GEOG 4712 Political Geography

Lecture 5: Classical Geopolitics: The Pivot, The Heartland, and the Eurasian Landmass

Outline

1) Administrative issues?
2) Classical elements
3) Mahan’s prescriptions
4) Mackinder’s legacies
5) The dictum
6) The map
7) Some criticisms
US + UK Geopolitical Visions

Classical geopolitics + genealogies
Mahan’s Geopolitical Vision

Basis for Great Power Status
1) Territory: size matters
2) Population: bigger = better
3) Geopolitical Position: Island
4) Strong Government: Presidential
5) Strong National character: Anglo
6) Strong Navy/Good Harbors

Mahan’s Prescriptions
1) Build Panama Canal
2) Expand Into Pacific + Caribbean
3) Build Strong Navy
4) Contain Russia
5) Formal Alliance with British Empire
1. Decline of British Hegemony
2. Shrinking world; post-Columbian Epoch tech
3. Internationalization of capital
4. New Actors: Democracy and rise of women + workers
5. Rise of non-European Powers

The dictum: 1904

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland
Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island
Who rules the World-Island commands the world
Mackinder’s Policy Prescriptions

1) Prevent Germany from developing naval power
2) Prevent Germany and Russia from allying
3) Maintain control of inner/marginal crescent
4) Midland Ocean Alliance (post-1943)
Mackinder’s Legacy

1) “Midland Ocean Alliance” Post WWII; Geopolitical World Order of US/UK vs. USSR (NATO)
2) US-USSR containment strategy; Rimland site of Cold War alliances (NATO, CENTO, SEATO)
3) Idea that land war in Asia cannot be one; Princess Bride + Napoleon

Critiques of Mackinder’s Geopolitical Vision

1) Does not consider changes within societies in geographical heartland
2) Never acknowledges Russia--views Germany as Heartland Power to control world-island
3) Does not acknowledge Britain’s decline or rise of US or Japan
4) Does not foresee or acknowledge importance of airpower
Still relevant?

Global expansion of US military involvement

Due to the secretive and transient nature of the present conflicts, this map is not complete, and the size of troop deployment is a relative proportion based on the present data.

Source:
2005 Base Structure Report
GlobalSecurity.org
C. John Mearsheimer