

## Geopolitics: The deadly legacy of Halford Mackinder Part 1

The two-part Almanac beginning with this article is the transcript of an oral presentation.

By Chauncey Hulburt

What follows will be some observations on the history of geopolitics, which is what is behind what's happening between Russia and Ukraine right now. It will, I hope, serve to give a longer-wave perspective on what exactly is transpiring there. And it will be something that can inform your thinking, as you pursue the mission of putting the economy back on a sound footing through national banking; that mission is to launch a manufacturing, scientifically driven recovery that can rebuild Australia, leverage that process around the world, and turn the world back from the brink of World War III that it's on right now.



Halford Mackinder. Photo: Wikipedia

The great difficulty you have in a time where there's nothing but lies in the media, is that if you're looking for something in the media that can counter the lies that people are being bombarded with, it's an impossible task. This is one of the worst cases of all-out, bald-faced, shameless lying that's ever existed in history. It makes for an extremely difficult situation when it comes to trying to talk to people, based upon a discussion of developments which have unfolded in the past 24 or 48 hours, or even the past couple of weeks. The moment you take that as your perspective, *you're already in a controlled environment* and are on the verge of losing the battle.

What's needed, is to look at what's unfolding now as part of a longer wave of history, which was instituted by the oligarchy through Sir Halford Mackinder beginning, in particular, in 1904, when he published his famous document that founded the practice—I don't want to call it a discipline or a science—of geopolitics. It's not even a discipline; call it the "subject", if you will, of geopolitics. That work was titled "The Geographical Pivot of History". The centrepiece of the idea is shown in **Map 1**, where you see the central role of the "land power" of central Asia for the entire world. The blue area is the "rim" around the centre of that land power: stretch out into Africa



Photo: Quora

Map 2.

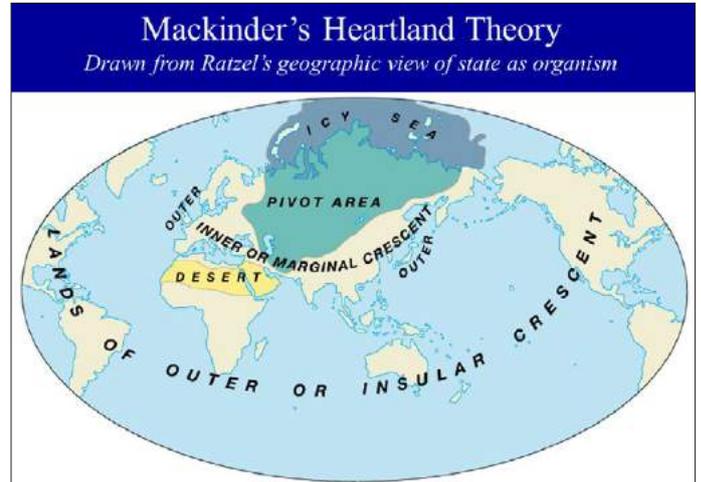


Photo: Soviet & Russian Geopolitics, Blaze Lee

and through the Middle East, and you have what Mackinder called the "World Island". You see "sea power" around that.

He stated his idea explicitly in an amplification of his thesis from 1904. In 1919, with the end of World War I, he wrote another document, a book entitled *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*. He re-stated the central thesis from 1904. What he stated there succinctly, in his own words, is that "Who rules eastern Europe, commands the Heartland. Or, on **Map 2**, it's the "pivot area". So he's saying, "Who rules eastern Europe, commands the Heartland. Who rules the Heartland, commands the World Island." If you control that pivot area, or the red "land power" area, then you control the world island. And, "Who rules the World Island, commands the world." That is the essence of Mackinder's geopolitical thesis. The implementation of that doctrine has been responsible for shaping all world politics since then, emphatically including the outbreak of World War I; and then, again, the outbreak of World War II.

One person who was extremely impressed with Mackinder's writings was General Karl Haushofer, from Germany. He steeped himself in Mackinder's writings, and he passed that to one of his subordinates, Rudolf Hess. Hess was the one who then shared this doctrine with Adolf Hitler, and it became the subject of *Mein Kampf* [My Struggle], and all of Hitler's thinking. Hitler looked at the land power area, and what he called that—not only the red, but also the blue on Map 1—was *Lebensraum*, "living space". The idea was that Germany was a small country, but a powerful one. It was overpopulated; it needed living space. And they were going to expand into these vast, "empty" reaches in the east, and take over the raw materials from those areas. They would enslave the peoples in those areas, to make them workers for the greater Reich. This was the essence of everything that informed Hess, as he discussed that with Hitler. And Hitler picked up on that, and made that what it was.



The final ("golden") spike is hammered into North America's first transcontinental railroad, 10 May 1869. Photo: Wikipedia

### Railways threatened British Empire

What Mackinder said in 1904 was, "Transcontinental railways are now transmuting the conditions of land power, and nowhere can they have such effect as in the closed heartland of Euro-Asia." What we're actually dealing with here is the shock of what the United States did with the Transcontinental Railroad under President Abraham Lincoln, through to 10 May 1869 when it was completed. That opened up the entirety of the North American continent to intensive development. Lincoln's great contribution to posterity was not only ending slavery, and bringing the right to vote to every American citizen through that process, but his great gift to all future generations was that he oversaw the building of the Transcontinental Railroad. He was assassinated in 1865, but he had put into place all the funding that was required to do that. He did that *even as the war was raging*. If there were ever a reason for him not to do it, it would be—the kind of budgetary thinking that goes on today, you could say—that "the last thing we can afford to do is build a Transcontinental Railroad, when we're running the biggest budget in the history of the United States, and running up bigger and bigger debts. We can't afford to do this!" Lincoln's point was, no—we can't afford *not* to do it.

People did recognise, then, that this was the future. The American project was the impetus for the building of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, which Russian statesman Count Sergei Witte oversaw, and which was ultimately completed in 1916. And that *did* change everything, in that central area of Eurasia.

One of the things that's being raised now is this question: Is the Belt and Road Initiative simply the Chinese applying the principles of Mackinder to their foreign policy? That's emphatically *not* the case. The BRI is not a geopolitical move on their part; it is a developmental move, just like Lincoln's building the Transcontinental Railroad was not a geopolitical move. It was a developmental move, and it completely transformed the economic geography of the United States.

It should be noted that before Mackinder, geography was not even considered properly a subject for study! While introducing geopolitics, he raised the study of geography to a different level altogether.

### Geopolitics in and after World War II

I will now play a 10-minute excerpt from a 2019 BBC video documentary titled "The Heartland Theory", which gives a good idea of the way in which the doctrine of geopolitics, and Mackinder, has deeply embedded itself in American and Western political life. [Embedded in the BBC video are clips from an American film made during World War II, as well as other archival footage. -ed.]

### BBC documentary excerpt begins

*US WWII film:* Conquer eastern Europe, and you dominate the Heartland.

*BBC narrator:* In the 1940s, America became fascinated by the idea that the Nazi plan for world domination was based on a perversion of the ideas of this Victorian geographer.

*US WWII film:* Deep in its mountains lie thick, rich veins of gold and silver...

*Narrator:* Halford Mackinder had argued that with the advent of railways, the vast resources of the Eurasian "Heartland" could become the basis of a great land power that could defeat any sea power. And American propaganda films told audiences that this was the basis of Hitler's strategy.

*US WWII film:* Conquer the World Island, and you dominate the world.

*Narrator:* Sir Halford, now in his eighties, was dismayed at the idea that he'd influenced the Nazis. And then, in 1943, *Foreign Affairs* magazine got in touch with him from New York, and asked for his thoughts on the geopolitics of the allies coming victory. And Mackinder proposed a way that they could stop Germany, once defeated, from rising yet again. To Germany's west, there should be "a reserve of trained manpower, agriculture and industries in the eastern United States and Canada"; a "moated aerodrome in Britain"; a "bridgehead in France". And to Germany's east? "[I]f the Soviet Union", he wrote, "emerges from this war as the conqueror of Germany, she must rank as the greatest land power on the globe."

But by 1945, Germany was broken. The Nazi regime had surrendered unconditionally, and the country was divided into zones by the allies. With Germany out of the picture, Mackinder's model came to foreshadow the emerging east-west standoff of the Cold War. The West and the Soviets were enemies once again. After pro-Soviet forces absorbed Poland, and Hungary, and Romania, and more, the power who ruled eastern Europe and the Heartland was not Germany, but the Soviet Union.

In America's "Ivy League" universities, academics had already been spurred by Mackinder's work to confront the risks of one power dominating the World Island, and to map out the conflict zones along its coastal Rimlands. Now, as the Soviets' reach expanded, Mackinder's ideas reached this man: a diplomat, called George Kennan.

*Kennan (archival footage):* Imperialism often involved the advancing of the actual, formal borders of your sovereignty.

*Narrator:* And Kennan proposed that to prevent it dominating the Eurasian landmass, the Soviet Union had to be contained.

*Kennan:* What they [the Soviets] want to do is get puppet communist regimes in power in other areas.

*Narrator:* On 6 March 1947, Mackinder died. But his ideas were very much alive. Six days later, President Truman told the US Congress that America had to contain the Soviet Union,



Diplomat George F. Kennan (left) was one of a group of Anglophiles who used Mackinder's doctrine to guide President Harry S Truman (right) into the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Photos: Screenshots

by helping countries threatened with communist takeover.

*Harry Truman:* It is necessary only to glance at a map to realise that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation.

*Narrator:* The United States was declaring itself ready to protect democratic ideals by using the threat of military force to stop a single power from dominating Eurasia.

*UK news broadcast (archival footage):* America has decided that her true frontiers are in Europe.

*Narrator:* As the mainly democratic West and the Soviet-controlled East dug in for decades of Cold War, America established a ring of bases around the Soviet-dominated bloc—from West Germany, to Italy, to Turkey, and on to South Korea and Japan.

Critics see containment as part of America's aggressive and imperialistic foreign policy. Others argue it protected democracy. Either way, it was still going 40 years later, when this happened: [Video shows jubilant crowd of Soviet citizens]. In 1991, moves towards democracy in the Soviet Union had unleashed demands for independence in the Soviet republics. A last-ditch coup by hardliners failed to stop all of the republics, from the Baltic to Central Asia, splitting away. But all this, and the trouble that followed, gave Mackinder's Heartland theory a new appeal. With communism abandoned, the Russian economy was caught between broken-down old Soviet systems and the sudden introduction of Western-style capitalism. The shock nearly killed it—even as well-meaning Westerners flew in to offer their medicine.

*US President Bill Clinton to Russian shopkeeper (archival footage):* We are going to be friends.

*Russian commentator (archival footage):* It produces very bad feelings here, that the United States interferes in our internal affairs.

*Narrator:* And amid all this chaos and humiliation, new political thinkers began to emerge. One was a right-wing ex-dissident called Alexander Dugin, who managed to get a job teaching strategy at the General Staff Academy, to the future leaders of the Russian military. Dugin drew deep on Mackinder's ideas, to cast traditionalist Russia as locked in an eternal struggle for power with the liberal West, which throughout the 1990s seemed to be encroaching ever deeper into Russian life. In 1997 Dugin set out his ideas in a book called *The Foundations of Geopolitics*, which became an unlikely best-seller. And here he is lecturing recently [2018] in Shanghai, outlining his Mackinder-influenced take on antagonism between Russia and the West.

*Dugin:* In geopolitics there are two absolute opposite poles—there is “sea power”, that is, the Western world; [and] there is “land power”, that is, Russia—and the fight to control the Rimlands, in order to control the Heartland. That was the famous idea of Mackinder: Who controls eastern Europe, that [sic] controls Heartland; who controls Heartland rules the world.

*Narrator:* In the wake of their liberation from Soviet domination, eastern European countries queued up to join NATO and the European Union, fearful of future Russian aggression. But if eastern Europe worried about Russia, Russia worried about NATO.

*BBC News, 23 Oct. 1995:* Seen from here, NATO's expansion sends all the wrong signals. It tells the Russians they're still not really accepted by the West.

*Narrator:* Dugin followed Mackinder's theory to conclude that Russia should move to dominate once more the break-away republics of the old Soviet Union, or “Eurasia”. And some writers have argued that Dugin's Mackinder-influenced themes have proved useful to Russia's leaders, keen to reassert their country's standing in the face of what they see as Western over-dominance. In 2011 President Putin proposed

the formation of a Eurasian Economic Union; and in 2014, at this ceremony in the Kazakh capital [Astana, since re-named Nur-Sultan], a treaty was signed by Kazakhstan, Belarus and Russia.<sup>1</sup> They were soon joined by other ex-Soviet republics. But the idea of Eurasia as a counter to the European Union came into sharp focus in Eastern Europe.

In 2013 Ukraine was in talks with the EU. But then, Ukraine's President [Viktor] Yanukovich withdrew, under Russian pressure.

*BBC News, 11 Dec. 2013:* The barricades are being built by protestors fighting to keep alive their dream of joining the European Union.

*Narrator:* Pro-EU protestors occupied the centre of the capital, Kiev. Yanukovich sent in armed police, and the situation degenerated into bloody violence. In eastern Ukraine there were pro-Russian protests, which became a Russia-backed insurgency. And in southern Ukraine, Russia seized its chance to annex Crimea, which like the east of the country has a high ethnic-Russian population.<sup>2</sup>

But though Russia may rule the Heartland, it does *not* control the World Island. Eurasia is now home to another great power. In 1904, Mackinder worried about trains uniting the Heartland. Today, China is stretching its railways across the Eurasian supercontinent. Relations between China and Russia are warm; but will Chinese expansion into Russia's old sphere of control in central Asia start to cause tension? Mackinder-minded analysts think it might.

[Video shows Chinese island-building activities in the South China Sea.] The lagoon is teeming with ships. And the South China Sea, vital to world trade, is becoming the focus of a new geopolitical struggle for dominance. China has built whole islands to assert its claims to control. America is pushing back.

*Chinese radio operator, to US navy vessels and surveillance aircraft:* This is Zhubi Reef. China has sovereignty over the Nansha Islands and adjacent waters. Leave immediately and keep far off.

*Narrator:* And there are signs that America's strategic thinking in the region is coloured by Mackinder's ideas. Mackinder argued that those ideas could help to stop a single state from dominating the world. As the great powers square up more and more, will his insights help to keep them in check? Or is it time to consign these century-old ideas to the past?

**BBC excerpt ends.**

You can see from this, how the ideas of Mackinder are playing out today. It is useful, for example, to think about this question: Why were we opposed to Russia for so many years? “Oh, that's because they were communists! They were communists, and they could threaten the world with their nuclear weapons.” Well, the Berlin Wall came down, the Soviet Union dissolved, and they're not communists as they were before, and yet our fight with them is bigger than ever! We're closer to nuclear war now than at any time since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

*Continued in the next issue.*

1. This exaggerated picture of the influence of Alexander Dugin's mystical geopolitical doctrines on Russian policy represents the opinion of the BBC authors. Other factors, including the desire to find efficiencies in trade and take advantage of historically formed economic ties in the region, prompted Kazakhstan, Russia, and Belarus to initiate first a Customs Union (2010) and then the Eurasian Economic Union (2015), bringing in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

2. The BBC authors' version of events in Ukraine suits the prevailing hostile posture of the UK towards Russia. Our material from AAS archives “Mackinder in US foreign policy: Brzezinski's drive to split Ukraine from Russia” (page IV) gives a more accurate account of the 2014 “Euromaidan” coup.

# Mackinder in US foreign policy: Brzezinski's drive to split Ukraine from Russia

Among the later geopoliticians influenced by Mackinder's Heartland theory were American national security advisors in the Cold War like Henry Kissinger (under President Richard Nixon in 1969-75) and Zbigniew Brzezinski (1977-81 under President Jimmy Carter).

Brzezinski was a Polish-born geostrategist, diplomat, and co-founder of the Trilateral Commission international policy group, and a devotee of British imperial geopolitics. As Carter's national security advisor, he escalated US hostility towards the Soviet Union and covert Central Intelligence Agency funding and arming of Afghan mujahideen (anti-Soviet militants). In 1978 he called for stepped-up American activity along an "Arc of Crisis" on the Soviet Union's southern perimeter.

Kissinger, in his 1994 book *Diplomacy*, insisted that the USA remain focused on Eurasia even after the Cold War had ended, warning: "Geopolitically, America is an Island off the shore of a large landmass of Eurasia, where resources and population far exceed the United States. The domination by a single power of either of Eurasia's two principal spheres—Europe or Asia—remains a good definition of strategic danger to America... For such a grouping would have the capability to outstrip America economically, and in the end, militarily."

*The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (1997) was Brzezinski's contribution to the "unipolar world" model after the break-up of the Soviet Union. He wrote there, that after 500 years as the centre of world power, Eurasia was still "the chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played... It is imperative that no Eurasian challenger emerges, capable of dominating Eurasia and thus also of challenging America."

On the centenary of Mackinder's influential paper on geopolitics, British historian Paul Kennedy wrote in the *Guardian* (19 June 2004) that Soviet domination of the "Heartland" during the Cold War had revived Mackinder's theories. Now, he added, "with hundreds of thousands of US troops in the Eurasian rimlands and with an administration [of President George W. Bush] constantly explaining why it has to stay the course, it looks as if Washington is taking seriously Mackinder's injunction to ensure control of 'the geographical pivot of history'."

### Brzezinski and Ukraine

Brzezinski helped directly to set in motion the global showdown over Ukraine, just as he had done in launching the radical Islamist global terrorism of the past 45 years by his strategy of backing extremist fighters in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union's "soft underbelly" in Central Asia. In *The Grand Chessboard*, he zeroed in on the priority of keeping Ukraine and Russia apart. He declared Ukraine a "geopolitical pivot" because "[w]ithout Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire". He made clear what that meant, by a map in the book that depicted Russia chopped into three pieces, with a "European" chunk west of the Ural Mountains, and two independent raw materials-provider entities in Siberia and the Far East.

In early 2014 Russia-hating Ukrainian nationalists, heirs of Stepan Bandera's Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) who had been protected and nurtured throughout

the post-World War II period by British and American intelligence, were driving towards the February 2014 violent "Maidan" coup against Ukraine's elected president, under the deceptive banner of being "pro-Europe"; in November 2013 President Victor Yanukovich had announced a delay in signing the European Union Association Agreement (EUAA), out of concern that Ukraine's extensive trade relations with Russia would be destroyed. Brzezinski personally jumped in to help organise the regime change. In a 15 January 2014 statement broadcast by the US government-backed Radio Liberty in Ukraine, he said, "I salute the heroic people of Maidan. What you are doing is historic and vital." This was heard in Ukraine as a powerful go-ahead from the United States, for the overthrow of the government.

The project for Ukraine's "European choice", its bid to join the European Union (EU), had been carefully coordinated from the West. The 2008 Bucharest summit of the NATO military alliance promised Ukraine and Georgia NATO membership in the future. The European Union moved in parallel: In December 2008 its "Eastern Partnership" targeted six countries, each formerly a republic within the Soviet Union, for EUAs. The core of Ukraine's EUAA was a free-trade program under which the industrial economy would be dismantled and EU-based market players would grab Ukraine's agricultural and raw materials exports. *But the economic deal also mandated "convergence" on security issues, with integration into European defence systems!*

The civil war in eastern Ukraine began in 2014, after the ouster of Yanukovich in that "Euromaidan" coup. The spearhead of the Euromaidan was not the citizens who came out to the central square in Kiev to demonstrate for the EUAA (imagining "jobs for everybody, wages like in France, pensions like in Germany", as Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine leader Natalia Vitrenko put it at the time). It was a smaller force of paramilitary units from western Ukraine, promoting a fascist ideology inherited from one-time ally of the Nazis Bandera (1909-59) and his OUN, which had slaughtered tens of thousands of Jews and Poles during World War II. Their doctrines of ethnicity-based nationalism include a belief that war with Russia is inevitable.

Within days of the Euromaidan coup, Banderites in the new regime stripped Russian and other languages of their status as official languages alongside Ukrainian, in areas of the country where a majority of people spoke them. That action, together with the terrorist record of the Banderite Right Sector group, triggered the secession of Crimea from Ukraine—with Russian backing—and its overwhelming vote by referendum in March 2014 to join the Russian Federation. Uprisings against Kiev's authority began in the Donbass at the same time. NATO governments and the international media call both events "Russian aggression".

*This background on the post-World War II application of Mackinder's geopolitics by Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski draws on previous publications in the AAS. For in-depth background on the Euromaidan coup of 2013-14: "The Anglo-American imperial project in Ukraine: a violent coup, fascist axioms, and overt neo-Nazis", Australian Almanac Vol. 8, No. 5, with AAS of 22 Feb. 2017.*

## Geopolitics: The deadly legacy of Halford Mackinder Part 2

Part 1 of this article, the edited transcript of an oral presentation, appeared in the Australian Almanac last week.

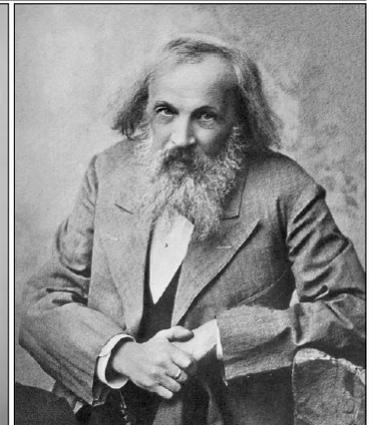
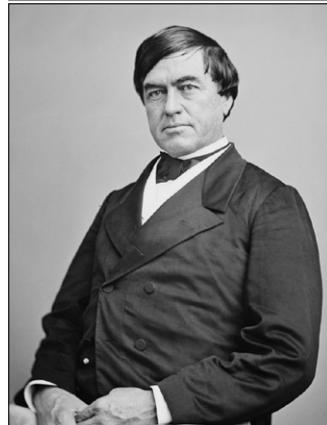
By Chauncey Hulburt

When you ask yourself, are we really being threatened by communists, to where we have to take a strong stand—it's not the case. What the geopoliticians, the Anglo-American establishment, are threatened by is the economic development on a scale never seen before in history that is proceeding apace in China. China is developing as no nation has ever done in history, on such a grand scale. The United States was the best example, up until what the Chinese have done.

The fact of this development *is* the problem, because now you have the potential for Russian and Chinese cooperation on the development of the whole Eurasian landmass. In a certain sense, the Russians are in more need of help from the Chinese than ever, with all of these sanctions coming into play against them. So one thing which is being done by the West, is to drive China and Russia to work together more closely than ever before, and to give one another back-up for further moves for the development of the real economy in both states. And there are a lot of nations around the world that are not in the least interested in seeing China brought to its knees, because China is giving credits out, and is assisting in actual physical economic development on a scale that's never been seen before—in Africa, across Central Asia, and in Southeast Asia. So what's happening, is that the reality of unprecedented economic development threatens to destroy the remnants, and the control mechanisms, of the old Anglo-American establishment.

When you look back further in history, beyond the recent period, you can see that there is the basis for collaboration between the USA and Russia. Think about this over the longer term: go back to when the Civil War in the United States breaks out, in 1861. Whom did the British support? The British and the French supported the Confederacy. Wall Street supported the Confederacy. Do you realise that when the United States wanted to get a loan to pay some of the federal government workers—I believe this was February or March of 1861, before the war had formally broken out—Wall Street said to the United States of America, "We will give you, the federal government of the United States, a loan (at very high interest rates!), provided you get the states of Pennsylvania and Ohio to co-sign for it." Is that not interesting? Wall Street says, "The United States government is not a good credit risk; we need to see the states of Pennsylvania and Ohio co-signing, then we'll consider it." And whom were the British working with? Their big beachhead, the "Venice of the North", was Manhattan, the New York City Island where Wall Street is located!

So you had Abraham Lincoln coming in [as US president]. Who's in Russia? Tsar Alexander II. He became Tsar in 1855; he was assassinated in 1881. What did Tsar Alexander II do? He freed the serfs, in 1861. But what helped him to do that? Well, it's interesting to see that the ambassador whom Lincoln sent over to Russia was Cassius Marcellus Clay, one of the top fighters against slavery, and for its abolition, in Kentucky. (The famous boxer Muhammad Ali, born Cassius Clay,



Top, a Moscow statue of US President Abraham Lincoln with Russian Tsar Alexander II; above, Lincoln's Ambassador to Russia, Cassius Marcellus Clay (left), and envoy to US Declaration of Independence centennial celebrations, Russian scientist Dmitri Mendeleev (right).

was named after this anti-slavery political leader; Muhammad Ali's grandfather Herman Heaton Clay, named his son, Muhammad Ali's father, Cassius Marcellus Clay in tribute to the famous abolitionist.) Lincoln appointed Clay the US ambassador to Russia on 14 July 1861, and he served through 1862; he received the job again in 1863, and served until 1869. He was credited with helping to win Russia's support to the Union's cause.

In 1863, when the war could have gone either way, the Tsar deployed Russia's Pacific Fleet to seek its winter quarters in San Francisco Bay; and the Atlantic Fleet, to New York City. It was a major display of support by Russia, at the direction of the Tsar, working with Ambassador Cassius Clay, to have this show of force to support Lincoln and the United States—the same Lincoln who was undertaking to build the Transcontinental Railroad, even as he mobilised the nation to win the war.

Map 1.

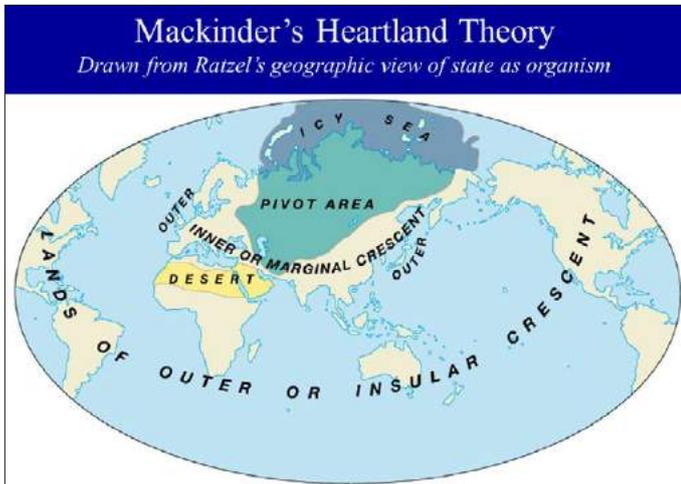


Photo: *Soviet & Russian Geopolitics*, Blaze Lee

The other noteworthy ambassador from the United States to Russia during this period, from 1869 to 1872, appointed by General Ulysses S. Grant—because Lincoln, of course, was assassinated in 1865. Grant was elected president in 1868, and re-elected four years later. Whom did he send to Russia? He sent Andrew Curtin, the former governor of Pennsylvania. Curtin had visited Lincoln at various critical points during the Civil War; he was one of Lincoln's greatest allies among the nation's governors. He pulled together all the governors, and sponsored what was called the "Loyal War Governors' Conference" on 24-25 September 1862, shortly after the war had broken out. The Union cause wasn't looking all that promising at that point, so he pulled the governors together and said, "Look, here's what we have to do", and rallied them. Curtin was, otherwise, extremely close to all the top executives of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The Pennsylvania Railroad by 1874 was the largest company in the world, but in 1862 it was already the largest *railroad*, and it was the heart and soul of the overall rail expansion effort in the North. So Curtin went over to Russia as an ambassador from the Pennsylvania Railroad, in effect, as well as from the United States, and a lot of what he did was to contribute to the development of the rail networks in Russia.

In 1876 the centennial celebration of the United States' Declaration of Independence was held, and it was a celebration of scientific and economic progress. And whom did the Russians send over, but Dmitri Mendeleev—one of the most brilliant scientists in human history, the author of the periodic table of the elements. He came over especially to investigate the breakthroughs that the United States had already made in developing an oil industry. Oil had been discovered in Oil City, up in north-western Pennsylvania. And so north-western Pennsylvania was the centre of oil production for the world. When Mendeleev came over, he spent time at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, but then he went up to north-western Pennsylvania. He took everything he learned from there and applied that in the development of the Russian oil industry.

Thus there were the highest levels of scientific collaboration, economic collaboration, collaboration in wartime—a rich, rich tradition that existed between Russia and the United States throughout the late 19th century. And this was something that had to be stopped. If you think about it, what was Mackinder saying? He was saying that what we're looking at here is the Eurasian Heartland; we're looking at the World Island, but in particular at the Eurasian Pivot, or the Heartland (**Map 1**). This has to be controlled! And the idea was that if the British couldn't control it, then what they *could* at least do is

make sure that there is a fight going on over who *will* control it. If Germany is pitted against Russia, that's one way to make sure neither one of them controls it. And so all fights were to be manipulated in this way.

### Mackinder after World War I

At the Versailles conference, at the end of World War I, Mackinder came in with an updated book, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. What he said was: Look, the role of Britain and the United States has to be to preserve the balance of power between the powers contending for control of the Heartland. To stabilise the situation, or to give them the capacity for stabilisation, he advocated the creation of an array of "independent" states to separate Germany and Russia. The idea was to have a number of small states there, and any one of these states could then be used; if it appeared that one country or another was going to take control of the Eurasian Heartland, or if one country was making too much progress, one of these small countries could always be used to blow the situation up.

And isn't that what we're seeing today? Ukraine is a perfect example of that now. It's not the smallest; it's big,

### London *Economist* recommends Mackinder

Under the headline "The war in Ukraine is going to change geopolitics profoundly", the 5 March issue of the *Economist*, the weekly flagship of the City of London, recommended the theories of British Empire strategist Halford Mackinder. "Trying to make sense of this new [China-Russia] axis, some find themselves turning to strategists of old, and in particular those who set more store by the abiding facts of geography than the contingencies of history", the *Economist* wrote. "The obvious starting place, for this question and for the modern history of geopolitics more generally, is the idea of the 'Heartland' put forward by Halford Mackinder in 1904. Mackinder argued that whoever controlled the core of Eurasia, roughly between the Arctic Sea and the Himalayas, could command the world. On that analysis, Russia and China united in common cause represent a big problem."

The article also invoked the work of the Dutch-American "geostrategist" Nicholas Spykman, who expanded Mackinder's ideas to include control of the Pacific Rim. Spykman's vies are now embodied in the American "Indo-Pacific" strategy. Mackinder was concerned that since British hegemony, based primarily on its naval hegemony, could not control the Eurasian landmass, the countries of Central Europe would be key in undermining any domination of the continent by either of the two major European powers, Germany or Russia.

It is fitting that the *Economist* revives Mackinder in connection with the Ukraine crisis. Mackinder did not write books and papers, but in 1919 he was dispatched by Lord Curzon, head of the British Foreign Office, to attempt the orchestration of an alliance between General Anton Denikin and Polish Chief of State Józef Piłsudski. Denikin at that time was head of the anti-Bolshevik White Army, then located in what today is Ukraine, before his eventual retreat southward and defeat.

compared with Lithuania or Estonia. But what you have is the creation of legal entities that can claim to be suffering under Russian domination, or Russian sabotage, and you have an institution like NATO, which can then be called in; and you have a prescription for war, for forcing Russia back. Maybe you go to the brink of nuclear war, and beyond.

Everything that Mackinder came up with was designed to ensure that there would never be anything like continuous economic development in the Heartland. He knew, or he had an idea of what the resources were in that area, and he said we can't allow that kind of development to occur.

### **Mackinder's influence on the Nazis and on modern Atlanticism**

Mackinder did have some noteworthy comments on the USA. In 1924 he published a theory on the "Atlantic community", in which he called for the creation of what, a quarter of a century later, would be NATO. He said that the power of the Eurasian Heartland could be offset by Western Europe and North America, given that Britain and the United States "constitute for many purposes a single community of nations". So that was the answer: the closest possible collaboration between the United States and Britain on this geopolitical doctrine would do it, and you could manipulate various small nations of Eastern Europe to blow the situation up as might be necessary.

In 1905 Mackinder became the chairman of the London School of Economics. He went on, between 1920 and 1945, to be the chairman of Britain's Imperial Shipping Committee, which was one of the most important economic posts. And in 1926-31 he was chairman of the Imperial Economic Committee. The damage he has done over time is absolutely incalculable.

In addition, you have Karl Haushofer, the German military theorist in the 1920s, who picked up on the "genius" of Mackinder. His associate Rudolf Hess presented this to Hitler, and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is nothing but an elaboration of this idea in all its ugliness. Hitler made a big point in his "Table Talk" dialogues during the war, when he was getting really manic about how good things looked to be going in 1941-42, at different points in Russia: He said: Look, my vision for the occupied territories is that I'm going to run this, and my model is the way Britain runs India! He said: They control hundreds of millions of people with only several hundred thousand administrators; the British are absolute geniuses on this.

One of the reasons that Hitler did not give the order to destroy the British at Dunkirk in 1940, that he let them escape, was that he was thinking he could negotiate with them. He wanted them to oversee colonial administrations on behalf of a combined world empire that they would share, where they could loot, and destroy people, and commit genocide on a scale that only he had imagined (though the British were quite something at that, as well). But his model was the British. So a lot of what you saw Hitler doing, in his design, came from this Mackinder outlook as well. That is all the more disgusting; it's hard to comprehend the full evil of it.

That's what we're dealing with. We're not dealing with a problem *in Ukraine*, about President Volodymyr Zelensky. Yes, there are those predicates, but this is a longer-wave project. And there were forms of collaboration under way, between the United States and Russia in particular, in the late 19th century, which were extremely promising; and there are certainly avenues for development *now* that could be equally promising, if people would bother to look at them, and embrace that. But we should realise that what we're dealing

with in the situation in Ukraine today is *not* the particulars between Russia and Ukraine in some centuries-old conflict. This is *geopolitics in its distilled essence*.

There is a factor of hysteria on the part of the Western geopoliticians because of how much economic development China has already undergone, and there's no going back. You can't put the genie back in the bottle in China. Not only have they done that at home, but with their high-speed rail networks and development corridors, they've opened the door to unprecedented development for any number of nations. So you have much of the world rallied in support of what China is doing, even if people don't feel they can speak out fully on this in the way that they might otherwise do.

### **Lincoln's lasting gift**

The beauty of this, to me—in one sense the "gift that keeps on giving", from Lincoln—is the Transcontinental Railroad. That has not only transformed the economic geography of the United States, but it's also transformed the entire world, and continues to do so. And what we can conceivably do in the solar system is that much more exciting to contemplate.

Looking at this from the standpoint of the longer sweep of history is what's critical. If we do that, then we don't get trapped. If you go tit-for-tat, trying to refute some new set of lies that people heard within the last five minutes, it's just thankless and you get nowhere. Better look to the longer waves, and you can always ask people a few questions. They think they're "anti-communist"? You could ask, "Well, why did the British conduct the Opium Wars against China in the 1830s and '40s? Was that because China was a communist monolith, and they needed to 'liberate' people through dope?"

If you consider what Churchill did to quash food relief efforts to India during the Bengal famine of 1942-43, it's so horrifying that it almost defies description. An estimated three million out of the 60 million people in Bengal, India died from starvation and diseases caused by malnutrition, during the famine of 1943. Shashi Tharoor, a historian and a diplomat at the UN, from India, said: "Churchill deliberately ordered the diversion of food from starving Indian civilians to well-supplied British soldiers, and even to top off existing European stockpiles that were prepared for the yet un-liberated nations of Greece and Yugoslavia." Rather than getting emergency food supplies to those people in Bengal, he had three million of them killed; Churchill didn't lift a finger. Will Durant, an American writer of some note from the 1930s, said that Britain's "conscious and deliberate bleeding of India was the greatest crime in all of human history" at that time.

Did Churchill starve these people, and kill them, in 1943, because they were communists? No. Why did the British oppose the American Revolution? Was Washington a communist? Think about it; think about the stupid reasons people give, like, "Well, of course the Ukrainians are doing such-and-such, because it's Putin." So, it's no longer even "communists"? It's just "Putin"? Think about how stupid and shallow people are! There are ways you can liberate them from that, when you think about some of these things: If you look at it in this larger geopolitical, nightmarish context that was created to prevent anything like the development that the United States had undergone in the late 19th century and into the early 20th century from ever recurring. *That was the purpose* of the geopolitics of Mackinder. That's what was played out all through the 20th century.

And yet, the Chinese have still done this. They've still done it.

## The Nazi roots of the ‘Indo-Pacific strategy’

By Richard Bardon

The “Indo-Pacific strategy”, formally adopted in 2018 but pursued under three US Administrations since President Barack Obama’s “Asia Pivot of 2011, is neither original, nor has it anything to do with keeping the seas and trade routes of southern Asia “free and open” in the face of China’s alleged plans to take over the world. Rather, the *US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific*, declassified in early 2021, confirms that its main purpose is to “maintain US primacy” via continued US “economic, diplomatic and military access to the most populous region of the world”, including by forging the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) into a NATO-style bloc opposed to China, so that Washington can continue to enforce the so-called “free markets” that enable its corporations to leech off of Asia’s economic growth.

And the strategy by which Washington intends to achieve this varies little from that proposed under the same name a century ago by German geopolitical theorist Karl Haushofer (1896-1946), as a maritime pseudo-colonial version of the ethno-nationalist doctrine he developed to justify Nazi Germany’s invasions and ethnic cleansing on the Eurasian mainland.

According to then-US National Security Advisor Robert O’Brien, “the concept of a free and open Indo-Pacific [was] first advanced by Japan”. In 2007 then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe gave a speech in India in which he “called for a ‘broader Asia’ spanning the Pacific and Indian Oceans”, a concept he extended all the way to Africa in a 2016 speech in Kenya. As a December 2019 paper by Harvard University historian Hansong Li<sup>1</sup> reveals, however, Abe did not invent, but rather only revived the concept. “In fact”, Li wrote, “a full-fledged account of the concept was born ... in Haushofer’s major treatise on political geography, *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans* (“Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean”), published in 1924.

### ‘Lebensraum’ on water

Born in 1869 in Munich in what was then the Kingdom of Bavaria (Germany was not unified until 1871), Haushofer joined the Army at the age of 18, graduated from the Bavarian War Academy in the late 1890s, and in 1908 was sent as a military attaché to Germany’s diplomatic mission in Tokyo, tasked with studying the strategy and tactics of the Imperial Japanese Army while acting as a military advisor and artillery instructor.

Following his return to Germany in 1910, he gained his PhD with a thesis titled “Reflections on Greater Japan’s military strength, world position, and future”. Haushofer had also studied the works of the British Empire’s “father of geopolitics” Halford Mackinder, whose theory that whoever controls the “Eurasian Heartland” of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Russia could rule the world, expounded in the 1904 paper “The Geographical Pivot of History”, has been the basis of so-called “great-power competition” ever since. Incorporating into this theory the notions of racial superiority and “blood and soil” ethno-nationalism promoted in Germany by the paganistic Thule Society, of which he was a member,

Haushofer developed—and, from 1923 onwards, popularised via his monthly *Journal of Geopolitics*—the concept that all nations must necessarily compete in a dog-eat-dog contest for *Lebensraum*, “living space”, in pursuit of which Germany must conquer and populate with “Aryans” the territories to its east.

Modern historians tend to downplay Haushofer’s association with Adolf Hitler, claiming that it was mainly indirect, via his student Rudolf Hess, Hitler’s long-time ally who was deputy *Führer* of the Nazi Party in 1933-41. Yet Haushofer regularly visited Hess and Hitler while they served time in prison for the Nazis’ attempt to overthrow the Bavarian government in 1923 (the so-called Beer Hall Putsch), during which visits he and Hess ghost-wrote much of Hitler’s manifesto *Mein Kampf*. “During those prison visits”, *EIR magazine* reported in 2001, “Mackinder’s dogma ... became transformed in the pages of *Mein Kampf* into the necessity for a *Drang nach Osten* (“Drive to the East”) for *Lebensraum*”, ultimately expressed in the Nazis’ invasion of Czechoslovakia that set off World War II.

Haushofer’s works were also quickly translated into Japanese, and became a cornerstone of Imperial Japan’s so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a.k.a. invasion and subjugation of neighbouring countries before and during WWII, which presumably explains Abe’s familiarity with Haushofer’s Indo-Pacific theory.

Hansong Li explains that Haushofer formulated his Indo-Pacific concept as a means to counter Germany’s rivals in the contest for influence in Asia by supporting the sovereignty—under German tutelage—of China, India, Japan, and the colonised nations of Southeast Asia, to shore them up as a bulwark against both the entrenched French and British, and the recently arrived USA (which had annexed the Philippines in 1898). “Given the long history of EurAmerican involvement in South, Southeast and East Asia”, Li wrote, “it was too late and too costly for Germany to operate as a colonial-imperial power in the region. Haushofer’s solution is to convert the region into a self-conscious political body, with German-educated Indian leaders on the front lines of anti-colonial resistance.... In this way, a soft but robust maritime Indo-Pacific would complement Germany’s continental developments in good times, and come to its aid in the absence of good fortune.” Regional ethnic divisions and “spatial determinism”—*Lebensraum* by another name—were to be emphasised, however, in hopes that every nation would consider Germany a better friend than its own neighbours.

Beneath the fluff about “freedom” and “democracy”, the USA’s *Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific* differs from Haushofer’s original only in that rather than supplanting incumbent external powers, it seeks to maintain its own “preferred partner” status.



Karl Haushofer (1869-1946)

*This article has been adapted from the version published in the AAS of 20 January 2021.*

1. “The Indo-Pacific: Intellectual origins and international receptions in global contexts”, published in *Europe in Flux*, Yale University, 17 July 2020.