

Outline

- Introduction
- Geopolitical terms
- Geopolitics definition

- Alfred Mahan (1840 - 1914)
- Halford Mackinder (1861 - 1947)

Introduction

- Geopolitics: the study of the geographical distribution of power among states across the world, and especially rivalry between major powers.
- State-centric: the goal of geopolitics is to advance the interests of the state
- A focus on geography: every place is understood in terms of its relationship to a state's interests
- Maximizing your own power involves weakening the power of others

Two elements of geopolitics

- 1) State-centric **foreign policy prescriptions**: the specific measures a state should take to achieve or maintain power.

- 2) World-view through which the goal and the methods are defined: **the geopolitical code**.

Geopolitical terms

- **Geopolitical code:** The operating code of a government's foreign policy that evaluates places beyond its borders.
- **Geopolitical world order:** A more or less stable set of international power relations dominated by an agenda set by the major powers (e.g. the Cold War).
- **Geopolitical transition:** Transition from one geopolitical world order to another. (e.g. from Cold War to post Cold War)
- **Geopolitical culture:** The dominant geopolitical ideology of a society - can be multiple cultures within a country

Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840 -1914)

- Naval Historian
- Head of US Naval Academy 1870's and 1880's

GOAL: Replicate the success of Great Britain for the U.S.

Mahan's Six Geographic Characteristics of a World Power

- TERRITORY – Size matters (resources)
- POPULATION – bigger the better
- GEOPOLITICAL POSITION – island
- STRONG GOVERNMENT
- NATIONAL CHARACTER
- STRONG NAVY AND GOOD HARBORS

MAHAN'S 5 POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS FOR THE U.S.

- BUILD A STRONG NAVY
- EXPAND INTO THE PACIFIC AND THE CARIBBEAN
- BUILD THE PANAMA CANAL
- CONTAINMENT OF RUSSIA
- FORM ALLIANCE WITH THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Sir Halford Mackinder

- Founded Geography Dept at Oxford to address decline of B.E. and get people to think imperially; M.P.



- Three innovations

- 1) Global or "god's eye" view of world; "objective"
- 2) Division of globe into seats of power with singular homogenous identity
- 3) "Geographical causation of history" the world now a closed system

Mackinder's five central themes on political geography and world history

The basis for political geography is physical geography

Geography lends itself to defense (especially with respect to sea vs. land)

A focus on European history is central to understanding world history

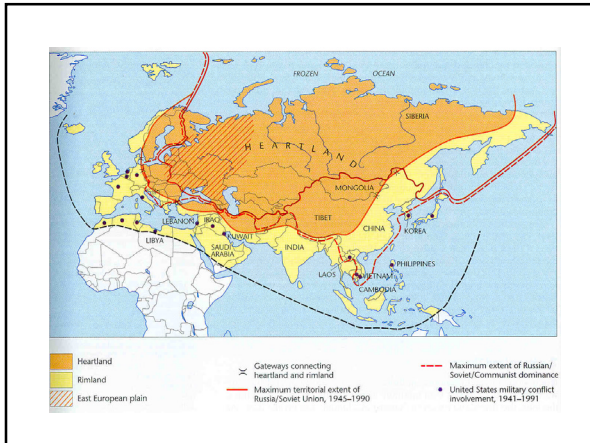
The evolution of history is based upon a struggle between land and sea powers

The world is an closed system – no more external areas: heightened resource competition

MACKINDER'S FAMOUS DICTUM

"Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland;
Who rules the heartland commands the World-Island;
Who rules the World-Island commands the World."

- Russia and C. Asia form the pivot of history (heartland): inaccessible by sea, armies can retreat into vast territory
- Europe has suffered invasion by Mongols, Huns, Magyars: fear of this region uniting against U.K.
- Transoceanic shipping in the 15th C. tipped balance toward sea power: Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, U.K.
- Outer crescent the realm of sea powers, the inner crescent (rimland) the zone of conflict where the land powers try to break out and gain warm-water port
- Railroads may shift power back: an economics-driven argument



How to prevent any one state from controlling East Europe?

- Split Germany – Russia
- Politically fragment the region
- After WWI the allies split up the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires into ethnic states: Germany was geographically separated from Russia, and a buffer zone was created between Russia and W. Europe
- Wilson's principle of self-determination for nations

**MACKINDER'S POLICY PRESCRIPTION FOR
BRITAIN IN 1943**

PREVENT GERMANY FROM DEVELOPING NAVAL
POWER

PREVENT GERMANY AND RUSSIA FROM COMING
TOGETHER

MAINTAIN CONTROL OF INNER CRESCENT

MIDLAND OCEAN ALLIANCE (after 1943)

MACKINDER'S LEGACY

- "MIDLAND OCEAN ALLIANCE" post-World War II. Geopolitical world order of U.S. and U.K. vs. Soviet Union.
- Containment. Rimland site of cold war alliances — NATO, CENTO, SEATO.
- Idea that a land-battle in Asia cannot be won. "DON'T INVADE ASIA" — Napoleon and Hitler both defeated in Russia, US in Korea and Vietnam. (still true today?)

CRITIQUES OF MACKINDER'S GEOPOLITICAL VISION

Doesn't consider changes within societies residing in the geographical Heartland

Overlooks Russian power – thought Germany was the Heartland power that would defeat Russia and control the World Island

Doesn't acknowledge Britain's decline or the rise of the U.S. or Japan

Doesn't foresee or acknowledge the importance of air power
