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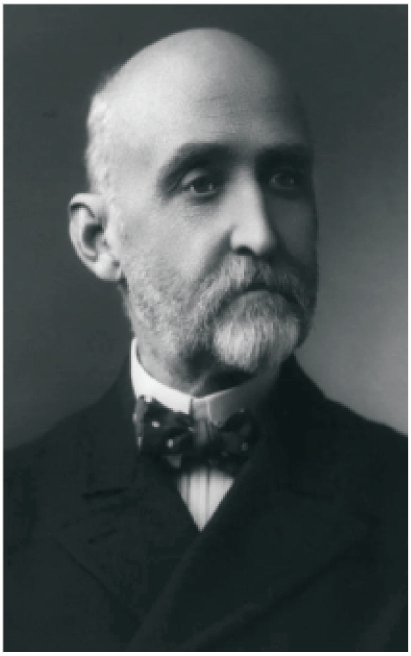

Mahan and Mackinder

Addressing the False Dichotomy in the Eurasian Pivot Theory

Philip Reid

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The Heartland Debate

For eight decades, the name Halford Mackinder has proven to be a source of fascination and controversy. Whether critic or disciple, the genesis of all individual interest may be traced to the same curiosity experienced whenever the 'Heartland' thesis, particularly what Colin Grey would call 'its devastating simplicity', is encountered for the first time.[1] The historical determinism the British geographer ascribed to the Eurasian interior in 1904, has evoked reactions from deep scientific scepticism to mystic jingoism. Endlessly regurgitated, the process of the Mackinder review has become a niche within International Relations theory that has evolved over time but retained a number of core themes. Mackinder faced stigma within his own lifetime due to an unsolicited association with the militarism of the Third Reich by way of Karl Haushofer, the German General and strategist who re-worked the 'Heartland' idea into his proposals for German autarky.[2] During the Cold War, critics would highlight the implications of new technologies for frontal warfare and the depth Mackinder claimed for the Eurasian Heartland, a trend that would be exacerbated by the communications revolution and the globalizing zeitgeist of the late-Twentieth Century.

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1 Milan Hauner, *What is Asia to Us? Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today,* London and New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 137

2 Kees Van Der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class,* Verso Books, London, 1984

In the post-Soviet era, however, a discourse emerged under the impetus of 'critical geopolitics' that not only reflected the anti-positivist influence of the Frankfurt School but also echoed earlier Soviet refutations of political geography prior to Stalin's censure of the subject in the late-1920s. Critical theorists have sought to deconstruct the Heartland theory by deprecating Mackinder personally, his relationship with the British imperial government, and other aspects of his life and character. Not only has the geographer attracted the very clichés of early-Twentieth Century militarism in opposition to which he saw himself writing, but the critical approach relies on a familiar Marxist dialectic that dismisses outright general assumptions regarding the political or military importance of space. In the post-Soviet and developing worlds, however, Mackinder's ideas have retained their appeal. In Russia, Central Asia, and India in particular, his ideas enjoy the degree of critical distance that permits the diverse legacies of Clausewitz, Kautilya, Sun Tzu, and Machiavelli, to be weighed objectively by academics and military strategists.

If Mackinder can be considered deserving of a place in this corpus at all, it is by virtue of his having articulated more categorically, but only ever with what he caveated was a 'teacher's eye for generalization', the strategic relationship between a smaller, offshore maritime state and a larger continental power on the Eurasian land mass.[3] The invention of the combustion engine would portend two separate Victorian transport revolutions. But, while the twilight of the age of sail brought significant advances in naval mobility, the iron railroad dramatically enhanced the relative speed of overland transportation: a rivalry Mackinder traces through the Mongols, Vikings, Huns, and bronze-age Thalassocracies. In 1904, however, history had furnished few examples supporting his general theory, and the pivot idea would gain currency in Western foreign policy circles only with the victory of the Soviet Union in the Second World War. This is but one of several contradictions and unsubstantiated threads bequeathed by a Mackinderian philosophy that while, undoubtedly

[3] Halford Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 4, Jul., 1943, p. 595

aggrandized out of all proportion to its intellectual depth, it is being denied objective scrutiny in the Twenty-First Century.

This author identifies four justifications for resurrecting the 'Heartland debate' in the present day. Firstly, as the critical discourse in the United States and Europe descends into barely-disguised vitriol, serious questions may be raised regarding its objectivity, particularly in the study of military and imperial history. Successive foreign policy shocks of the past decade have also heralded the end of the 'end of history' moment as the tacit claim of the United States to the provision of universal security and, to some extent, values, has been undermined by a revival of authoritarianism, regressive fundamentalism, and acts of great power expansion inconceivable in the post-bellum hubris of the 1990s. Real and potential conflicts in the Baltic, Ukraine, Korean Peninsula, and China's near seas, evoke enduring Mackinderian themes of contiguity and competition between Eurasian 'land' and offshore 'sea' powers. This is also discernible in the case of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), President Xi's signature foreign policy concept, and the third justification in the view of this author, for a resumption of the Heartland debate. No foreign policy platform in recent history has so conspicuously evoked the spirit of Mackinder by ostensibly outlining a road map for one state's political domination of the Eurasian land mass through overland lines of communication.

Finally, where the Heartland concept has thrived, it has often been distorted to the point of hyperbole. In editing *Central Asia in International Relations*, an eclectic collection of essays on Mackinder's legacy published in 2013, Nick Megoran expresses his dismay at the trend towards 'superficial' invocations of the Mackinder name and signature concept.[4] Indeed, 'one hundred years ago, Sir Halford Mackinder wrote about the Heartland' still appears as a stock preface in authorships demonstrating little evidence of primary scholarship. A by-product of this has been the entrenchment of a 'Mahan versus Mackinder' false dichotomy, whereby the two Edwardian writers are carelessly juxtaposed as the Western champions of 'sea power'

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4 Nick Megoran and Sevara Sharapova, eds. *Central Asia in International Relations: The Legacies of Halford Mackinder*, London, Hurst and Company, pp. 292–293

and 'land power', respectively. This essay will briefly review Mackinder's critical legacy which has so often failed to recognize not only the shared worldview revealed by a deeper reading of both authors but some obvious flaws in the geographer's geopolitical imagination. The enduring relevance of the Edwardian *Weltanschauung* will then be objectively weighed in the context of contemporary developments on a Eurasian land mass which is less stable than at any time in the past three decades.

A Century of Critique

While his worldview is adequately expressed in other works, it is in the *Geographical Pivot of History* and *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, published in 1904 and 1919 respectively, that Mackinder outlines the boundaries of his Heartland abstract. While some scholars, Brian Blouet for example, have attempted to draw a distinction between the 1904 'Pivot' and the 1919 'Heartland', the two models are broadly correlative, the latter being an expanded rendition of the former which accommodates the technological advances of the First World War, and emphasizes the strategic importance of Eastern Europe. After his influence on Haushofer was stigmatized by the American wartime press, Mackinder responded to an invitation from *Foreign Affairs* magazine, and published *The Round World and the Winning of the Peace*, in which he further refines the Heartland idea, and delivers his prognosis on impending Soviet victory. Four years later, in 1947, Mackinder's death would precipitate the first of what his most prominent scholars agree to have been three distinct phases of a post-War Heartland debate: an early-Cold War rediscovery supervened in turn by revivals in the 1980s and 1990s.

The 1904 'pivot' thesis rests on three key precepts. Firstly, Mackinder's 'Heartland', broadly conterminous with but not confined to the open Steppe region between Eastern Europe and Manchuria, enjoys an innate strategic value by virtue of its inaccessibility to 'sea power': a dynamic concept but one recognized by his peers as commensurate with the reach of the British Empire, its navy as well as its economic and political proxies. Secondly, an absence of geographic barriers in the Heartland is favourable to omnidirectional expansionism by 'land power', quadruped or mechanized. For Mackinder, Russian discretion to 'fling' military power from one side of the Eurasian land mass to the other was a perpetuation of the Mongol legacy, and circumferentially symmetrical to the distribution of British naval power around the Eurasian Land Mass.[5] Thirdly, Mackinder ascribes varying degrees of importance, across his publications, to the region's proven and estimated telluric resources. O'Hara and Hefferman believe this to have been influenced by the early-1900s Caucasian oil boom; but Mackinder also makes repeated references to ferrous and non-ferrous mineral deposits and the Steppe's agrarian potential.[6] That is to say, his Pivot Theory also posits a Heartland strategic advantage that is not based solely on mobility efficiency vis-à-vis the periphery but might take the form of a sedentary 'economic world, more or less apart', and the cradle of a civilization or empire.[7]

The implied threat of a Eurasia unified by hegemonic power has remained the single most transferable quality across Mackinder's legacy; yet the conflict between these three Heartland characteristics, less complimentary than might be supposed, is a remarkably extant flaw in Mackinder's logic, one seldom addressed in a century of scholarship. This is not the contradiction seen by Milan Hauner in 1989 — the objection that the Heartland cannot be considered impervious to sea power 'penetration', an expression used by Mackinder in 1919 as allied expeditionary forces swarmed over the disintegrating Russian Empire, when the threat motif of the Pivot Paper points to the encroachment of the continental hegemon on Eurasia's periphery via the same lines of communication.[8] This is partially explained by the cultural and institutional idiosyncrasies Mackinder associates with 'Heartland' and 'offshore' powers as well as the intended flexibility of his

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5 Halford Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", *The Geographical Journal*, 23, no. 4, April 1904, 443

6 O'Hara, Sarah and Hefferman, Michael. "From Geostrategy to Geo-Economics: The Heartland and British Imperialism Before and After Mackinder", in *Central Asia in International Relations*, eds. Nick Megoran and Sevara Sharapova, London: Hurst and Company, 2013, p. 104

7 Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*, National Defence University Press Classic Edition, (1942), p. 191

8 Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, p.122

model. 'It is obvious that only a first approximation to truth can be hoped for', Mackinder would caveat in 1904 — 'I shall be humble to my critics'.[9] Yet, it is possible, however, that where not distracted by the technological and social revolutions of the late Twentieth Century, the geographer's critics have been too patient with his basic theory.

A brief literature review of the Mackinderian corpus will be given here by way of its four most recognizable critiques. Indeed, the debate is now so refined that Mackinder's legacy boasts its own taxonomy, and Hauner and Megoran as well as Chris Seiple, have employed a similar fourfold analysis. The first of these, as discussed above, is a revisionist over-emphasis on the *fin de siècle* imperial context that produced the writers now considered formative in the development of political geography, at the expense of the theory itself. The scope of this essay precludes a detailed literature review of what increasingly appears to be an outgrowth of Western post-modernism, and it is sufficient to state the basic argument of the critical position since the mid-1990s. This centres largely on the geopolitical 'gaze' and the Manichean worldview that it is felt to impose which, according to critical theorists, constitutes an incitement to militarism rather than an analytical tool for its distillation.[10] The deprecation of geopolitics as a 'pseudo-science' has been upheld by a number of contemporary writers — Megoran for example who, in 2004, saw geopolitical theory as less the establishment of independent facts, than the 'the disclosure of contingent political arguments by the use of apparently objective language'.[11] Similar

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9 Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", op. cit., p. 427

10 Gerry Kearns, "Naturalising Empire: Echoes of Mackinder for the Next American Century?", *Geopolitics* 11:74–98, 2006, p. 81

11 Nick Megoran, "Revisiting the Pivot: The Influence of Halford Mackinder on Analysis of Uzbekistan's International Relations", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 170, No. 4; "Halford Mackinder and the 'Geographical Pivot of History'", Dec., 2004, pp. 347358, published by Wiley for The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), at http://www.jstor.org/stable/3451464, p. 349; Eldar Ismailov, *The Heartland Theory and the Present-Day Geopolitical Structure of Central Eurasia*, Central Asian and Caucasus Institute, p. 89, at https://www.silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/Monographs/1006Rethinking-4.pdf.

judgements were made in the mid-2000s by Eldar Ismailov and Mark Polelle; but this was the perpetuation of an intellectual zeitgeist initiated a decade earlier by Johnathan Agnew, Simon Dalby, and Gerard O'Tuathail who penned *Critical Geopolitics* in 1996.[12]

Above all, however, critical theorists rely on collocating the Anglo-American geopolitical tradition, with the continental writers considered responsible for the two early-Twentieth Century episodes of German aggression. In *Geopolitics and Empire*, Gerry Kearns hypothesizes three consequences of Mackinder's legacy: Nazi expansionism in the 1930s; American containment strategy during the Cold War; and the post-Soviet ambitions of the United States.[13] As a case in point, there is little doubt that, with each of Kearns' examples, the indirect influence of Mackinder's ideas is reckonable; yet this, and many similar assertions, are fundamentally flawed in a number of respects. Published in early 2022, *The Atlantic Realists* offers an exhaustive genealogy of Twentieth-Century geopolitics. Matthew Specter correctly highlights the tenuous academic distinction between interwar idealism and American *realpolitik*, and responds to what is a glaring inconsistency in the development of post-war realism — that is to say, its re-invention post-hoc in the United States as a 'classical' discipline, disavowing much of its early-Twentieth Century legacy. Nevertheless, while Specter limits his objective to the identification of a North-Atlantic literary milieu alone, highly palpable is a collective indictment of the political geographers for Europe's last great power conflict. Guilty by epistemic association with Ratzel and Haushofer, Alfred Mahan, Isiah Bowman, Walter Lippman, Nicholas Spykman, Hans Morgenthau, Henry Kissinger, and Halford Mackinder are all convicted of racist or imperialist clichés, echoing what Specter himself concedes was a hysterical purge by the American press during World War Two. Yet, while post-war realism is described in damning language as the 'semantic refuge for fugitives from Nazi

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[12] Ismailov, *The Heartland Theory*, p. 89; Nick Megoran, "Revisiting the Pivot", p. 349

[13] Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 16

geopolitics', the basic arguments of geopolitical theory are never approached.[14]

This is consistent with a critical approach that not only fails to polemicize arguments made by realists, including defensive realists, but attempts to disassociate itself from what is obviously a wider and unresolved debate in International Relations. The starting point for this idealized view of international relations — that conflict is both avoidable and possessed of a moral dimension — limns the broader liberal defence against realism since John Locke. Critical geopolitics perpetuates not only the Marxist characterization of political geography as a bourgeois mythicism but also a Postmodern cultural narcissism that excludes established realist schools of thought outside the Western tradition. Gerry Kearns' reading of John Mearsheimer, which exhibits the Marxist and post-colonial hermeneutics of 'suspicion' on the subject of informal Anglo-American imperialism without acknowledging the existence or agency of other hostile actors, is a good example of this.[15]

The other great powers of the late-Nineteenth Century — Russia Japan and France — claim their own realist and geopolitical legacies; and the realist tradition in Asia is traceable by way of Sun Tzu, Wu Qi, and Kautiliya as well as the early-Twentieth Century Japanese strategists whose influence on Karl Haushofer is acknowledged by Specter.[16] Specter makes a fleeting allusion to the rise of despots in Russia and Turkey at the time of publication, but in a work that seeks to attribute Twentieth Century jingoism entirely to Mackinder's North-Atlantic peers and successors, a single sentence on other global actors would appear somewhat deficient.[17] The 'Teutonic' character of late Nineteenth Century geopolitics is entirely logical. During the most formative period in the development of geography as an academic discipline, the United States, Germany and the British Empire were the

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[14] Matthew Specter, *The Atlantic Realists: Empire and International Political Thought Between Germany and the United States*, Stanford University Press, 2022, p. 135

[15] Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire*, op. cit., pp. 251–254

[16] Specter, *The Atlantic Realists*, op. cit. p. 65

[17] Specter, *The Atlantic Realists*, op. cit., p. p. 209

most powerful industrialized states on earth, engaging in a competition for space the scale of which had never before been witnessed in human history. Mackinder has been deemed a peripheral establishment figure at best, and Haushofer's interrogation, during which he protested both the work of his transatlantic peers and political pressure in Germany after 1933, revealed that his direct influence over German policy, which had betrayed designs on Eastern Europe prior to the publication of the Pivot Theory, had been greatly exaggerated.[18]

Nevertheless, while a succession of scholars, Hans Wiegert for example, Brian Blouet, and Chris Seiple, has sought to qualify the Haushofer link and vindicate Halford Mackinder, the latter was, by any definition, a conservative advocate of Britain's global prerogative, and his views were consistent with the 'forward school' of late-Victorian strategic thought.[19] Kearns' somewhat Freudian analysis of Mackinder's childhood influences and pastimes reveals more than a merely passive intellectual. The question most pertinent to the post-Soviet debate, however, is whether his obvious conviction sufficiently negates the basic precepts of Mackinder's theory: the relevance of Inner Eurasia and the Land-Sea dichotomy under conditions of global closure — what might be considered, as Strausz-Hupé would later argue in defence of geopolitics outside the Third Reich, 'an objectively valid set of observations about international relations'.[20]

The principle weakness of the Marxist legacy from which critical geopolitics derives its legitimacy, understood by Hauner but unaddressed by Seiple, is a failure to entirely purge the spatial element from its utopian vision of international relations.[21] Citing the observations of Oskar von Niedermeyer,

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[18] Brian W. Blouet, *Halford Mackinder: A Biography*, Texas A&M University Press, p. 190

[19] Chris Seiple, *Revisiting the Geo-Political Thinking of Sir Halford John Mackinder: United States-Uzbekistan Relations 1991–2005, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy*, Tufts University, 2007, p. 23. Blouet, "Mackinder: Imperialism, the Empire of India and Central Asia", in *Central Asia in International Relations*, eds. Nick Megoran and Sevara Sharapova, London: Hurst and Company, 2013, p. 51

[20] Gearóid Ó. Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, Routledge; 1st edition, 19 Sept. 1996, p. 127

[21] Hauner, *What is Asia to Us?* op. cit., pp. 218–222

Hauner notes Haushofer's popularity with the Soviet General Staff, despite the prohibition of his work in the Soviet Union.[22] Stalin's censure of the political geographers would coincide with his restitution of Eurasian empire and a Russian geopolitical continuum bridging the social revolution of 1917, is a central tenet of Heartland advocates, one dealt with assiduously by Milan Hauner.[23] The argument that the Sinic champions of Marxist-Leninism have, and continue to, interpret strategic imperatives through the lens of political geography, is a strong one. Indeed, the absence from contemporary critical accounts of the People's Republic of China — a nominally-Marxist Leninist state that has assimilated more square miles of territory than any other in the Twentieth Century and whose current military doctrine boasts of the country's 'spatial superiority', is striking.[24] While a hyper-connected and deterritorialized urban nexus may see spatial considerations as inherently Manichean and anathema to its own existence, so long as the 'geopolitical gaze' is practised by more than one competing state with a territorially-defined Weberian monopoly on force, then the Pivot idea cannot be lightly dismissed as a class-imposed false consciousness.

The three longstanding critiques, therefore, constitute the essence of the Heartland debate beyond critical geopolitics. The first of these, what Nick Megoran would describe in 2004 as an attempt to 'rubber-stamp the reduction of twenty-five centuries of history to timeless spatial truths', drew the attention of Mackinder's Royal Geographic Society audience at the Pivot Paper's presentation in 1904.[25] Leo Amery, Spencer Wilkinson,

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22 Hauner, *What is Asia to Us?* op. cit., p. 170

23 Strausz-Hupé, *Strategy and Values: Selected Writings of Robert Strausz-Hupé*, eds. R. Kitner and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr, Lexington Books, D.C. Heath and Company, Massachusetts, 1974, pp. 98, 122

24 Academy of Military Science, The Science of Military Strategy (2013), Academy of Military Science of the People's Republic of China, Military Strategy Studies Department (2013), Translated by Project Everest, United States Air University, 303, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Translations/2021-02-08%20Chinese%20Military%20Thoughts-%20In%20their%20own%20words%20Science%20of%20Military%20Strategy%202013.pdf

25 Megoran, *Revisiting the Pivot*, op. cit., pp. 347–358

and Thomas Holditch all rejected the simplistic representation of a Eurasian interior in competition with its periphery as well as Mackinder's grandiloquent use of socio-anthropological idioms — 'Latinized-Teuton' and 'Graeco-Slav' for example. His generalizations also drew criticism from Donald Meinig and William Gordon East in the early-Cold War debate.[26]

This detraction will not be examined here in detail, not least because the general and formative nature of his theory is quite obviously conceded by the geographer himself. It is important to recognize however, Mackinder's apparent reliance on the Mongol Khanates as a historical case study to support his conjecture that a politically unified Eurasian land mass would inevitably dominate marginal and offshore areas. The unsuccessful Yuan-Mongol invasions of Japan and Java in the Thirteenth Century, however, do in fact sustain a viable counter-thesis against the idea of a 'historically' proven Heartland hegemon, as does the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War, thirteen months after the publication of the Pivot paper. This vein of critique would be provided with supporting case studies by the events of the Twentieth Century. The short-lived ascent of 'Teuton over Slav' in Eastern Europe, for example, two decades after Mackinder proposed an independent bloc stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea to prevent such an outcome, did not ultimately result in the German conquest of the World Island. Indeed, in 1955, Arthur Hall would describe failure of the 'middle tier' in Eastern Europe as a conspicuous shortcoming in the Mackinderian philosophy.[27]

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[26] Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", op. cit., p. 440; see also, Donald Meinig, "Heartland and Rimland in Eurasian History", *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 3, September, 1956, p. 560, University of Utah for the Western Political Science Association, at http://www.jstor.org/stable/444454; William Gordon East, "How Strong is the Heartland?", *Foreign Affairs*, October 1950, p. 78

[27] Arthur Hall, "Mackinder and the Course of Events", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 45, No. 2, June, 1955, p. 126, Taylor & Francis, for the Association of American Geographers, at https://www.jstor.org/stable/2561417, accessed: 12. 01.2019, 21:47 UTC

The admission in 1943 that, 'for the first time in history, the greatest natural fortress on earth' would be manned 'by a garrison sufficient both in number and quality', implies Mackinder's awareness that his Geographical Pivot 'of history' had been lacking a historical alibi.[28] The 1945 borders of the Soviet Union would encompass all of the original Pivot Area, and the Warsaw Pact, most of the 1919 Heartland. During the years of Sino-Soviet entente, the People's Republic of China may also be absorbed into this abstract. The momentum of contiguous Heartland expansionism was detectable first in Northern Iran and Xinjiang, then later in Korea, Hungary, Laos and Vietnam.[29] A broad selection of these stock alibis for the pivot concept has again been tested by Milan Hauner; and the Soviet-era also offers numerous examples of strategic 'trade-offs' on opposite sides of the Eurasian land mass: the essence of the pivot idea.[30] While a largely autarkic network of railroads, industrial combines and pipelines resembled Mackinder's prophecy of a Eurasian interior 'inaccessible to oceanic commerce', 1989 symbolized the triumph of international maritime capitalism, and the Soviet Navy never seriously challenged Western sea control.[31] The unrealized omnipotence of Eurasian hegemony in this sense, is held as evidence against the Heartland Theory by Geoffrey Parker and Soren Scholvein, for example, as well as by Arthur Hall who saw the favourable balance of power in 1955 as having discredited the strategic advantage of the World Island.[32]

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28 Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace", op. cit., p. 601

29 Megoran and Sharapova, *Central Asia in International Relations*, op. cit., p. 19

30 See, for example, Strausz-Hupé's remarking on the 'liquidation of the West Berlin salient' in return for Khruschev's support in Asia, Strausz-Hupé, *Strategy and Values*, op. cit., p. 123. See also, Mao's shelling of islands in the Taiwan Strait in 1958 as a direct response to the US invasion of the Lebanon. Henry Kissinger, *On China*, (Penguin Press, 2011) p. 173

31 Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, op. cit., p. 191

32 Arthur Hall, "Mackinder and the Course of Events", op. cit., p. 121; Levent Hekimoglu, "The Heartland Fallacy", in *Central Asia in International Relations*, eds. Nick Megoran and Sevara Sharapova, London: Hurst and Company, 2013, p. 281; Soren Scholvein, *An Overview of Concepts and Empirical Examples from International Relations*, Finnish Institute of International Affairs Working Paper, 2016, p. 15 https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/196701/wp91-Geopolitics.pdf

This third critique, however, is in part a consequence of Mackinder's failure to sufficiently define the Heartland concept along either sedentary or nomadic lines. The first scholar to recognize this produced, perhaps, the debate's most celebrated polemic, one however that has further entrenched what remains an unaddressed contradiction. Written in 1942, *America's Strategy in World Politics*: *The United States and the Balance of Power* is considered an important conceptual bridge between the Edwardian political geographers and the post-war development of realism in the United States.[33] While not citing Mackinder by name, Nicholas Spykman reworks the Heartland concept into his 'Rimland' theory, a polemical antonym premised on the general observation that the most prolific historical areas of 'human activity' have been situated on the Eurasian periphery or 'Rimland', and not in the Heartland, a region he otherwise recognizes geographically.[34] Like the Pivot Paper, the book's leitmotif justifying American intervention in the Second World War, is defensive: Spykman contrasts Eurasia's superior natural resource endowment with that of the Americas rather than the British Commonwealth.[35]

While retaining a political emphasis on the Rimland, Spykman's introduction of national aggregate 'war potential' alongside other geopolitical orthodoxies, such as 'land power' and 'sea power', suggests a sedentary reading of the 1904 and 1919 theses, and his interpretation was upheld both by Arthur Hall in 1955, and Donald Meinig in 1956.[36] For Hauner, the Soviet Union was the archetypal Heartland state in 1989 due to the economic development of Siberia, not its spatial domination of the Eurasian land mass, echoing arguments made by both Dennis Mills in

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33 Nicholas Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and The Balance of Power*, Yale University Press, 1942

34 Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, op. cit., p. 182

35 Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, op. cit., p. 299

36 Arthur Hall, "Mackinder and the Course of Events", op. cit., p. 109–126. Meinig, "Heartland and Rimland in Eurasian History", op. cit., pp. 553–569; See also, Hauner, *What is Asia to Us*, op. cit.

1956, and David Hooson in 1964.[37] The Rimland idea, however, is in fact far more reliant on Mackinder's pivot model than is often recognized. Indeed, while he emphasizes the importance of the Rimland, Meinig largely articulates his own threat motif by reference to Soviet lines of communication extending into the Eurasian interior.[38] That in 1904 the metropole of the Eurasian hegemon was located on the Baltic Coast, was quite apparent to Mackinder, and his awareness of the Rimland's importance is only attested by his foreboding on the subject of the Russo-German entente.

By the time *Central Asia in International Relations* was published in 2013, the confusion between the two interpretations is manifest, with not one scholar among the book's thirteen contributors posing the question perhaps most pertinent to the debate: if the Eurasian Heartland possessed no resources or settled population, would it retain its strategic value? Levent Hekimoglu upholds the canonical interpretation of Spykman who, he believes, rejected Mackinder's vision of Central Asia as 'a treasure of resources and wealth capable of nurturing and sustaining a world power'.[39] Blouet, on the other hand, notes that in the Heartland Theory, Central Asia appears not as part of 'a putative resource-rich pivot that might facilitate the emergence of world empire' but as 'a launching post for the invasion of India'.[40] Kearns, also a contributor to the book, argues that Mackinder repeatedly describes the Heartland, 'as the springboard for a challenge to British interests'.[41] Yet, in the same chapter, he asserts that, 'Central Asia and the Caucasus

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37 Dennis R. Mills, "The U.S.S.R.: A re appraisal of Mackinder's Heartland Concept", *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 1956, 72:3, pp. 144–153, DOI: 10.1080/00369225608735653; David Hooson, "A New Soviet Heartland?", *The Geographical Journal*, March 1962, Vol. 128, No. 1, pp. 19–29, The Royal Geographical Society of the Institute of British Geographers, at https://www.jstor.org/stable/1794108

38 Meinig, "Heartland and Rimland in Eurasian History", op. cit., p. 568

39 Megoran and Sharipova, eds. *Central Asia in International Relations,* op. cit., p. 277

40 Megoran and Sharipova, eds. *Central Asia in International Relations,* op. cit., p. 23

41 Megoran and Sharipova, eds. *Central Asia in International Relations,* op. cit., p. 24

was presented primarily as a threatening set of resources'.[42] Hekimoglu sees as 'unequivocal' Mackinder's 1943 emphasis on Eurasia's resources and sedentary potential, despite the geographer's numerous allusions in *The Round World and the Winning of the Peace* to the Heartland's 'defensive position'.[43]

An exhaustive review of the 1904, 1919, and 1943 theses will return no explicit affirmation of one Heartland quality over the other. While extolling the hegemonic potential of the Steppe's growing sedentary population, Mackinder also gave three criteria to his 1904 audience, which he believed were necessary for the establishment of a Eurasian world empire: 'inner land mobility', 'external sea forces', and 'a margin densely populated'.[44] Consequently, in his view, 'the substitution of some new control of the inland area for that of Russia' would not 'reduce the geographical significance of the pivot position'.[45] This statement is entirely compatible with the Rimland concept articulated by Nicholas Spykman.

America's Strategy in World Politics may be seen as incorporating both a vibrant interwar debate between idealism and realism as well as a separate discourse, led by Arnold Wolfers and Edward Mead Earle in the United States, and by Giulio Douhet and Hugh Trenchard in Europe, weighing the implications of new battlefield technologies for subsequent conflicts. Spykman believed that air rather than sea power would determine the outcome of seaborne invasions, and that carrier warfare would be excluded from littoral areas: a conjecture only partially borne out by the conflicts of his time, and untested during the Cold War impasse.[46] The distortion of

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42 Gerry Kearns, "Imperialism and the Heartland", in *Central Asia in International Relations*, eds. Nick Megoran and Sevara Sharapova, London: Hurst and Company, 2013, p. 89

43 Hekimoglu, "The Heartland Fallacy", p. 275

44 Milan Hauner, "Russia's Asian Heartland Today and Tomorrow", in *Central Asia in International Relations,* eds. Nick Megoran and Sevara Sharipova, London: Hurst and Company, 2013, p. 143

45 Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", op. cit., p. 437

46 Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, op. cit., p. 33

conventional battlespace breadth and depth by the technological advances of the Twentieth Century, many still untested under conditions of total war, is the fourth and, perhaps, the most objective Heartland critique. This was also an original feature of the discussion in 1904, when Leo Amery would demur that future air power, perceived in the maiden flight of the Kitty Hawk one month earlier, would cause 'a great deal of this geographical distribution' to 'lose its importance'; it also constituted Isiah Bowman's defence against comparisons of his work to Mackinder and Haushofer.[47]

Mackinder, however, did accommodate the observable effects of modern military technology through a contiguous expansion of his Heartland abstract. Citing the mining of the Sound and the failure of the Gallipoli campaign, he added both the Baltic and Black Sea littorals to the envelope of land power pre-potency in 1919.[48] The aftermath of the Great War had, perhaps, been too early a juncture to fully reconcile the possible implications of military aviation with the Heartland idea; but in his final publication, nearly forty years after the Pivot lecture, Mackinder remained steadfast in refusing to accept that air power, due to its reliance on ground organization, would effect any 'permanent changes in strategic conditions'.[49]

It is not unreasonable to suggest, therefore, that the geographer would have continued to incorporate the technological revolutions that supervened his death into a 'geographical formula' he designed to 'fit any political balance'.[50] Yet, the contiguous extrapolation Mackinder elaborated so simplistically in 1919 would become more difficult to defend in the post-War Heartland debate that was commenced by William Gordon-East posing the titular question in a 1950 *Foreign Affairs* magazine article: "How Strong is the Heartland?"[51] East's hypothesis — that advancements in

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47 Chris Seiple, "Revisiting the Geo-Political Thinking of Sir Halford John Mackinder", op. cit., p. 25; see also, Specter, *The Atlantic Realists*, op. cit., p. 121

48 Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality,* op. cit., pp. 76–78; see also, Martin Gibson, *Britain's Quest for Oil: The First World War and the Peace Conference,* West Midlands: Helion and Company, 2017, p. 26

49 Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace", op. cit., p. 602

50 Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", op. cit., p. 443

51 William Gordon East, "How Strong is the Heartland?" op. cit.

ballistics and long-range aviation had undermined Eurasia's alleged imperviousness to projectable power from the periphery — would be upheld by Arthur Hall in 1955, and Dennis Mills in 1956.[52] This enduring critique, one that relies on a distinction between physical and strategic space, claims the dissolution of the traditional 'front' so integral to Mackinder's model of contiguous continental expansion.[53]

In addition to advanced ballistics, the technological revolutions that have informed the contemporary understanding of strategic space include the advent of stealth technology and drones, the shift from the use of submarines as tactical platforms to operational-level platforms, improvements in anti-aircraft technology, as well as the internet. A separate but parallel trend has seen the deprecation of land and sea power as meaningful idioms in international relations. The naval power and foreign policy relationships, realized by imperial Germany and the Soviet Union during the 20th century, have been presented as counter-theses to the binary assumptions of the Heartland orthodoxy. Eldar Ismailov, for example, considers the Russian Empire to have been a sea power by virtue of its three oceanic frontages alone.[54] Like its imperial German predecessor, the Soviet Union would maintain overseas interests premised on tenuous and extended Sea Lines of Communication, with Cuba being the most conspicuous example, but also in South-East Asia, East Africa, and the Indian Ocean. In 1958, Strausz-Hupé described Soviet foreign policy as having 'leapt over' the contiguous containment perimeter into previously denied areas: Guatemala, Egypt, Syria, and Algeria.[55] For Milan Hauner writing in 1988, Moscow's rapid naval expansion in the late-1960s and

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52 Arthur Hall, "Mackinder and the Course of Events", op. cit., p. 125; see also, Dennis Mills, "The U.S.S.R.: A re appraisal of Mackinder's Heartland Concept", Scottish Geographical Magazine 72 (December 1956), pp. 144–153

53 Patrick Porter, *The Global Village Myth: Distance, War and the Limits of Power,* London: Hurst and Company, 2015, p. 9

54 Ismailov E., "The Heartland Theory and the Present-Day Geopolitical Structure of Central Eurasia", in *Rethinking Central Asia*, 2010, The Silk Road Studies Program, The Central Asia and Caucasus Institute,

55 Strausz-Hupé, *Strategy and Values*, op. cit., p. 105–106.

1970s affirmed the 'sea power' credentials of the USSR, whose imminent demise he would otherwise correctly anticipate.[56]

The 'end of history' zeitgeist was lent much credence by the fact that the Cold War had been won without a major armed conflict, and failed to recognize both the countless proxy conflicts in the developing world and the posture of offshore Sea-Air power in the years prior to Gorbachev's domestic and foreign policy reforms. Published in 1997, *The Grand Chessboard* is a prominent reference for the Heartland debate during this period. Like Mackinder's 1904 Paper, Zbigniew Brzezinski's conceptual diminution of the Eurasian Land Mass and warning against retrenchment typifies the ambivalence of a foreign policy establishment at the apogee of hegemonic dominion. Brzezinski's 'chessboard', however, is a very different continent from Mackinder's pivot — all parts equally exposed to the political, economic, and military influence of what he identifies in the United States as the preponderant offshore power.[57] This reflected a hubristic confidence in the *Revolution in Military Affairs* that would underwrite Western policy and doctrinal initiatives such as the Partnership for Peace, the Prompt Global Strike, Full Spectrum Dominance and, ultimately, the invasion of landlocked Afghanistan. Following the successful airborne insertion of six hundred paratroopers into Kazakhstan after a non-stop flight from North Carolina, the commanding officer of the US 82nd Airborne division would declare, in the same year that *The Grand Chessboard* was published, that 'there is no place on earth we cannot get to'.[58]

While four of Brzezinski's five key 'geo-strategic pivots' were at least contiguous either to Russia or China, subsequent adaptations of the 'pivot' idea during the 2000s, by Ian Bremmer and Michael Tierney for example, would further dilute the importance of the geographical situation and the

56 Hauner, *What is Asia to Us?* op. cit., pp. 118–136.

57 Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", op. cit., p. 438.

58 Kees Van Der Pijl, "Energy Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Era", in *Global Rivalries from the Cold War to Iraq*, Pluto Press, 2006, at http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18fs7s8.15

Eurasian land mass.[59] Other writers from this period who would herald the obsolescence of the traditional 'front' in the age of information technology, satellite communications, and guided missiles, include Bruce Berkowitz and Robert Art.[60] In 2015, Christopher Fettweis would argue that 'geography is largely scenery, all but irrelevant to the most important issues of grand strategy'.[61] The academic response to this appeared largely in the form of what Nick Megoran has described as 'neoclassical' geopolitics: authors who associate themselves with the Heartland legacy 'but creatively rework it with reference to changing social, economic, political and cultural factors'. Megoran cites Saul Cohen, Everett Dolman, James Bennet and, indeed, Chris Seiple, whose defence of Mackinder relies on what Seiple describes as the geographer's 'geo-communal' progressivism, and the potential for radical Islamic militants to 'fling' power across Eurasia.[62]

Seiple's hypothesis epitomizes, in many ways, the issue of asymmetry within the Heartland debate. While the praxis of Mackinder's continental monolith was the iron railroad, it is clear that he understood projectable land and sea power as manifesting along a broad spectrum, from the material to the ethereal. Continental interiors have historically been vulnerable to myriad forms of power projection below the threshold of military invasion, from high-altitude reconnaissance, to sabotage, espionage, and influence operations conducted through embassies, consulates, and commercial entities. The geopolitical 'gaze' draws equivalence between the mounted expeditions of Francis Younghusband and the Western anabasis into Central

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59 Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York: Basic Books, 1997, pp. 46–48; Ian Bremmer, *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World*, Penguin Putnam, 2012; Michael Tierney, "Beyond the Central Eurasian Pivot", *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol. 17, Issue 1, 2016

60 Kearns, "Naturalising Empire", op. cit., p. 90

61 Christopher Fettweis, "On Heartlands and Chessboards: Classical Geopolitics, Then and Now", Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2015, at https://cfettweis.com/wp-content/uploads/On-Heartlands-and-Chessboards.pdf

62 Megoran and Sharapova, *Central Asia in Internation]al Relations*, op. cit., p. 20

Asia after 2001: while differing significantly in terms of scale and effect, both manifestations of Sea Power 'penetration' in the Heartland. The same logic may be applied to cases of non-contiguous power projection by continental powers. In the present day, the disruptive influence of Russian and Chinese state or non-state entities have attracted attention in jurisdictions as distant as South America and Vanuatu. Yet, taking the Russian Federation as a case in point, the limited spoiler effect of a Russian private security company in, say Libya, in strategic terms, is of an entirely different order from Moscow's deep and structural interests in Belarus, Kazakhstan and, of course, the Ukraine.

In addition to the contradictions discussed above, therefore, the Heartland concept also stands in need of an objective criteria by which 'penetration', 'expansion' and 'hegemony' might be effectively gauged, and the debate will remain largely hypothetical until a paradigm shift in the strategic landscape subordinates the putative technological and social revolutions of the late Twentieth Century to a material reality that appears as dystopian today as it did in 1913, 1939, and 1975. Like the German acquisition of colonies after 1884, and the ascent of Imperial *Weltpolitik* between 1896 and 1911, Soviet inroads into the Indian Ocean would stall with a sudden change in underlying conditions, in the latter instance, the abrogation of the Soviet-Egyptian friendship agreement in 1976.[63] The Soviet mutual defence treaty with Vietnam, signed two years later, was effectively negated within months by China's punitive invasion of the country's northern borderlands.[64]

Contemporary defences of asymmetry in International Relations fail to sufficiently distinguish between sea denial and sea control, and between a navy that is the artificial product of policy and natural 'sea power' that results from an inalienable set of geopolitical conditions. Constructed and organized primarily around the disruption of Western resupply convoys in the North Atlantic in the event of a ground forces confrontation in Europe, Soviet naval power relied disproportionately on the use of

63 Hauner, "Russia's Asian Heartland Today and Tomorrow", op. cit., pp. 118–136.

64 Henry Kissinger, *On China*, op. cit., p. 340

submarines.[65] This enjoyed a firm precedent. Imperial Germany's overseas possessions had accounted for a fraction of the Empire's foreign trade on the eve of the Great War, and Weimar commentators, including Karl Haushofer, would reflect on the lessons of the conflict for German 'sea power' – so confidently advocated by a previous generation of German naval officers that had been profoundly influenced by the ideas of Alfred Mahan. Consequently, National Socialist re-armament would not emulate the pursuit of sea control overseen by Alfred von Tirpitz after 1897 but sought a sub-surface fleet structure that, between 1939 and 1945, came to define what would in effect be a prelude to a third Battle of the Atlantic between offshore Sea power and Eurasian land power in its Soviet mould.

Mahan versus Mackinder

Written in 1974, Paul Kennedy's *Mahan versus Mackinder: Two Interpretations of British Sea Power* may be considered prototypal in what has become a well-entrenched corruption in the Heartland debate.[66] Kennedy's argument builds on the interwar discourse by asserting the peripheral role of naval power in both world wars. That the second conflict with Germany was decided by a terrestrial struggle for the control of Eastern Europe is deemed a sufficient validation of Mackinder, whose thesis, in Kennedy's view, correctly anticipated the pre-eminence of land power in the Twentieth Century. The extent to which the acceptance of Kennedy's dichotomy has influenced the debate has been recognizable in some national media spaces, but has traditionally encountered little in the way of academic qualification. Scholars who have attempted to cite the Edwardian pair in succinct reductions of the land-sea power diarchy include David Gompert,

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[65] David Gompert, "Sea Power and American Interests in the Western Pacific", RAND National Defence Research Institute, 2012 at https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR100/RR151/RAND_RR151.pdf, p. 33; David Blagden, "Sea Powers, Continental Powers, and Balancing Theory", *International Security* 36, No. 2, Fall 2011, p. 194, at https://www.jstor.org/stable/41289702, accessed 22.02.2019, 16:17 UTC

[66] Paul Kennedy, *Mahan versus Mackinder: Two Interpretations of British Sea Power*, Militargeschitliche Mitteilungen, 1974

Christopher Bullock, Donald Meinig, and even Chris Seiple.[67] To some extent, this reflects the burden of the Haushofer association that would entrench Mackinder's dislocation in post-War realism and as early as 1942, Stephen Mladineo's forward in the National Defence University's reprint of *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, notes the burgeoning, and in his view erroneous, trend towards contrasting Mackinder's ideas with those of Mahan.[68]

It is unsurprising, therefore, that in regions outside those where the scholarship on Mackinder has traditionally been the strongest, the recourse to 'Mahan versus Mackinder' is almost colloquial. Juxtaposing Chinese military activity in the Indian Ocean and the Depsang Valley, Zorawar Daulet Singh stated in a 2013 IDSA policy paper, that Indian strategy was 'being contested by Mackinder and Mahanian images'.[69] Such offhand associations are only defendable when used in a figurative sense, which is rarely if ever conceded, or when the alarmism of the 1904 thesis is taken purely at face value. In permitting, however, Halford Mackinder to be perceived as a policy advocate for land warfare in Britain, they are entirely misplaced.[70] He was not formally acquainted with Alfred Mahan; but on his North American tour, Mackinder lectured on 'sea power' and the 'unity of the ocean'.[71] His government career saw him charged with the administration of intra-imperial maritime trade and, like his American

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67 David Gompert, "Sea Power and American Interests in the Western Pacific", op. cit., p. 31; see also, Christopher Bullock, "China's Bluewater Ambitions: The Continental Realities of Chinese Naval Strategies", *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Summer/Fall 2002, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 57–63, Georgetown University Press, at https://www.jstor.org/stable/43134051; Chris Seiple, "Revisiting the Geo-Political Thinking of Sir Halford John Mackinder", op. cit., p. 36

68 Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, op. cit., p. xxii.

69 Zorawar Daulet Singh, "India's Geostrategy and China: Mackinder versus Mahan?", *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 7, Issue 3, pp. 137–146, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2013, p. 137

70 Blouet, *Halford Mackinder,* op. cit., p. 147

71 Blouet, "Mackinder: Imperialism, the Empire of India and Central Asia", op. cit., p. 74; Blouet, *Halford Mackinder,* op. cit., p. 144

peer, he firmly understood that Britain's imperial history and future survival was rooted in the command of the maritime commons.[72] Mackinder's proposed solution to the challenge of a railroad-girded Heartland in 1904 was not a continental army, but greater coordination of sea power resources across the British Commonwealth and New World. Mahan's recognition of the challenge presented by the railroad is also quite apparent in *The Problem of Asia and its Effect on International Policies*, published four years before the Pivot Paper, and described as its 'loose prototype'.[73]

Common to the land power abstractions of both authors is an idiosyncratic dimension characterized by autocracy, militarism, the salience of rural over cosmopolitan interests, and a tendency towards economic autarky: antithetical to the values they perceived, and indeed cherished, in the maritime world. It would be inaccurate, however, to attribute this solely to the 'Anglo-Saxon' chauvinism prevalent on both sides of the Atlantic during the late-Victorian era. Notwithstanding Haushofer's own rendering of the Heartland concept, which also drew on the ideas of Ferdinand Fried and Giselher Wirsing, the distinction between 'liberal' offshore systems and autocratic and autarkic continental systems is a popular one among dialectical materialists, recognizable across Marxist and neo-Gramscian literature. Tending to the 'annihilation' (in Polyani's words), of 'all organic forms of existence', Marxist theory has presented the capitalist need for commodification, alienation, and socialization between exchange partners as existing in violent opposition with more primordial, communal structures.[74] In 2009, Gerry Kearns returns the classic Marxist definition of commodification as the 'global strategy of imperialism'; yet he does not draw on the offshore-continental context used by other authors, such as Fried.[75] An interesting model, however, has been provided by Kees van Der Pijl who, in 1998, hypothesized a 'Lockean Heartland': an evident

72 Blouet, *Halford Mackinder,* op. cit., p. 168

73 Blouet, *Halford Mackinder,* op. cit., p. 109

74 Kees Van Der Pijl, *Transnational Classes and International Relations*, Taylor and Francis, 1998, pp. 23–37.

75 Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire*, op. cit., p. 284

attempt to polemicize an otherwise uncited Mackinder, and provide the unitary world capitalist economy idea, so integral to the Marxist worldview, with a distinctly North Atlantic geographical context, in opposition to a 'Hobbesian contender' on the Eurasian land mass.[76]

Van der Pijl's continental contender state is revealed in neo-Gramscian language, as the dominance of 'productive-capital' over competing 'money-capital' tendencies within state-systems, as opposed to a contrary configuration in offshore states.[77] While for Van der Pijl, the Soviet gulag system of forced labour offered something of an apotheosis, 'continental' tendencies are also identified to varying degrees in opposition to the 'maritime-liberal' in Britain, France, and the United States, with particular attention paid to Fordism.[78] A similar tabulation has been made by Charles Tilly, with his theory of 'coercive-intensive' state formation in Early Modern Europe, with Poland given as the archetypal configuration of landed salience over cosmopolitan interests.[79] A precise boundary for coercive state formation on the European continent is not given, but Tilly's 'capital-intensive' states — Venice, Portugal and Holland — are all maritime: the hegemonic 'inheritance' emphasized in neo-Gramscian historiographies and the 'westwards march of empire' framed by Mackinder as a rotation around the pivot area.[80] However, a boundary is given by Torbjen Knutsen: the Elbe River which, in his view, marked the approximate boundary beyond which the agricultural estate became the 'chief socio-economic unit' in post-Westphalian Europe.[81]

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76 Van Der Pijl, *Transnational Classes and International Relations*, op. cit., pp. 95–97

77 Van Der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class*, op. cit.

78 Van Der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class*, op. cit.

79 Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States*, London and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 66.

80 Halford Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", op. cit., p. 437; William Robinson. "Gramsci and Globalisation: From Nation State to Transnational Hegemony", in *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy 8*, No. 4, December 2005, p. 253

81 Torbjon Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory*, Manchester University Press, 1992, pp. 152–153

Hauner explores this theme at length, attributing what he sees as traditional Russian submission to the state not least to centuries of resistance against nomadic invasion as Mackinder does, but also drawing on writers such as Fyodorov and Yuzhakov, who eulogize the virtues of productive Russian military-peasant communes over British laissez-fare imperialism.[82] This alleged organic relationship between territory, culture, and the state, expressed variously in the works of Haushofer, Ratzel and Kjellen, was the logos of the German political geographers with whom Mackinder would become associated by default.[83] Citing Karl Popper, Knutsen identifies the spiritual ancestry of both Hitler and Stalin in Hegel, whose legacy inspired not only the Young Hegelian grouping that included Karl Marx but a wave of economic patriotism after his death in 1831, in a Germany under siege from British *laissez-faire*.[84]

Matthew Specter has correctly identified the emergence of geopolitics in the late 19th Century as a trans-Atlantic phenomenon. While Blouet has rejected the influence of the German geographic tradition, emphasizing instead Mackinder's childhood influences in England, Ratzel, Haushofer, Kjellin, Bowman, Mahan, and Mackinder read each other's work, and found their national experiences to be comparable. Ratzel was deeply influenced by his travels in America, and Mahan was as celebrated in Germany as in England.[85] Both Mahan and Mackinder eulogize inherent 'Teutonic' capacities for seafaring and self-governance.[86] Citing his

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82 Hauner, *What is Asia to Us?* op. cit., p. 61

83 Kirill Nourzhanov, "Mackinder on the Roof of the World", in *Central Asia in International Relations* eds. Nick Megoran and Sevara Sharipova, London: Hurst and Company, 2013, pp.152–162. Nick Megoran, "Rethinking the Study of International Boundaries: A Biography of the Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Boundary", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 102, No. 2, March 2012, pp. 464–481,Taylor & Francis, for the Association of American Geographers at http://www.jstor.org/stable/41412783

84 Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory*, op. cit., pp. 150, 220

85 Specter, *The Atlantic Realists*, op. cit., p. 28

86 Blouet, *Halford Mackinder*, op. cit., p. 42

admiration of the German 'anthropo-geographers', Kearns also believes Mackinder shared Ratzel's organic conception of the state.[87] This is only a half-truism, however, and both Specter and Kearns greatly understate Mackinder's agnostic geo-determinism which, rooted in the pivot idea, is more committed than Mahan's, and their choice to focus primarily on race again betrays the lingering stigma of the Haushofer association — evidence of the genealogical link to Ratzel represented as both polemic and moral indictment.

It was in the Steppe's absence of 'contrasting features', that Mackinder saw a geographical context highly conducive to state centralization.[88] Like Mahan, who described its government as representing 'the simplest conception of political unity', Mackinder saw this in Imperial Russia; but 'Kultur' as it is referred to by the geographer was, above all, a German idiosyncrasy.[89] Mackinder evidently sees 'Anglo-Saxon' civilization on the other hand, as highly legalized, and capable of bringing about a commensurate level of political devolution in the Ratzelian state organisms of the continent through the exportation of ideals, and not the acquisition of *Lebensraum* for its subjects.

For much of the Twentieth Century, the totalitarian state provided realists with as reliable a reference for continental land power, as when Mackinder identified state ownership of railroads and financial institutions, in 1904, as the foundation of German competitiveness.[90] Critics of a facile 'land-sea' dichotomy, however, have noted the difficulty encountered in attempting to categorically assign either appellation to a particular civilization or state. Brooks Adams and William Gordon East both qualify England's alleged maritime inheritance by reference to the national predominance

87 Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire*, op. cit., p. 4

88 Tamara Chin. "The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877", *Critical Inquiry* 40, No. 1, Autumn 2013, University of Chicago Press, p. 217, at https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/673232, p. 196

89 Hauner, *What is Asia to Us?* op. cit., p. 423

90 Blouet, *Halford Mackinder*, 166. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, op. cit., p. xxiii.

of farming in the early-Medieval era, when Europe's maritime trade was carried by Hanseatic and Venetian merchants.[91] East also makes similar caveats in respect of assumed-Japanese and Corsican 'extra-insularity'.[92] Both Donald Meinig and Van der Pijl identify in German state formation, the opposition between an inherently maritime Rhineland and a continent-facing interior; Van Der Pijl identifies competition between similar influences in France.[93] This subject is approached in Specter's analysis of the *Realpolitik* and *Weltpolitik*, *Lebensraum,* and *Großraum* concepts, in which he cites, among other metaphors, Berghahn's identification of an outward-looking German 'pro-business' faction, in opposition to the continental-oriented agrarian wing of the SS.[94]

Published in 1890, Alfred Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* examines European conflict from the mid-Seventeenth Century to the eve of the Napoleonic period. Mahan gives six fundaments of 'sea power' — some geo-deterministic, others relating to a state's capacities, population and national character. They are considered to have been influenced by his study of Antoine-Henri Jomini.[95] England and the United Provinces are Mahan's 'natural' sea powers; both states share a unity of aim 'directed upon the sea' due to a dearth of indigenous resources. Land and Sea power, however, are also presented as two competing sub-national forces, elaborated primarily through the antagonistic relationship between Jean-Baptiste Colbert and his royal patron, Louis XIV, but also described at different echelons in the Bourbon state — within the French East India Company, for example.[96]

Mahan traces the division of French and British military power into their 'maritime' and 'continental' eminencies to Louis XIV's rejection of the

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[91] Brooks Adams. *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, The Macmillan Company, New York: 1897, p. 254

[92] East, *The Geography Behind History,* op. cit., pp. 36, 116.

[93] Van Der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class,* op. cit.

[94] Specter, *The Atlantic Realists*, op. cit., p. 77

[95] William Dilworth Puleston, *The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan*, Johnathan Cape, London: 1939, pp. 83–91

[96] Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, op. cit., pp. 258–273

Leibnitz plan for a naval campaign in the Mediterranean in favour of a continental war, and his failure, despite the relative strength of the French navy at the time, to prevent the Glorious Revolution in England.[97] Mahan considered the age of British sea power to have been inaugurated by the War of the Spanish Succession, despite the perpetuation of the maritime contest well into the Eighteenth Century. However, even when writing the *Problem of Asia* in 1900, it is apparent that he still very much regarded England's old continental rival as a frustrated but natural sea power due to its domination of the West European peninsula. This is the principle contradiction in Mahanian thought: the admiral's geo-determinism undermined by a resolute belief that, under prudent leadership, France might have inherited a maritime hegemony that was not automatically pre-destined for the British Isles.

Mahan lists a number of optimal strategies for sea power, but emphasises, above all, the military control of navigation choke points and insular bases over the annexation of large territories. Furthermore, control of the maritime 'common' between enemy shores by which commerce is carried, was, for Mahan, as much a fundament of sea power as the warship.[98] Consequently, the tension between Colbert and Louis XIV is revealed in a materialist context that segregates the competing sea-land systems by economic structure and efficiency, in a language broadly consistent with the idiosyncrasies described above. Both the Mahanian and Mackinderian worldviews require a 'front', not only militarily during periods of conflict but also during peacetime, between maritime and continental economic systems. This is implied in most of Mackinder's pivot literature, with a useful example given in his description, in 1904, of English and German coal exports competing in Northern Italy.[99] The locus of structural competition in the *Influence of Sea Power Upon History* is Northern France;

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97 Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History,* op. cit., pp. 167

98 Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, Project Gutenberg, 2004, E-book, p. 52, at http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13529/13529-h/13529-h.htm; Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Problem of Asia and Its Effect Upon International Politics*, New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1900, p. 52

99 Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", op. cit., p. 484

and Mahan identifies Bourbon policy as pre-disposed towards militarism in order to redress the commercial imbalance brought about by the efficiency of Dutch competition. He makes a similar argument in *The Problem of Asia* when discussing Russian expansionism.[100]

Mahan defined wartime equilibrium between maritime and continental systems by reference to two opposing phenomena: the recourse by the contained land power to coastal defences and *Guerre de Course*; and the peripheral harassment by the sea power by coastal bombardments, direct invasion, and the financing of allied forces on the continent. The admiral considered this model applicable to all major wars of the 18th Century, but he pays particular attention to the War of the Spanish Succession and the Seven Years' War, emphasizing the circumferential containment of France in the case of the former, and the immunity of Britain's international trade during the latter.[101] Parallels with the Pivot thesis are obvious: the important concepts uniting Mahan and Mackinder, as well as Spykman, being the 'offshore' power; the contiguous continental hegemon; and the strategic 'bridgehead' — a term used by Mackinder to denote the continental manifestations of sea power where they occur on the periphery of the Eurasian land mass.[102] Mahan's depiction of the Spanish War of Succession describes a watershed around a French 'Pivot' state wherein Franco-Iberian land power encountered the continental bridgeheads of Anglo-Dutch offshore power: Portugal, the Rhenish and Low Countries, and French privateers, hegemonic sea power. With the Union of England and Holland, the latter, long the apex of the maritime capitalist world, had in effect become a continental bridgehead for the former, a role cemented in the view of Mahan, by treaty-defined ratios of naval and land forces.[103]

The respective worldviews of the two authors converge significantly, therefore, qualifying somewhat their well-entrenched opposition.

100 Mahan, *The Problem of Asia*, op. cit., pp. 41–72

101 Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History,* op. cit., pp. 62, 219–293

102 Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality,* op. cit., p. 192

103 Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History,* op. cit., p. 61

Furthermore, the Mahanian and Mackinderian models of continental and offshore rivalry are partially extolled in a materialist discourse that is highly correlative with Van der Pijl's distinction between 'money-capital' and 'productive-capital', Charles Tilly's 'capitalist-intensive' and 'coercion-intensive' models of state-formation and, indeed, the popular Liberal Market (LME) and Coordinated Market (CME) economic dichotomy theorized by David Soskice and Peter A. Hall, in their 2001 work, *Varieties of Capitalism*.[104] In postulating 'Mahan versus Mackinder', Paul Kennedy relied on the distinction made by the Allied General Staff during the Great War, between maritime 'side shows' and the major theatres of ground operations.[105] In his summary of Mahan's key precepts, Kennedy recognizes neither offshore 'money power' nor the unity of the ocean.[106] Consequently, little agency is accorded to either the allied embargo between 1914 and 1919, or allied sea control after 1943.[107] This compartmentalization of the wars on land and at sea reflects the influence of Julian Corbett, a contemporary of Mackinder, whose work, for reasons of scope, has not been incorporated into this paper, but who contested the strategic value of decisive naval confrontations, such as the Battle of Trafalgar, citing their limited impact on the land war.[108] Paul Kennedy cites Churchill in conceding that the Royal Navy provided the 'foundation' for victory in 1945; yet his Heartland argumentation misses the obvious fact that the struggle for Eastern Europe was not, in strategic terms, a land power conflict in isolation.[109]

A contentious topic in modern Russia — the causal relationship between allied deliveries of material aid and Soviet victory — is still very much a

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104 Peter Hall and David Soskice, *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*, Oxford University Press, 2001

105 Kennedy, *Mahan versus Mackinder*, op. cit., p. op. cit., p. 53

106 Kennedy, *Mahan versus Mackinder*, op. cit., p. 63

107 Kennedy, *Mahan versus Mackinder*, op. cit., p. 58

108 Michael Handel, "Corbett, Clausewitz and Sun Tzu", *Naval War College Review*, Autumn 2000, Vol. 53, No. 4 pp. 106–124, US Naval War College Press, at https://www.jstor.org/stable/44638894, p. 115

109 Kennedy, *Mahan versus Mackinder*, op. cit., p. 58

subject of debate. Studies qualifying the importance of lend-lease shipments have tended to emphasize conservative assessments of allied contributions to the Soviet arsenal, often failing to account for the indirect effects of other supplies (foodstuffs, for example) and certain industrial inputs.[110] This would include Milan Hauner who, in 1989, was obliged to rely on the US Army's 1952 estimate, a lower figure, in fact, than that returned by subsequent studies in Russia.[111] Nikita Khrushchev's memoirs, however, reveal discussions with Stalin in which the latter unequivocally affirms the decisive role of allied lend-lease.[112] As potentially the most deterministic factor in the outcome of the war, this is significant for the Heartland debate in three ways. Firstly, the use of overland lines of communication to supply Soviet Forces in the Heartland supports the scepticism of Arthur Hall, Milan Hauner, and others regarding the region's hypothesized insulation from the maritime sphere. It is not unreasonable to suggest that, during this period, the Soviet Union, in fact, conforms to the model of a strategic 'bridgehead', the German principalities cited by Mahan being the most amenable comparison, dependent on offshore subsidy and allied control of the maritime commons. Kennedy's failure to recognize this not only pre-empted globalist assumptions that have taken the 'world ocean' to be a common public good but is also the likely result of the traditional association of Mackinder with the Russian Empire and Central Asia.

That Mackinder recognizes Germany as the Pivot state in each of his three papers on the subject is self-evident, and the mid-Century conflict in Europe corresponds to the given pattern of a militarily and economically

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110 East, "How Strong is the Heartland?", op. cit., p. 87–88

111 N. Ryzhkov and G. Kumanev, "Food and other strategic delivery to the Soviet Union on the "Lend-Lease", Proceedings of the International Scientific-Practical Conference on the Cooperation of the Anti-Hitler Coalition: an Important Factor in World War II (the 70th Anniversary of the Opening of the Second Front)", May 21, 2014, at http://histrf.ru/uploads/media/default/0001/12/6e1a74e16a509acd9984d677d5573c3b7b49a9a1.pdf -, accessed 01.12.2015., (in Russian); see also Hauner, *What is Asia to Us?* op. cit., p. 108

112 Nikita Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev: Commissar, 1918-1945*, Penn State Press, 2004, pp. 638–639

unified periphery containing an autarkic hegemon, with predominantly internal lines of communication.[113] This was recognized by Arthur Hall in 1955 who believed that, from the Battle of Sedan to the end of the Second World War, alliances in Europe had 'revolved' around a German, not Russian, pivot. Due to its dislocation from the core Heartland region, however, he erroneously asserts this to be a rejection of Mackinder's pivot concept.[114] Blouet, on the other hand, believed Mackinder had only begun to take Russia seriously as a potential Pivot state during his 1919 mission to the Caucasus, and the geographer's assessment of Soviet hegemony given in 1943 is undoubtedly still premonitory.[115]

Finally, Soviet dependence on allied lend-lease would imply that the indigenous resources of the Heartland did not constitute a decisive advantage in a conflict with the European periphery.[116] Hekimoglu's suggestion in 2013, however, that 'Mackinder's confidence in the commercial competitiveness of railways and the vastness of resources in Central Asia have both turned out to be misplaced', exemplifies the intellectual neglect that has distorted the debate.[117] Whether conceived of in sedentary or nomadic terms, the most consistent quality of Mackinder's pivot state is a reliance on internal lines of communication — what Donald Meinig would term 'nodal' power, and relative isolation from the maritime commons.[118] When understood in these terms, European history has returned successive manifestations of the pivot concept since the establishment of Amsterdam as the 'offshore' financial centre of the early-modern era: Bourbon, Napoleonic, Imperial German, National Socialist German, and Soviet.

An important corroboration of the Edwardian worldview was made in a 2014 study by Levy and Thompson, which catalogued more than five

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113 Blouet, "Mackinder: Imperialism, the Empire of India and Central Asia", op. cit., p. 61

114 Hall, "Mackinder and the Course of Events", op. cit., p. 112

115 Blouet, *Halford Mackinder,* op. cit., p. 174

116 Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality,* op. cit., pp. 90–94

117 Hekimoglu, "The Heartland Fallacy", op. cit., p. 268

118 Meinig, "Heartland and Rimland in Eurasian History", op. cit., p. 557

hundred instances of European conflict since the late Medieval era. The study determined that the dominant Euro-Atlantic naval power had not been a continental power since the death of Charles the Second, and the end of the Spanish-Hapsburg era. Levy and Thompson also found that counter-balancing alliances had formed against the leading European sea power only sixteen percent of the time, compared with forty-three percent against the leading land power.[119] Affirming a distinction between autarkic continental and regionalized or globalized maritime systems, the two authors reject 'the conventional belief — neo-realists, defensive realists, and others — in the universal applicability of balance of the power theory in multistate systems'.[120]

This line of thought further departs from Classical Realist orthodoxy by its emphasis on opposing aggregate systems, one highly correlative with the Mackinderian worldview. Mackinder's pivot concept echoes the historical materialism of his lesser-known American peer Brooks Adams, whose work also attracted the attention of Haushofer but who is seldom bracketed with the other 'proto-realists' of his generation.[121] Both authors extoll an international order less the result of a self-balancing equilibrium of sovereign nation-states acting in the national self-interest, than competing correlations of material and political organization, with two distinct global centres: a diarchic world that results from the natural competition between railroads and shipping as the only viable means of mass logistical transportation. The parallel migrations of Paris-Berlin-Moscow and Amsterdam-London-New York in the European Modern era, trace the twin-apexes of aggregate land and sea power of increasing magnitude, with only narrow channels of waters delineating the boundary of two distinct but overlapping systems, whose varying degrees of interdependence during peacetime would prove untenable in war.

119 Jack Levy and William Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea: Do States Ally against the Leading Global Power?", *International Security* 35, No. 1, Summer 2010, 31, MIT Press, at https://www.jstor.org/stable/40784645 Accessed: 22-02-2019 16:31 UTC

120 Levy and Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea", op. cit., pp. 13, 36

121 Hauner, *What is Asia to Us*? op. cit., p. 175

Mackinder Today

The Heartland Theory is not infallible, and the European medieval period is certainly less correlative. It would appear that only with the establishment of Amsterdam and London, by way of Lisbon and Antwerp, as successors of a truly global rather than regional maritime system, would a sea power-land power equilibrium of the relative scale seen by Classical Realists in the Peloponnesian War, be restored following an epoch dominated by an overland-littoral Eurasian economic system. The Pivot concept also fails to explain certain periods of modern European history, particularly the long 19th Century between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the outbreak of the First World War. While generally accepted as the zenith of British offshore power, London's foreign policy priorities were divided between the need to contain a potentially resurgent France and resisting the Russian-led reactionary crusade against liberalism in Europe. During the half-century that followed the Crimean War, Anglo-Russian competition was manifest around the entire Eurasian periphery; yet Russia was not, at that point, a pivot state in the true materialist sense described above. With Prussian victory at Sedan, Brooks Adams locates the omphalos of the Eurasian railway network at Breslau, having shifted eastwards from Cologne as the locus of German banking had shifted from Frankfurt to Berlin.[122] Indeed, the omnipresence of Franco-German capital in the Russian empire at the turn of the century further distorts the identification of a single continental pivot state. This is evident in Adams' three major works at the turn of the Twentieth Century as well as Mahan's *Problem of Asia*: both authors apprehended a loose Franco-Russo-German continental 'system' encroaching on China's borders in terms that again transcend conventional definitions of the nation-state.

It is, perhaps, more accurate, therefore, to speak of the Pivot 'configuration', discernible, on average, once a century in the modern European context, and only once on a truly pan-Eurasian scale. The chief conceptual obstacle to a succinct transposition of the Pivot template in the present day is maintaining the bipolarity assumed by the authors discussed in this paper. The world's leading naval power is also a continent-wide state, fielding the

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[122] Brooks Adams, *America's Economic Supremacy*, New York: Macmillan, 1900, p. 39

world's third largest ground forces, and benefits from a complex economic relationship with a major Eurasian land power, one without precedent in the historical pivot cases given here. The largest concentration of maritime activity globally is in East Asia, and a greater proportion of Chinese trade is seaborne, than in the United States.[123] The 'port' has been largely decoupled from Western cosmopolitan life since the 1970s, and the decline of the United States' merchant marine in the post-War period is not only one of several markers for the decline of American comprehensive national power, but also the contradiction of a Mahanian fundament.

Yet, after fifty years of neo-liberal globalization, four inalienable qualities of the international system provide a workable *a priori* reference for American 'sea power': the privileged position of the North-Atlantic region in global value chains, including the 'exorbitant privilege' of issuing the World's reserve currency; the reliance of those value chains on Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC); and the scale, reach, and technological sophistication of US projectable power. It is by dominating the maritime, technological, social, and financial commons, that the United States is still considered the world's only superpower, and Western defence assessments in the 21st Century have expressed this in increasingly Mahanian terms.[124]

It is in attempting to identify the early-Twenty First Century pivot state, however, that the principal contradictions are encountered. Both Mahan and Mackinder foresaw China's prolific industrial potential. Mahan wrote in 1900 that it was 'difficult to contemplate with equanimity' the industrial rise of a politically unified China, 'cooped within a territory already too narrow for it': a phraseology that when used in respect of Germany, is taken in isolation by Matthew Specter as evidence of the admiral's sympathy for Teutonic Lebensraum in Europe.[125] Mackinder did not directly associate

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[123] Gompert, *Sea Power and American Interests in the Western Pacific*, op. cit.

[124] For example, in 2016, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff signed the Joint Concept for Access and Manoeuvre in the Global Commons (JAM-GC), officially signalling its approval as a joint operational concept. See https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/article/1038867/joint-concept-for-access-and-maneuver-in-the-global-commons-a-new-joint-operati/

[125] Mahan, *The Problem of Asia*, op. cit., pp.86-90

the rise of China with *Kultur* or a specific 'continental' threat to Western sea-power; but elsewhere, the case for Chinese 'land power' has often appeared dogmatic.[126] Hegel famously wrote that, for the Chinese, 'the sea is only the limit, the ceasing of the land; they have no positive relation to it'.[127] Tonio Andrade describes China's historical relationship with the ocean as a 'necessary evil', and 'as a barrier to keep barbarians at arm's length'.[128] The T'ang, Yuan, and Qinq dynasties were drawn from Steppe, or Steppe-border tribal confederations that had been Sinicized to varying degrees, but which nevertheless established themselves as ruling castes aloof from, and sometimes in contempt of, sedentary China. Rooted in the Central Plain, Han and Ming dynastic rule was founded on the hierarchical incorporation of the peasant-soldier, extensive public works, and the managed distribution of arable land.[129] In the 1949 victory of the communist guerrillas, Donald Meinig saw a 'firm reversal' of transient maritime-tendencies under the nationalist government back to China's traditional inward orientation 'as a landed, peasant society with her strategic frontier resting upon the steppe'.[130]

The counter-thesis to this consensus on Chinese continentalism, relies on three detracting arguments. Firstly, China's extensive cultural linkages throughout South East Asia today represent the legacy of a period of maritime orientation under the Song Dynasty (960–1138) when the quality of Chinese naval technology, the most advanced anywhere in the world at the time, was impressed upon Marco Polo in the shipyards of Guangzhou. Successive waves of migration from China's southern cantons, notably at

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126 Adams, Brooks, *The New Empire*, New York: Macmillan, 1903, p. 198; see also, Mahan, *The Problem of Asia*, op. cit., p. 90

127 George Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Dover Publications, 2004

128 Tonio Andrade, 'The Company's Chinese Pirates: How the Dutch East India Company tried to Lead a Coalition of Pirates to War against China, 1621-1662.' *Journal of World History*, 2004, 15 (4), pp. 417–420

129 For accounts of Han and Ming political organization, see Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, trans. J. R. Foster and Charles Hartman, *The Folio Society*, Vol. 1, pp. 107–177, Vol. 2, pp. 410–420

130 Meinig, *Heartland and Rimland in Eurasian History*, op. cit., p. 553-569

the beginning of the Twentieth Century, would establish Singapore, Malacca, and Penang as major offshore centres of Chinese capital, which would later finance industrial expansion on the mainland in the 1980s, when Guandong province would again become China's maritime gateway to the world.[131] Maintaining the world's largest fishing fleet and coast guard, the modern People's Republic is a powerful, and increasingly assertive, maritime actor in its near seas. Present policy has also seen China undertake a breakneck naval modernization program, and pursue blue water capability in the Indian Ocean Region and the Western Pacific.[132] Xi Jinping's signature foreign policy concept has granted the maritime sphere formal parity with the Eurasian interior, and the Belt and Road media space has been peppered with references to the voyages of Ming Admiral Zheng He as evidence of China's sea-going past.

Drawing attention to China's deep integration within global value chains, more extensive than either its Soviet or German predecessors, is a stock response to realist assumptions of an inevitable land-sea power conflict. Unlike the two Pivot States of the Twentieth Century, China's trading relationships and outward stocks of Foreign Direct Investment are not concentrated in contiguous territories but are globally dispersed and, like a significant proportion of its industrial inputs, reliant on Sea Lines of Communication. Consequently, the case for contemporary 'land power' relies on the distillation within the opaque nexus of Chinese coastal capitalism, of a core architecture premised on the political power of the People's Liberation Army, and a one-party state that conforms to and is, perhaps, the sole great power legacy of the totalitarian archetypes of the mid-Twentieth Century.

Since China's opening, 'Marxist-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought' has been gradually reduced to an intra-party credo; and the public legitimization of the CCP today resembles more Mao's distinctive brand of assertive nationalism. The argument, however, that forty years after the disavowal

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131 Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 639

132 Ronald O'Rourke, "China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress", Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2017, pp. 28–30

of Mao's revolutionary economic model, 'Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics' retains many Marxist, if not 'continental', instincts, is a strong one. After declining under Deng and Jiang, employment in Chinese SOEs has risen since 2005, and the 2009 stimulus plan, the Belt and Road Initiative, and Made in China 2025, have each resulted in a greater share of economic output being diverted to the portfolio of state-owned or controlled national champions, cultivated by the party since the mid-1990s. Despite both the 12th Five-Year Plan and reforms announced under the 18th Party Congress in 2013, hinting at a pro-market orientation, some monopolies that were broken up under Zhu Rongji in the 1990s have been reconstituted under Xi, and over half of SOE assets remain under central rather than regional government control.[133] The official list of strategic industries, where chief executives are party-appointed, accounts for roughly one third of the Chinese economy, and includes heavy industry, hydrocarbons, telecommunications, logistics and, most crucially, banking.[134] Jamie Peck and Jun Zhang identify the 'political foundations of China's power-elite capitalism' as 'rooted in the nomenklature cadre management system' that weaves 'formal hierarchies with *guanxi* networks'.[135] While the government has partially privatized its welfare and social programs, they have not been downsized or weakened; instead, party members have exploited their privileged access to state financing to re-invent themselves as 'entrepreneurs'.

The return to stricter authoritarian controls that is associated with Xi's presidency supervened a period of relaxed control under Hu and Wen that culminated in popular dissent online and in China's Western provinces, but affirms a longstanding reassertion of party control traceable to the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square massacre. Two decades after 'princeling' revolutionary elites produced a fourteen-thousand character

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133 Elizabeth Economy, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State*, Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 103–106

134 James Peck and Jun Zhang, "A variety of capitalism ... with Chinese characteristics?", *Journal of Economic Geography*, 13, 2013, p. 377. doi:10.1093/jeg/lbs058, P. 371

135 Kees Van Der Pijl, "Energy Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Era", op. cit., p. 305; Peck and Zhang, "A Variety of Capitalism", op. cit., p. 383

manifesto calling for the permanent entrenchment of party authority, a 2012 communique, known as 'Document Number 9', would outline seven western values — the seven 'no's' deemed antithetical to party governance: universal values; press freedom; civil society; citizen's rights; historical party aberrations; a privileged capitalist class; and an independent judiciary.[136] While an optimistic discourse in the West continues to anticipate an amenable class of democratizing entrepreneur-capitalist to balance the party-state, Jack Ma's disappearance after a speech criticizing the CCP, and the regulatory crackdown on technology companies in 2021, rounded off a decade of *guojin mintui,* or 'the state advances and the private sector retreats'.[137]

China's present trajectory sees the party-state not only conforming to the Edwardian land power idiosyncrasies described above but actively fostering a national ideology rooted in cultural opposition to the normative basis for sea power given by Mahan and Mackinder. China's naval modernization program has advanced at a time when Beijing has not only been able to deploy its vast surpluses into myriad endeavours advertising Chinese ascendancy but also when construction, whether of cities, railroads or aircraft carriers has constituted an end in itself. While Beijing's blue water ambitions have triggered alarm among experts in New Delhi and Washington, international attention has largely focused on China's assertion of sovereignty rights in the South China Sea.[138] What amounts to an attempt to dominate East Asian Sea lanes by 'area denial'— that is to say, by the latent threat of mainland-based aviation and ballistic missiles — recalls the *Guerre de Course* seen by Alfred Mahan as the last resort of a contained and frustrated land power. No country, besides Iran, has been more vocal in opposing the principle of Freedom of Navigation.[139] The late Twentieth

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136 E. Richard McGregor, *The Party*, Penguin Books, 2010, p. 35. Economy, *The Third Revolution*, p. 38

137 Peck and Zhang, "A Variety of Capitalism", op. cit., p. 371

138 Parag Khanna, *Connectography: Mapping the Future of Globalization*, New York: Random House, pp. 30, 230

139 Lynn Kuok, "The U.S. FON Program in the South China Sea: A Lawful and Necessary Response to China's Strategic Ambiguity", Brookings Centre for East Asian Policy Studies, 2016, p. 3

Century saw a 'creeping jurisdiction' over littoral waters, particularly among newly-independent states, with the ocean being increasingly thought of as a resource than a public good, and this camp now finds a champion in Beijing.[140]

While undoubtedly a maritime power under the Song, it is difficult to draw equivalence between a vast continental mass whose maritime trade and naval power has been overwhelmingly littoral, and Mahan's poorly-resourced North-West European states, structurally pre-disposed to the projection of self-sustaining naval power thousands of miles from home shores. Song maritime trade was also predominantly littoral, and large-scale ship-building began only after a Jurchen invasion in 1126 pushed the northern extent of the empire south of the Yangztee, qualifying somewhat the citation of the Song alongside other major dynasties that have ruled a politically-unified China.[141] While as plutocratic a society as may be found anywhere in Chinese history, a number of scholars, Wang Gungwu for example, have noted the social limitations on a Song bourgeoisie confronted with a neo-Confucian revival that, subsequently patronized under the Mongols, would culminate in a return to moral orthodoxy and social hierarchy under the Ming.[142] Although their purpose is still debated — one hypothesis even suggesting Zheng He had been dispatched to recover the Emperor's nephew — the Eunuch Admiral's seven voyages brought only passing influence in the Indian Ocean, and ultimately contradicted the broader trajectory of Ming trade policy.[143] The Qing response to incursions

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140 Kuok, "The U.S. FON Program in the South China Sea", op. cit.

141 Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 310

142 Wang Gungwu, "Merchants Without Empire: The Hokkien Sojourning Communities", pp. 403-404, in *The Rise of Merchant Empires, Long-Distance Trade in The Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, ed. James Tracey, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 403. See also, Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, op. cit., p. 46

143 Emrys Chew, "Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon – The Indian Ocean and the Maritime Balance of Power: a Historical Perspective", Working Paper, No. 144, Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2007, p. 5. See also, Henry Kissinger, *On China,* op. cit.; Van Der Pijl, *Global Rivalries from the Cold War to Iraq*, p. 298; Wang, "Merchants Without Empire", op. cit., p. 416; Susan Whitfield, *Life Along the Silk Road*, London: John Murray, 1999, p. 101

by Japanese pirates was not the establishment of a capable fleet, or even a concerted reinforcement of coastal defences; but the forced depopulation of a vast stretch of the Chinese coast between Shantung and Kwangtung.[144] That aspects of China's current strategic relationship with the maritime world, therefore, appear more as a contiguous extension of continental sovereignty than aspiring to Blue Water sea control, is historically consistent.

The Pivot in Asia

The People's Republic inherited both a statist omnipresence and, at best, a littoral conception of naval power, from the Ming and Qing.[145] Successive proponents of China's military modernization, that would in effect begin with the Qing Dynasty's humiliating defeat in the first Opium War, have rarely counselled the value of projecting power at sea. Strategies for dealing with the threat of hostile sea power and foreign invasion have oscillated between 'strategic retreat' to the interior, and combinations of static and active coastal defence. The PLAN's first regular deployments beyond the first island chain only took place after the normalization of relations with the United States; and, the origins of the current drive for naval modernization are inherently defensive — traceable to leadership concerns in the 1990s over China's growing dependence on Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).[146] Few mainland scholars and naval experts encountered by the author, have privately taken Beijing's declaratory far seas ambitions seriously — one described them as aspiring to a 'fleet in being' only, intended to deter American, Japanese, and Indian containment.[147]

This essay concludes by identifying four geopolitical trends in East Asia that serve as markers for the enduring relevance of the Pivot idea in the 21st Century. The first of these, the extension of the Eurasian land power envelope outwards from Mackinder's revised 1919 Heartland model

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144 Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization* Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 488

145 Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization* Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 301

146 Chen-Ya Tien, *Chinese Military Theory*, Spa Books, 1992, op. cit., p. 276.

147 Author's Interview, Beijing, 2019

implied by advances in anti-ship ballistic weaponry, is a derivative of the technological critique, and the most problematic to evaluate. China's area denial complex is more advanced than its Soviet predecessor in a number of respects. The DF-21D and DF-26 prototype Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles, for example, have been successfully tested against moving naval targets at a range of over one thousand and three thousand nautical miles, respectively, a threat not faced by the United States Navy during the Cold War.[148] Other potentially significant developments include long-range radars, advanced air defence systems, satellite-based and ubiquitous-passive sensors, advanced air-to-air missiles, quiet submarines, 'smart' mines, and the increasing use of paramilitary forces in naval operations. In principle, these will limit carrier and expeditionary force operations to the use of stand-off munitions and impractical long-range aerial assaults.[149] Recognition of this in US naval policy circles is attested somewhat by the advancement of the 'Air-Sea Battle', now known as the Joint Concept for Access and Manoeuvre in the Commons (JAM-GC), and 'Distributed Lethality' concepts, the latter advocating the dispersed but forward posturing of naval firepower closer to the Eurasian littoral — relegating the Carrier Strike Group to a blue-water reserve.[150]

It is under the hypothetical umbrella of Area Denial that both Russia and China have been able to prosecute a contiguous 'grey zone' extension of territorial interests in the long decade since the Russian Federation's 58th Army crossed the internationally recognized Georgian border. In the case of Russia, it could be argued that until early 2022, the reliance on 'hybrid'

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148 Gabor Voros, "US Global Power Projection: Is the World's Policeman still Credible?" Budapest: Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016, p. 6, at https://kki.hu/assets/upload/08_KKI-Studies_USA_Voros_20161026.pdf. See also, "Restoring American Seapower: A New Fleet Architecture for the United States Navy", Washington: Centre for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, (CSBA), 2017.

149 "Restoring American Seapower", CSBA, op. cit., p. 93.

150 Raymond McConoly, "What is the Distributed Lethality Concept?", *Naval Post*, June 2021, at https://navalpost.com/what-is-distributed-lethality-concept/, accessed April 2022

tactics below the threshold of open conflict, in fact, reflected a recognition of the sea power deterrent along the Eurasian littoral. Strausz-Hupé had drawn a similar conclusion in 1958 in respect of what he described as the communist 'nibbling process': the Soviet recourse to political and paramilitary warfare in response to the Eisenhower doctrine.[151] Some contemporary analyses have linked grey zone vulnerability to the legacy of the 'one-size fits all' Carrier Strike Group (CSG) model; but earlier writers, William Dunaway and James Cable for example, had traced an extant trend towards the declining ability of naval power to effect strategic outcomes in littoral regions.[152] A new-found confidence in the ability to deter offshore intervention, however, is undoubtedly one contributing factor surmisable in China's brazen advancement of its land reclamation program, intimidation of Taiwan, and sequestration of Hong Kong.

This essay does not probe the level of theoretical depth seen in defence assessments currently weighing the implications of Chinese Anti-Access Area-Denial (A2AD), where consensus in any event has been rare, except to note its obvious Mackinderian context. Some cartographical projections infer a broad extrapolation of the Heartland 'envelope' beyond the island chains and into the Western Pacific. Yet, these must be qualified by countless unknown variables in the practical application of long-range surveillance, air defence systems, stealth technologies, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as well as the obvious human factors that would determine the outcome of an escalating conflict in East Asia.[153] A simple litmus test, however, for the enduring relevance of the Heartland idea in these terms might be performed by assessing the divergence in relative power projection capabilities at the

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151 Strausz-Hupé, *Strategy and Values*, op. cit., p. 100

152 William Dunaway, "Gunboat Diplomacy in a New World Order: Strategic Considerations for U.S. Naval Intervention ME in the Twenty-First Century", Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive, 2001, at https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/43777/gunboatdiplomacy00duna.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. See also, James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy* 1919–1991, Macmillan, London, 1994

153 See, for example, illustrations of assessed Sino-Russian Reconnaissance Strike Complexes, in "Restoring American Seapower", CSBA, op. cit., p. 11–12

two geographical poles of inaccessibility: maritime, at Point Nemo in the Southern Pacific, and continental, close to the Sino-Kazakh border in Xinjiang. Should China's aggregate projectable power, military, political and economic, be held to exceed that of the United States in the latter jurisdiction, and vice-versa in the former, then it follows that, while standing in need of practical confirmation, the sea power and land power fundaments so recognizable to Mackinder and his peers, retain some value in the present day, and the asymmetry evangelized by Brzezinski and his contemporaries has been over-emphasized.

A full vindication of the pivot concept, however, requires continental power to be 'flung' from side-to-side across the Eurasian land mass, contiguously and via internal lines of communication: roads, rivers, railroads, pipelines, and fibre optic cables. Consequently, the third contemporary criterion for gauging the Heartland idea is deeply intertwined with Beijing's own strategic dichotomy between land and sea. In 2013, Xi Jinping would announce the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), the terrestrial component of his signature 'Belt and Road' initiative, with a language and ceremony that would have enthused an earlier generation of Mackinder scholar. While the BRI has been articulated to an international audience through the party's principled Confucio-Marxist rhetoric, and has been buoyed by the founding in 2014 of a dedicated multilateral investment bank, the past eight years have seen the perpetuation of Beijing's longstanding preference for bilateral economic diplomacy, leading many commentators to criticize the initiative for its obvious Sino-centricity.

Prior to the 2013 announcement, China's sincerest attempt at multilateral leadership had been the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) — established in 2001 but a legacy of China's earlier border demarcation talks with Russia and the Central Asian Republics. The SCO conforms to something of a grand 'Eurasian' stereotype in the Mackinderian mould, not least due to its cartographical consolidation of the World Island but because it has served as a champion of the patriarchal, illiberal modes of

[154] Li Mingjiang, "The Belt and Road Initiative: Geo-economics and Indo-Pacific Security Competition", *International Affairs* 96, Issue 1, January 2020, pp. 169–187, at https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz240, p. 174.

governance shared by all its founding members, with the exception, arguably, of the Kyrgyz Republic. If the SCO was not originally an 'anti-American' or 'anti-Western' alliance as some have claimed, then its founding ethos was, at the very least, 'non-Western' and, with the completion of the decade-long withdrawal of US forces from Central Asia that was initiated by the SCO's Astana Declaration in 2005, the regional bloc is now the largest globally not to host an American base within its collective borders.

China, however, has subsequently pursued more direct mechanisms — through the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism (QCCM), for example — for managing regional security, and Russian resistance to the development of the SCO as an economic bloc in the 2000s has been seen as a contributing factor in the genesis of the BRI.[154] Indeed, Hu-era initiatives already underway within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, bear a strong resemblance to what would become the twin pillars of the BRI, suggesting that the initiative is less attributable to Xi's personal influence than many have suggested.[155] The lively media and analytical discourse that supervened the 2013 announcement, has largely dismissed the initiative as a 'branding exercise', or returned a string of domestic and geo-economic rationales to explain its conspicuous roll-out.[156] A third school of thought, however, has attempted to frame the BRI as geopolitical by design: that is to say, a foreign policy and defence establishment roadmap for China's domination of Eurasia or, in the case of the Maritime Silk Road, the Indian Ocean region.

The use of the 'String of Pearls' and 'Malacca Dilemma' theses have been commonplace in Western and Indian commentaries on the Belt and Road, alongside the superficial invocations of Mackinder's World Island idea used to frame Central Asia's strategic importance since the 1990s. Yet, this school of thought has, for eight years, been frustrated by the absence of a 'smoking gun' that would evidence top-down hegemonic intent, or sufficiently explain the timing of the BRI. The reality is likely a combination of the geopolitical and domestic economic as well as those factors unique

155 Li, "The Belt and Road Initiative", op. cit., p. 174.

156 Economy, *The Third Revolution*, op. cit., p. 193

to Xi's leadership. Chinese overseas investment did increase considerably between 2013 and 2020 compared with the preceding seven years, but continued to favour, by some margin, developed economies over the core-BRI target regions. These are also, however, the economies most able to absorb substantial ODI inflows, and it is rather the influx of Chinese capital as a proportion of economic activity in certain regions, Central Asia for example, and Beijing's apparent appetite for losses and subsidy, that speaks to the BRI's strategic potential.

The limited but burgeoning rail trade across Eurasia, claimed under the BRI mandate, has only been made possible under prolific subsidy from Chinese regional governments. While it should be pointed out that no such limitations exist in respect of fibre-optic networks, Leo Amery's retort to the Pivot thesis in 1904 — that it would require 'fifteen to twenty parallel lines of railway' to present a credible land-based alternative to maritime shipping — is now even more defendable in the age of the super-container.[157] Yet, it is the existential consequences of enhanced Chinese autarky that are, perhaps, more consequential for international maritime capitalism, as well as for the ability of policymakers in Beijing to exploit the 'New Silk Road' zeitgeist in order to further the country's overland strategic lines of communication. In the case of Central Asia, the sequencing of first economic and then military engagement is significant, the most conspicuous case being Tajikistan, the Central Asian state most indebted to China, and which has also become its most reliable defence partner in the region. A modest increase in arms sales, the gifting of military equipment, joint training and, in the case of Tajikistan, patrolling of the Afghan border, has not escaped the attention of regional experts. If the present Chinese leadership is able to justify military expansionism in the South China Sea on the basis of a Han, Song, or Ming Dynasty claim, then the assertion of a Tang or Qinq Dynasty claim in Central Asia seems equally plausible, and is supported by ambiguous cartographical projections in Chinese media and Belt and Road promotional material, in which all roads and corridors lead to Beijing.

157 Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", op. cit., p. 441

Notwithstanding its deep roots in the Soviet education system, rising Sinophobia in Central Asia reflects a globally discernible trend where the early 'win-win' pragmatism of Beijing's relationships in the developing world is giving way to suspicion, hinting at diminishing returns from, or even a reversal, in BRI diplomacy. The final marker for the Heartland legacy, therefore, relates to offshore dominance of the ideological commons. This is the reason given by Levy and Thompson for the greater frequency of alliance structures against hegemonic land powers. Policies of what CCP officials now routinely protest as the 'containment' of China, were detectable as early as the late-1990s when the present pattern of US-Indian engagement began to take shape, and Japan adopted a policy of countering Chinese influence where it was becoming most perceptible. The Japanese Foreign Ministry's successor initiative — the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity (AFP) — hailed the democratic potential of a continuous geographical belt around the Sino-Russian Heartlands that included India, where the AFP was announced.[158]

In 2007, also in a speech to the Indian parliament, Shinzo Abe would speak of the 'confluence of the two seas', providing a maritime cultural reference for increasing defence and economic cooperation between the two democracies.[159] The four nations of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or 'Quad', an expansion of the Trilateral dialogue initiated by the USA, Japan and Australia to include India, convened in Manilla, and the annual US-Indian Malabar naval exercise was expanded to include Japan, Australia, and Singapore. India and the United States had begun to explore the coordination of policy on China after the election of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1998, marking a paradigmatic shift away from Cold

[158] Taro Aso, "On the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity'", address by H.E. Taro Aso, Minister for Japanese Foreign Affairs on the Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Founding of the Japan Forum on International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, at https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/pillar/address0703.html, accessed 4 April 2022

[159] Shinzo Abe, "Confluence of the Two Seas", speech by H.E. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, in the Indian Parliament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, at https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html, accessed 10 March 2022

War-era mistrust, one confirmed by the Bush administration's recognition of India as a civil nuclear power in 2005. The consolidation of this putative democratic alliance has been impeded by Indian reticence towards use of the latter term; but the degree to which 'Quad' diplomacy was perceived as a strategy of containment was reflected in protests made by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These achieved some success, particularly in the case of Australia, and the security dialogue would not reconvene until 2017. A year later, the United States Pacific Command was renamed 'Indo-Pacific' Command, a term in fact coined by Karl Haushofer, but in the present day, tacitly understood by all sides as implying the maritime containment of East Asia's foremost land power.

This is not the first time in modern history that Beijing has perceived itself to be encircled by external powers. In 1965, after a decade confronting Nationalist and American air power over Southern China, Mao was faced with US forces in Vietnam, Laos, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan as well an increasingly hostile Russia and India. Henry Kissinger recalls a change of tone by the Chinese premier at this juncture that would precipitate the rapprochement in which he himself played such a decisive role.[160] Yet, the US-China détente, as a logical extension of the pivot model, has received scant treatment in the Heartland literature. This is perhaps, unsurprising, given that its chief architect was also a leading figure in the development of post-War Classical Realism, and an agnostic on the land-sea diarchy. The triangular diplomacy of the late-1960s, a period during which Washington also made overtures towards Khrushchev, complicates the simplistic representation of China as a Western strategic bridgehead on the Eurasian land mass; but nevertheless, by the mid-1980s, the Soviet pivot faced a coordinated offensive on almost all of its borders. Of the competing causal narratives for the demise of the USSR, at least one — the emergence of a nuclear-armed competitor on its Eastern border advertising the tacit support of the United States — may be attributed directly and two others — the so-called 'revolution of rising expectations', and the Afghan resistance — indirectly to the Nixon-Kissinger balancing

[160] Kissinger, *On China*, op. cit., p. 203

act.[161] The 'bridgehead' hypothesis is only supported by the ascendancy of a market liberal agenda in China after 1979.

In 2011, however, Kissinger would caveat that the nations on China's borders represent 'realities not created by American policy', and it is difficult to discern at what point a pivot configuration could be reasonably defended in the present day.[162] The unlikely formalization of the Quadrilateral dialogue, or the recently established AUKUS Pact as defensive military alliances would certainly be taken as one affirmation, as would a re-militarization of the Siberian border in the context of a meaningful rapprochement between Russia and the West. Yet, India, Japan, Australia, South Korea, and Taiwan all maintain complex political and economic relationships with Beijing. India notably remains a member of both the Quadrilateral Dialogue and the SCO, and New Delhi's binary dilemma between 'Mahan and Mackinder' as (albeit careless) metaphors for its maritime-Himalayan balancing act, endures. The foremost question in international affairs today therefore, is whether China under its present leadership is a leading stakeholder in, or is in fact fulfilling the pivot role in opposition to, international maritime capitalism: one so recognizable in the history of modern Europe. The Cold War peace dividend has been as bounteous for China as for the West, and future developments may well justify asking the question as to which side was ultimately the great balancer in 1971.

Gerry Kearns' third criticism of geopolitics, in addition to its implied Manichaeism and emphasis on contiguity, is to suggest that it has 'no faith in markets'.[163] Two thousand miles inland from China's party-managed, globalizing seaboard, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) functions as a *de facto* fifth column of the PLA in Xinjiang, presiding over militia, food supply chains, and welfare for its two and a half million 'employees'. With trade dominated by contiguous territories and a mandate

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161 Hauner, "Russia's Asian Heartland Today and Tomorrow", op. cit., p. 144.

162 Kissinger, *On China,* op. cit.

163 Kearns, "Naturalising Empire", op. cit.

to garrison and ethnically homogenize the frontier, the XPCC is not a graduate of the Washington Consensus and, along with the *Minbing*, the largest state-controlled militia in the world, serves as apt a metaphor for Chinese land-power as the Carrier Strike Group does for Mahanian sea-money power. Like the communist guerrillas and their dynastic forebears, Beijing continues to sense opportunity in the strategic depth of the Eurasian interior, and in overland and un-interdictable lines of communication to Europe and the Middle East. It may be less contemporary developments in East Asia that draw the attention of future historians than China's inward orientation under conditions of heightened strategic competition and effective containment in the First Island Chain. Only the passage of the coming decades will confirm whether the Belt and Road Initiative was a transient rebranding of China incorporated, or indeed one manifestation of a more universal law recognized in their respective interpretations of history by Alfred Mahan and Halford Mackinder.

Halford Mackinder's 1904 paper: The Geographical Pivot of History, has been an object of scholarly contention for more than eight decades. Endlessly regurgitated, the process of the Mackinder review has become a niche within International Relations theory that has evolved over time but retained a number of core themes. Contemporary 'critical' accounts continue to rely on an entrenched anti-Positivist dialectic that dismisses the military or political importance of space, as well as a damning, yet admissible, genealogical link to the German 'anthropo-geographers' of the late-19th Century. Other longstanding critiques of the Pivot Paper draw attention to the implications of modern technologies for the contemporary understanding of strategic space and the depth Mackinder affords his Eurasian 'Heartland'. While in places contradictory, Mackinder's principle contribution to the realist literature rests on his having expressed more succinctly than the other authors of his generation, the strategic relationship between a smaller, offshore maritime state and a larger continental power under conditions of global closure and this can neither be lightly dismissed nor emphatically accepted. Cursory readings of the Pivot Theory have permitted the distortion of the debate and the hyperbolic citation of Mackinder's name and signature concept in news media and academia. The popular 'Mahan versus Mackinder' dichotomy, is perhaps the most familiar manifestation of this. The careless misrepresentation of what was in many ways a shared rather than contradictory worldview, as well as the shifting strategic landscape in the early-Twenty First Century, justifies another review of Mackinder's ideas, as well as those of Alfred Mahan. This paper gives a brief synopsis of the Pivot Theory's critical legacy and weighs the enduring relevance of the Edwardian Weltanschauung in the context of contemporary developments on a Eurasian land mass that has witnessed the breakneck political and economic rise of a second industrialized and ambitious power in the 'Heartland'.

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