system (planets and Sun notional representations, orbits to scale)

surface ice, suggesting far larger total amounts of ice in the former. Moreover, the north polar surface ice clearly contains water while the south polar surface ice appears limited to carbon dioxide.[35] In addition, the Martian north pole and surrounding areas are likely to be choicer property because both large and small dust storms are more frequent along the equator and in the southern hemisphere than in the northern hemisphere.[36]

Although the Moon and Mars are obvious objects of astropolitical attention, the solar system's asteroids and comets may well be its most sought-after geostrategically derived locations. The total number of asteroids and comets larger than a kilometre might be as high as 250,000.[37] Those most familiar include the handful of asteroids with diameters of more than 100 kilometres that orbit between Mars and Jupiter and a somewhat larger number of asteroids and comets that move in elongated orbits and periodically loop inside the orbit of Mars (see Figure 10.3). Although the mineral composition of the large asteroids is unknown, analysis of the composition of meteorites found on Earth suggests that they are chock full of oxygen and valuable metals.[38] The comets are comprised of rock and ices that contain volatile gases including oxygen. Taken together, the availability of oxygen and associated micro gravity environment suggest that a future industry in space is most likely to develop to exploit asteroids and comets.

Space dictums for the twenty-first century

Halford Mackinder was wary of being labeled a determinist; this was the tag affixed to socially unacceptable Marxists. 'I have no wish to stray into materialism' he stated simply, 'Man and not nature initiates,' but he did insist that 'nature in large measure controls.'[39] Nonetheless, he claimed 'it is *inevitable* that a vast economic world, more or less apart, will [develop in the heart-land] inaccessible to oceanic commerce.'[40] In fact, there is a gloomy determinism if not openly frank in places at least implied throughout his work. But it is not a strict determinism; it acts

decisively only to the extent that humanity allows it. It is conditional determinism. The 'inevitability' of single world empire based in the geographic power of the heart-land will occur only to the extent that world leaders turn a blind eye to the realities of geopolitics:

> The actual balance of political power at any given time is, of course, the product, on the one hand, of geographical conditions, both economic and strategic, and, on the other hand, of the relative number, virility, equipment, and organization of competing peoples … [but] the geographical quantities in the equation are more measurable and *more nearly constant* than the human.[41]

Although the capacity to rise above *what would otherwise be* a geographically determined future is possible, Mackinder thought the prospects bleak. Geopolitical realities would march inexorably along, despite democratic ideals, unless persons of vision could take control of history.

The logic stands for outer space. Today airpower is dominant in the American way of war, but visionaries can see it tipping in favor of space power. Like the transition from sea to land power dominance Mackinder foresaw a century ago, the geographically determined shift is 'attributable to its strategic invulnerability, territorial contiguity, and massive physical resources.'[42] Space has all these characteristics, and has appropriately been dubbed the ultimate high ground. A nation-state in command of LEO could prevent any other state from gaining access to the resources of the cosmos, for this high ground is unflankable. The advantages of presence, persistence, and flexibility of response already provide a massive terrestrial combat enhancement. The first state to weaponize LEO may have an insurmountable advantage, but at the very least, the longer that state can retain control of LEO the more likely that its power will increase to the point that 'the empire of the world would then be in sight'.[43]

Mackinder's response was to formulate a strategy that would prevent the key territory from being occupied by any power bent on universal dominion. He identified Eastern Europe as the gateway to the heart-land, and it became axiomatic to oppose any effort to establish a strong state there. The perception of geography has changed with the opening of the global system into outer space. To paraphrase Mackinder, is not the pivot region of the world's politics that vast area of solar space that is inaccessible to sea, land, or air power, and is today about to be covered with a network of orbits?[44] Once consolidated, could this region not be the base for a new kind of global power? If so, perhaps a new dictum is needed for the space age: *Who controls low-Earth orbit controls near-Earth space. Who controls near-Earth space dominates Terra. Who dominates Terra determines the destiny of humankind*.[45]

By 1904, it was plain that Britain could no longer act alone as the global balancing state, ensuring that Eastern Europe would not be united under a hostile power. Mackinder began to advocate that the liberal democratic states of the outer

crescent ally with inner crescent states as necessary in a federative union aimed at preventing, or at least countering, any consolidation of heart-land power.[46] At first, such a prescription seems right for the emerging era of space power. A federated union of sovereign states ought bind themselves to a set of agreements not to weaponize space, or make any claim to territory in space. In fact, such is the case. The current regime in outer space, based on the 1967 Outer Space Treaty (OST), does just that. But, the OST was based on Cold War rivalries, when neither of the wary superpowers could be sure who would win a space war. Today, only the United States has the capacity to seize and control LEO, though it has demonstrated no willingness to do so as of yet. Is a global effort to thwart any designs the United States might have on world hegemony through spacepower the only viable Mackinderian response?

Perhaps not. Mackinder

> saw the fundamental cause of war as being the unequal distribution of the world's resources and its strategic potential. It was necessary now to make states come to terms with the geographical circumstances of their own existence. This was the 'reality' which they had to accept and live with.[47]

Common sense dictated that if such an organization could build on these realities, it had a chance, but only if it could create a working coalition that would prevent any one state from gaining dominance over critical resources.

> In Mackinder's opinion the alternative to the search for effective international structures would be a return to a world in which force was the final arbiter and conquest always the goal of the aggressor state. If this were to happen, men would have no alternative to the role of being 'slaves to the world's geography'.[48]

There is little doubt that in a realist world where states that do not expand their power must wither and die, the United States is prone to assume arbitrary dictatorial power over the globe should it have a reasonable chance of doing so. But Mackinder was not worried about an idealistic liberal democracy wielding power so much as a totalitarian one. Yet, even in the latter case, concentrations of great power could have counterintuitive ramifications. The Pivot had limits in the power it could convey. 'There have been and are here the conditions of a mobility of military and economic power of a far-reaching and yet limited character.' [49] Those limits were compelling in their own right, and could '[stimulate] healthy and powerful reaction, instead of crushing opposition under a widespread despotism.'[50] Further, these limits were 'due to the fact that the mobility of their [land] power was conditioned by the steppes, and necessarily ceased in the surrounding forests and mountains.'[51]

Dominance through space power could ensure the United States sovereign survival against other states, and would make a formidable tool for punishing states that failed to do its bidding. But space power has little anticipated capacity to directly challenge the sovereignty of other states. Only land power can do that, through occupation of terrestrial territory. It is quite possible, given the American sense of non-interference in (at least) other democratic states, that the US *could* assume the role of international peacekeeper and police officer instead. Such an outcome might enhance, rather than detract, from the ultimate manifestation of a world state built on a federal model.

Conclusion

Halford Mackinder's seminal contribution to the study of history and geography was his sweeping view of politics and grand strategy. He was the first to place national decision-making on a truly global scale, and he became a passionate advocate of direct state action to remedy the coming inequities forecast by that encompassing vision.[52] In this, Mackinder was clearly a product of his time. From his earliest publications, he steadfastly maintained that geography could rise to the level of a field of study, with the promise of rational solutions derived from systematic examination of the relative facts and conditions.[53] I have attempted to demonstrate that the essential concepts of Mackinderian geopolitics are remarkably transferable to the physical and political landscape of outer space. The analogy is neither complete nor authoritative. But, if geopolitical theory developed for the Earth and its atmosphere can be transferred to outer space, then, *a fortiori*, the utility and value of its fundamental concepts and holistic design remain relevant, and are suitable for a set of revised or neoclassical geopolitical propositions.

Notes

1 H.J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (New York: Holt, 1942), p. 30. Originally published in 1919.

2 Ibid., p. 27.

3 H.J. Mackinder, 'The Geographical Pivot of History', *Geographical Journal*, 23 (1904), p. 422.

4 H. Sprout, 'Geopolitical Hypotheses in Technological Perspective', *World Politics*, 15 (1963), pp. 187–212; and H. Sprout and M. Sprout, *The Ecological Perspective on Human Affairs: With Special Reference to International Politics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979).

5 See C. Gray, 'Introduction' to Jim Oberg, *Space Power Theory* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2000), pp. xiii–xiv. See also Oberg, *Space Power Theory*, pp. 120–3.

6 E.W. Gilbert, 'Introduction' to Halford J. Mackinder, 'The Scope and Methods of Geography' and 'The Geographical Pivot of History' (London: The Royal Geographical Society, 1951), p. 12.

7 The argument was made by Friedrich List seventy years earlier. See E. Mead, 'Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton, Friedrich List: The Economic Foundations of Military Power', in P. Paret (ed.), *The Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 253–6.

8 And a different form of land power, too, the automobile. Though this form of power was a logical heir to cavalry and fit within the Mackinder's sea–land paradigm, it too was undervalued. H.G. Wells was the earliest of the armored-automobile power advocates, see 'The Land Ironclads', *Selected Short Stories* (1901) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), pp. 85–112; H.G. Wells, *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress Upon Human Life and Thought* (New York: Harper, 1902).
9 G. Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1985), p. 24.
10 See G. Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, (1921) translated by D. Ferrari (New York: Coward, McCann, 1942), p. 62; W. Mitchell, *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power – Economic and Military* (New York: Putnam, 1925); and H. Trenchard, 'Air Power and National Security', in E. Emme (ed.), *The Impact of Air Power: National Security and World Politics* (New York: Van Nostrand Co., 1959), pp. 190–200. For assessments of their positions, see also P. Meilinger, 'Giulio Douhet and the Origins of Airpower Theory', in P. Meilinger (ed.), *The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1997), pp. 1–40; A. Hurley, *Billy Mitchell: Crusader for Air Power* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1964), pp. 81–3 and J. Cooke, *Billy Mitchell* (Boulder, CO: Rienner, 2002); and B. Andrew, *Trenchard* (London: Collins, 1962).
11 E. Dolman, *Astropolitik: Classical Geopolitics in the Space Age* (London: Frank Cass, 2002).
12 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 432. My emphasis.
13 See for example, G. Hammond, 'Myths of the Air War over Serbia: Some "Lessons" Not to Learn', *Aerospace Power Journal*, XIV, 4 (2000), pp. 78–86.
14 N. Spykman, 'Geography and Foreign Policy', a two-part series in the *American Political Science Review*, 32, 1 (1938), pp. 28–50 and *American Political Science Review*, 32, 2 (1938), pp. 213–36; and *America's Strategy in World Politics* (1942) (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1970).
15 Spykman replaces Mackinder's famous dictum with this slight revision: 'Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the World'. See *The Geography of Peace* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1944), p. 43. On the calls for America and Britain to lead the natural alliance of liberal democracies, see Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, and 'The Round World and the Winning of the Peace', *Foreign Affairs*, 21 (1943), pp. 595–605.
16 R. Strausz-Hupe, *Geopolitics: The Struggle for Space and Power* (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1942).
17 S. Cohen, 'The World Geopolitical System in Retrospect and Prospect', *Journal of Geography* 89, 1 (1990), pp. 2–10.
18 Ibid., p. 10; S. Cohen, *Geopolitics of the World System* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), pp. 49–53.
19 G. Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought*, p. 15.
20 The diplomatic history of the Cold War has nowhere been better done than in Walter McDougal's spaceflight classic, … *the Heavens and the Earth* (New York: Basic, 1986).
21 Mackinder, 'Geographical Pivot', pp. 421–2.
22 Daniel Deudney finds a reference to Strabo, 'Geopolitics and Change', in M. Doyle and G. Ikenberry (eds), *New Thinking In International Relations Theory* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 91, and both Aristotle and Thucydides were well aware of the basic principles. In addition, Deudney advances a modified geostrategic model, which he terms Neoclassical Geopolitics, or 'structural-functional security materialism', to analyze the evolution of security practices in a world of changing material conditions.
23 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 422.
24 Ibid., p. 434.
25 G. Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought*,
26 Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, p. 150.
27 A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History: 1660–1783* (Boston: Little Brown, 1890), p. 5.

28 US Air Force briefing titled 'Operation Iraqi Freedom: Space', at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, September 2003.
29 D. Beason, 'What are these Lagrange Points Anyway?' in J. Pournelle (ed.), *Cities in Space: The Endless Frontier*, Volume III (New York: Ace, 1991), p. 58.
30 P. Spudis, *The Once and Future Moon* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), pp. 202–10; E. Burgess, *Outpost on Apollo's Moon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 222–3; G. Heiken, D. Vaniman, and B. French, *Lunar Sourcebook: A User's Guide to the Moon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) pp. 636–7, 647–9.
31 D. Thomas, *Introduction to Space: The Science of Spaceflight* (Malabar, FL: Orbit, 1999), p. 180.
32 R. Zubrin, *Entering Space: Creating a Spacefaring Civilization* (New York: Tarcher and Putnam, 1999), p. 220.
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34 M. Carr, *Water on Mars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 18–19.
35 P. Thomas, S. Squyres, K. Herkenhoff and A. Howard, 'Polar Deposits of Mars', in H. Kieffer, B. Jakowsky, C. Snyder and M. Matthews (eds), *Mars* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1992), pp. 771–5.
36 R. Kahn, T. Martin, and R. Zurek, 'The Martian Dust Cycle', in Kieffer *et al*., *Mars*, pp. 1034–48.
37 D. Cox and J. Chestik, *Doomsday Asteroid: Can We Survive?* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996), p. 56.
38 Ibid., pp. 140–1.
39 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 422.
40 Ibid., p. 432, my emphasis.
41 Mackinder, 'Pivot', pp. 43–4, my emphasis.
42 Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought*, p. 24.
43 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 436.
44 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 434. 'Is it not the pivot region of the world's politics that vast area of Euro-Asia which is inaccessible to ships, but in antiquity lay open to horse-riding nomads, and is today about to be covered with a network of railways?'
45 Dolman, *Astropolitik*, p. 8.
46 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 436 as well as the League of Nations discussion in *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. Mackinder carried this view of an international federation to protect until his death (see 'The Round World and the Winning of the Peace').
47 Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought*, p. 24.
48 Ibid.
49 Mackinder, 'Pivot', pp. 434–6.
50 Mackinder, 'Pivot', p. 427.
51 Ibid.
52 E. Earle, 'Introduction' to Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1942), p. xxii. Mackinder was dispassionate in his search for geographic constants that helped to explain the course of history, but completely partisan in his advocacy of geostrategic principles based on that academic knowledge. He served in parliament from 1910 to 1922 in an attempt to ensure that his policy recommendations received proper consideration.

11

THE HEARTLAND – THEN AND NOW

David Hooson

There can be little doubt that Mackinder's concept of the Heartland has gained more widespread attention in the twentieth century than any other specifically geographical theory. While far from being a precise formulation, its boldness, novelty, and vision have led to its being open to varied interpretations without losing its power of persuasive insight. This was to a large extent due to the power of Mackinder's literary style coupled with his broad knowledge of global history, geography and politics, not encumbered with unnecessary detail or jargon but able to integrate effectively and imaginatively to produce a coherent argument. Outlook, vision, and a certain cool detachment alongside startling conclusions of global significance, have endowed Mackinder's ideas with a power and influence over many international thinkers and leaders over most of the twentieth century.

His focus on the significance of location at all scales, without being dogmatic or deterministic, and his remarkable sureness of touch of the sweep and the important details of geography and history have made his prose as compelling to read as his lectures clearly were to hear. In this chapter I have undertaken to attempt a thumbnail sketch of what the heartland of Eurasia, however vaguely defined, was like, and what was developing there around 1900 when Mackinder first made his startling depiction of a 'Geographical Pivot of History', in which the seeds of a long run of intellectual and practical consequences were sown. Finally I will describe Inner Asia, broadly defined as it can be today a tumultuous century later, once again struggling to exist under a new geographical spotlight and a new 'Great Game'.

In-between 'Then and Now', I propose to describe what was clearly the heyday of the Heartland idea in the period of World War II and the succeeding Cold War. Further I will beg the reader's indulgence as I relate my observations of this resurrection to certain personal memories of living through it.

The Heartland at mid-century

My entire teenage years were spent in a state of war and war being known as a great teacher of geography, I had already been transfixed by following the global

campaigns, in their total geographical context, when I came in the autumn of 1943, at the age of 17 to the School of Geography at Oxford, founded by Mackinder in 1899. Very soon I came across Mackinder's paper in *Foreign Affairs* entitled 'The Round World and the Winning of the Peace',[1] in which he stood by, and amplified, his ideas of twenty and forty years earlier, including the following statement:

> All things considered, the conclusion is unavoidable that if the Soviet Union emerges from this war as conqueror of Germany, she must rank as the greatest land Power on the globe. Moreover she will be in the strategically strongest defensive position. The Heartland is the greatest natural fortress on earth. For the first time in history it is manned by a garrison sufficient both in number and quality.[2]

This had been written in the immediate aftermath of the crucial battle of Stalingrad, *the* turning point of the war, after which the German war-machine, denied the oil of Baku and broken by its military over-stretch and by the Russian climate, was on retreat to Berlin.

To encounter such a powerful synthesis of the world strategical picture at a crucial time, coming from a venerable and authoritative figure, founder of my school at Oxford and professing my newly chosen field, was a thrill indeed. A further thrill came around the victory days of 1945 when I came across a dog-eared copy of Mackinder's *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919) in a bookshop in India.[3] Its inspiring discussion of that earlier post-war settlement added, for me, a needed historical depth and insight into the looming problems of the next peace, in the atomic age.

Two years later, on returning to Oxford, I was to encounter Mackinder again. The winter of 1947 in Britain was the coldest of the century, the whole country being paralyzed, without heat or a functioning transport system. It was hard to bear even for a healthy young person fresh from the tropics, but for poor old Mackinder, then 86 and plagued with respiratory ailments, it was proving fatal. My tutor, E.W. Gilbert, was spending as much time as he could with Mackinder, feverishly gathering material for future biographies.[4] Not surprisingly, my tutorials were dominated by up-to-the minute stories about the great man.

Mackinder returned to the forefront of my life once again when I arrived in the United States in the mid-1950s to embark on a new role, as a specialist in the geography of the Soviet Union. It was an exciting time to be able to study one newly recognized super-power from the vantage point of the other. The Soviet Union, having recovered from its devastating war, had apparently demonstrated its scientific superiority through the brilliant symbolism of the first earth-satellite, Sputnik! The upsurge of interest in the Soviet Union in the United States was palpable, even frenetic. Khrushchev's era of 'competitive co-existence' proved a remarkable stimulus for education, science and, of course, Soviet studies in America and, teaching at a university in the Washington area, with the Library of Congress

nearby, I had a ringside seat for the drama that was unfolding. Along with that of the Sputnik, the spectre of an apparently united Eurasian heartland with the Sino-Soviet alliance, seemed to fulfil one of Mackinder's 'worst case scenarios' for the West.

At this time, I was invited to give a lecture course on the Soviet Union at the Pentagon. My initial trepidation at this, having been used to looking askance at that institution, was dispelled when I actually starting teaching. First of all, I was surprised to hear that, among the generals and admirals in my class, Mackinder was well known and highly regarded as a geopolitical thinker and progenitor of the containment policy, which was becoming the accepted framework for coping with the advent of the other super-power. I found that my having graduated from Mackinder's School of Geography at Oxford gave me some extra kudos.

I found it necessary to scale down the exaggerated estimates of the power, resources, and efficiency of the Soviet Union post-Sputnik. I found a reassuring absence of bombast or even anti-Russian sentiments – just a rather humble desire to get to know the facts and the background of this new adversary. My own attempts to discover what was actually happening inside the Soviet Union were eventually incorporated in a book entitled *A New Soviet Heartland?*, published at the end of the Khrushchev era in 1964.[5] In retrospect, the remaining quarter-century of the life of the Soviet Union became steadily more repressive and sclerotic. With the defection of China, the Vietnam and Afghan wars, the over-stretch of resources in the Third World and the costly nuclear arms build-up, its essential strength was sapped, until it collapsed in 1991. The notion of a menacing, durable Heartland power, 'the greatest natural fortress on earth' became less and less convincing, although very few people in the West actually forecast its demise. Mackinder, who always maintained that a vigorous, developed population was *the* essential requirement for a strong world power, would probably have recognized the inexorable weakening of his Heartland power and lowered his sights accordingly.

However it is undeniable that from the 1940s to the 1960s at least, with its zenith in the late 1950s, Mackinder's Heartland idea seemed all too real, even haunting, for 'the West'.

The 'pivotal' Heartland in 1904

When Mackinder read his startling paper on 'The Geographical Pivot of History' to the Royal Geographical Society in London in 1904,[6] the time was propitious for a radical re-evaluation of the state of the world and in particular the long-term geographical bases of world power. As an Englishman he had been brought up to believe in the world-wide supremacy of the British Empire, with its control of the seas, bolstered by a head start among the nations in the industrial revolution, and in free trade as the policy of the strong. The expansion of the Russian land empire had certainly been an irritant, if not a threat, in the last half of the nineteenth century and in particular the advance of the Russian bear to within snarling range of the British (Indian) lion in central Asia, highlighted the difference between the

limits and abilities of the greatest land power and the greatest sea power of the Old World. The 'Great Game' rivalries in this no-man's land of mountains and deserts, leading, amongst other things, to the creation of Afghanistan as a buffer, obviously caused Mackinder to think of the inaccessibility to sea power characterized by the enormous area of inland and Arctic drainage which formed the basis of his Pivot area.

His cautionary pronouncement about the impending end of the 500-year 'Columbian Epoch' of sea-borne empires was a natural counterpose to his Eurasian land-bound Pivot. However, there were other developments which were already beginning to modify Mackinder's stark dichotomy. British sea power was being challenged by the new Germany, which had quickly joined in the scramble for colonies, while the United States, following war with Spain in 1898, was on the threshold of its twentieth century rise as a dominant world sea power and hegemon. Equally striking was the sinking of the Russian fleet in 1904 by Japan, putting an end to the hitherto unbroken Russian advance across Eurasia over four centuries.

This defeat for Russia meant that it had to abandon its designs on Manchuria, through which it had just driven the Trans-Siberian railway to Vladivostok, and begin the laborious task of building a new line in the much less attractive route north of the Amur river. However the fact remained that Russia was in the process of threading its still vast and resource-rich holdings in Siberia and central Asia with railways, as Mackinder had indicated would be needed for the transformation of his Pivotal Heartland fortress into a viable, credible base for possible world domination.

While Mackinder in his Pivot paper mainly sought to remind his readers of the history of outward movement of waves of nomads from the Heartland to conquer the richer peripheral lands, from Europe to south-west Asia and China, the direction had long since been reversed by 1900, with colonial incursions by Russia, China, and the Western powers. The discovery of the sea routes around Africa had put an end to the silk roads across the Heartland and the people of this region sank into a deep isolation. Eventually in the nineteenth century, the oppression of their feudal emirs and khans was replaced by colonization from the Russian, and to some extent, Chinese and British Empires. The age-old way of life of the nomads and the people of the irrigated valleys was disrupted by sedentarization and the introduction of cotton monoculture to make up for the disruption, by the American Civil War, of Moscow's imports.

In summary, the long isolation of the Pivotal Heartland had begun to be ended by Russian colonization and the 'Great Game' when Mackinder spoke in 1904, and railways, migrations and development in its Eurasian empire showed signs of incipient fulfillment of that 'vast economic world, more or less apart … inaccessible to oceanic commerce',[7] which could make the Heartland truly strong. But much was in flux at the time, with incidents like the Boer war (1899–1902) and the Russo–Japanese War (1904–1905), and the impending revolutionary and military convulsions just a decade away. The age of oil was coming in fast, with Russia (Baku) at the time in the forefront, and the Wright Brothers had lifted off in

December 1903. But the idea planted by Mackinder in 1904 was to stay alive through most of the tumultuous twentieth century.

The collapse of the Soviet Union

As we have seen, the Heartland concept, in its various guises, achieved high visibility and credence from the turning of the tide in World War II to the long paralysis of the Cold War which quickly followed. The most intense and at times panicky decade for America was the 1950s, with the Soviet–Chinese alliance still apparently intact and the Korean War smoldering dangerously, while the Sputnik launch symbolized the arrival of the Soviet Union as a scientifically advanced, and nuclear-armed super power. The tensions eased somewhat in the 1960s after the Cuban missile crisis and the Sino–Soviet split, which, if recognized, might have enabled the US to avoid the Vietnamese disaster. But the fact that the Soviet Union's writ continued to hold sway over most of Mackinder's original Pivot including Mongolia, as well as an expanded Heartland bolstered by its control of east–central Europe, meant the persistence of the geopolitical *status quo* and Western containment policies. However the invasion of Afghanistan, the first real sign of Soviet over-stretch in the Heartland, was to lead, a decade later, to the dissolution of the USSR and Russian withdrawal from Eastern Europe, Mongolia, and the central Asian and Caucasian republics. This disintegration, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'created a black hole in the very center of Eurasia. It was as if the geopoliticians' Heartland had been suddenly yanked from the global map.'[8]

The Heartland today

A decade after the Soviet collapse, what is left of the Heartland and its former components and the people who continue to live where their ancestors have lived for thousands of years? There are now eight newly independent states, freed from the control of Moscow, but still ruled by the communist leaders installed by Moscow before 1991. These leaders initially opposed the break-up of the Soviet Union, but quickly changed hats and became heads of state when they eventually got the green light. They rule as autocrats and it is arguable that their people are oppressed even more severely than they were under the Soviet Union. The natural environments have been ravaged by decades of neglect and the imposition of wrong-headed, wasteful policies, especially with respect to irrigation. The worst single testament to this is the drying up of the Aral Sea, which is now less than half as large as it was in 1960, as a result of reckless siphoning off of water from the Amu Darya river into desert areas without proper linings to the canals. The damage to the people's health in the affected areas has equalled in seriousness the economic stress. There was a long-standing plan to transfer water from Siberian rivers to compensate for the man-made shortage but it was never put into effect. Aggravating the long-term problem is that global warming seems to be implicated in melting the glaciers and snow fields which provide the precious irrigation water in this

inland drainage area. Many of the Russians, Ukrainians and other nationalities who had settled in this 'sun-belt' in the colonial times are now made to feel unwelcome and are returning to an almost equally unwelcoming Russia. The native languages are now being favoured over Russian and the Latin alphabet is being widely introduced.

In some ways, therefore, these peoples are reverting to their pre-colonial life, except that their present (former Soviet) rulers have retained many of the worst colonial features, such as the dominance of cotton, and have made little attempt to ameliorate the water situation – a matter of life and death for most of the people of the region – tied as they still are to the soil.

What future do they have?

Were it not for two factors of the modern world, these people in the Heartland of Asia might have been able to settle again into an isolated state – on a low but sustainable level – preserving some of their traditional way of life. But the incursion of (a) petroleum and (b) terrorism, have made this difficult for the foreseeable future. The Caspian area around Baku was the world's chief oil source when Mackinder was writing his Pivot paper, and forty years later, it helped to bring victory for the Soviet Union, while denying oil to Hitler and contributing to his defeat. Oil has continued to be discovered around the Caspian, not only in Azerbaijan but more munificently in the Kazakstan sector, on shore and under the sea, while natural gas is found in abundance in the Turkmen sector. Therefore, as it was a century or more ago, international oil companies have converged on the new states and made deals with the presidents directly. As with other 'petro-states' around the world, such as Nigeria, Venezuela, or Saudi Arabia, the oil wealth is usually taken by the few, leaving the mass of the people more impoverished than ever. Instability and revolution almost inevitably follow, exacerbated in this region by ethnic conflicts and the attractions of Islamic fundamentalism.

Terrorism is an imprecise word which can cover a multitude of sins and motives but it is now the word which inevitably comes to mind since September 2001. The case of Afghanistan – like the other states, a Heartland country, cobbled together artificially within the last hundred years by outside forces – has been at the forefront. It can be argued that the Afghans delivered the *coup de grace* to the Heartland superpower which invaded it, only to be abandoned in their devastated state by the other (victorious) super-power. It is hardly surprising that it became a haven for terrorists, and is still in a desperate state, where the opium poppy seems the only profitable crop.

Since late 2001 the former Soviet central Asian republics have become bases for American forces surrounding Afghanistan, having previously been a black hole of ignorance for almost all Americans. Unfortunately this circumstance and the US alliance with the autocratic governments has emboldened their rulers to be even more autocratic and unmindful of the needs of their subjects, with incalculable consequences down the road. Chinese colonialism still holds sway

in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) and Tibet, where independence movements are branded as 'terrorist'.

The people of inner Asia, including a broad swath from the Caucasus to Mongolia, all largely imprisoned in a vast inland drainage area, are singularly at risk at present, the more so as they have been brought suddenly in to the wider world. Whether the denizens of inner Asia realize that they are in a Heartland or not, they can have no doubt about the constraints of their existence, and their vulnerability in a special location and environment. For the long-term self-interest of the United States as well as the stability, well being, or even survival of the vulnerable peoples of the Heartland, a munificent investment in healing the stricken environments and disrupted lives is called for. This would be not only much more humane and charitable but also more successful and effective – as an investment – than ever more lavish military spending and the chimera of 'homeland security'.

The life and death of an idea

Mackinder's sweeping generalization was never meant to be determinist or to minimize the importance of human vigour and intelligence. It was intended to stimulate thought rather than stifle it, and its very grandeur made it provocative. His novel idea, which had an adventurous and sometimes breathtaking career throughout the twentieth century, lived, like the man himself, fuelling controversy and influencing policies across the world, to a ripe old age. The sound of a hypothesis being dumped can be satisfying if it has engaged people's minds and encouraged imagination. It took two world wars and the Cold War, culminating in the collapse of the Soviet Union, to lay Mackinder's theory to rest, but who knows in what guise it may raise its provocative head in the future?

The world's physical lineaments may remain the same but the balance of power has shifted, sometimes wildly, over the past century. In particular the maps for 1942 at the high point of the German and Japanese conquests, 1957 at the height of Moscow's control from Europe to China, and 1992, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, represent the extremes of imperial occupation. The political map for 2004 – a century after the Pivot paper – will not in itself, with its array of nearly 200 'sovereign' states, convey the over-riding fact of the global reach and influence of the United States as the unrivalled sole super-power. It remains to be seen whether the forces of globalization can save the American from the eventual demise of all the previous, over-stretched empires of history.

Notes

1 H.J. Mackinder, 'The Round World and the Winning of the Peace', *Foreign Affairs*, 21 (1943), p. 595–605.
2 Ibid., p. 601.
3 H.J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (London: Constable, 1919).

4 E.W. Gilbert, *Sir Halford Mackinder 1861–1947: An Appreciation of His Life and Work* (London: Bell, 1961).
5 D. Hooson, *A New Soviet Heartland?* (Princeton, NJ: Van Norstrand, 1964).
6 H.J. Mackinder, 'The Geographical Pivot of History', *Geographical Journal*, *23* (1904), pp. 421–37.
7 Ibid., p. 41.
8 Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 87.

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