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*Special Section:
Discussing Geopolitics*



Introduction to Early 20th-Century Geopolitics

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Keywords: Brzezinski, geopolitics, Haushofer, heartland, Kissinger, Kjellén, living space, Mackinder, paranoia, pivot of history, Ratzel, rimland, Rōyama, Spykman, taboo, trans-continental bloc

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to familiarize the reader with some of the most important “classical” geopolitical theories. Our interpretation is somewhat based on Klaus Dodds’ recent four volume compilation called *Geopolitics* (2009) as well as on the second edition of *The Geopolitics Reader*, edited by Gearóid Ó Tuathail and others (2006). Even though the preliminary texts¹ of the latter are concise and focused, the general introduction by Dodds might be more readily accessible to readers who have little prior knowledge about geopolitics. Yet, his description of the political, geographical, and economic situation at the end of the 19th century is based on a rather Eurocentric point of view, focusing mostly on contemporary European great powers, while Japan, for example, is barely covered at all. Keeping this limitation in mind, Dodds provides a clear picture of the circumstances under which geopolitics arose as a new discipline. The text explains the principal motives of the Western imperialistic powers of the time, especially the strategic goals of the British and the French, and their influence on contemporary world affairs. It describes how fear and xenophobia affected the development and implementation of geopolitical concepts.

Dodds distinguishes between “classical”, “critical”, and “popular” geopolitics. Classical geopolitics was developed around 1900 to explain the manifold relationships between state, territory, location, resources, and power. This kind of geopolitics was mostly based on the writings of Friedrich Ratzel (Germany, 1844-1904), Rudolf Kjellén (Sweden, 1864-1922) as well as Sir Halford J. Mackinder (England, 1861-1947), and was strongly influenced by social Darwinism along with

imperialist and often Eurocentric perceptions. The notorious concept of “Lebensraum” (living space), particularly if connected to deterministic theories like in Ratzel’s expansionist “Gesetz der wachsenden Räume” (to be discussed later in this article), is an infamous example of these ideas. Furthermore, application of the organic-state theory, which interpreted the state as a living being, was perceived essential for securing “state health”. Parallel to the ancient “Rota Fortunae” (wheel of fortune) idea, states were interpreted as either growing or dying. Yet, in a world where all lands had been claimed, there was no space left for the territorial growth these theories called for. The “diplomatic claustrophobia” that developed on this basis around 1900 might therefore be called “closed space paranoia”.

In the 1970s, the writings of political scientists and politicians such as Henry Kissinger revived public interest in geopolitics. Yet, it was the extensive oeuvre of critical scholars such as Mark Bassin (UK), Simon Dalby (USA), Yves Lacoste (France), Gearóid Ó Tuathail (Ireland) as well as the late Takeuchi Keiichi (Japan) and Peter Schöller (Germany) that elucidated the shortcomings of classical geopolitics. At the same time, their works proved the importance of geographical knowledge as an essential element within the execution of political power, thus leading to a stimulating discourse about geopolitics, in other words, “critical geopolitics”.

Popular geopolitics deals with various types of geopolitical interpretations, narratives, and symbols, spread by visual and non-visual means of communication within

Spang, C. W., & Milovanovic, I. (2011). Introduction to early 20th-century geopolitics. *OTB Forum*, 4(1), 8-17.

¹ There is one general introduction to the *Reader* and separate introductions to the five parts of the book.

popular culture, including anime, cartoons, comics, radio, and television programs. Additionally, this trend within geopolitics emphasizes the importance of civil groups and non-government organizations. State domination, public acquiescence and resistance against trans-national corporations, recent U.S. neo-conservatism, corporate globalization, as well as declining U.S. and growing Chinese power are its most common focal points.

In *The Geopolitics Reader*, geopolitics is analyzed in no less than six introductory chapters: a general introduction and separate prologues for each of the five sections of the book. In his overall introduction, Ó Tuathail critically reviews geopolitics, analyzing crucial geopolitical discourses by putting an emphasis on their imperialist origins, frequent racist overtones, and lack of objectivity. He promotes critical thinking beyond elitist conceptions, pointing out the significance of cultural interpretations, geopolitical imaginations, and traditions. As a consequence, Ó Tuathail divides geopolitics into “formal”, “practical”, and “popular” branches, according to the way in which domains such as economy, ideology, military, politics, and religion interact with each other in creating structural networks of power either within any given society or between states.

The prologues to the first three sections were also composed by Ó Tuathail, the final two were written by Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge. The introduction to Part I (*“Imperialist Geopolitics”*) analyzes the rivalry between Great Britain and Germany from the beginning of the 20th century until the end of World War II, and simultaneously looks at the rise of U.S. power. Some of the main ideas of politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler as well as the theories of Halford J. Mackinder, Karl E. Haushofer (Germany, 1869-1945), and Isaiah Bowman (USA, 1878-1950) are discussed. The introduction to Part II (*“Cold War Geopolitics”*) deals with the causes of hostility between the USA and the USSR in the postwar period. Ó Tuathail sheds light on the basic geopolitical forces and motives of policy-makers in East and West, and explains

the key decisions that helped ending the Cold War.

The opening chapter of Part III (*“Twenty-First Century Geopolitics”*) covers the strategic policy decisions of the Clinton (1993-2001) and George W. Bush (2001-2009) administrations in an attempt to reveal the roots of neo-conservatism in the USA. American interests have often been expressed by military means; an environment of fear and general paranoia about possible terrorist attacks lead to (unjustified) interventions, which were often based upon deep-rooted geopolitical illusions. Simon Dalby in his introduction to Part IV (*“The Geopolitics of Global Dangers”*) analyzes some of the most pressing problems mankind faces at the beginning of the new millennium, including environmental hazards, and the limitation of natural resources. He also deals with questions of global security, bio-terrorism, and the unjust distribution of wealth, predicting future “resource wars”. The introduction to the final part (*“Anti-Geopolitics”*) by Paul Routledge deals with the term “anti-geopolitics”, described as a struggle of various indigenous groups against the political, economic, military, and cultural hegemony of a state and its elites. These counter-hegemonic struggles “from below” have been manifested either through peaceful forms (non-violent resistance, demonstrations, strikes) or aggressive forms (military actions and terrorism). Analyzing these movements and their direct consequences, Routledge describes them as “Colonial Anti-Geopolitics” (2006, pp. 234-237), “Cold War Anti-Geopolitics” (2006, pp. 237-240) and “Contemporary Anti-Geopolitics” (2006, pp. 240-246), each of them representing a different historical era.

The Struggle for Space

States have been competing for resources and markets worldwide at least since the Age of Exploration half a millennium ago. But the struggle for space became much more ruthless after the Industrial Revolution changed production and trade worldwide. The drive for raw materials (at first timber and fur, later coal, gas, and oil) was an important factor behind the Russian conquest of Siberia as

well as parts of North America, and it was also at the heart of the subsequent American purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867. Moreover, it was one of the reasons for colonial rivalries during the Age of Imperialism before World War I. Japan's expansion in East Asia (Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, China, and other parts of South East Asia) from the late 19th century until the end of World War II is just one of many modern examples of imperialistic policies. However, if we take a look at the rise of postwar Japan, we realize that the country managed to become one of the most developed and (economically) powerful nations without either an abundant "Lebensraum" or natural resources. This seems to indicate, that due to late 20th century economic and technological developments, "Lebensraum" has become less important than Hitler and others had earlier believed.

The Birth of Modern Geopolitics

One of the trailblazers of geopolitics was Friedrich Ratzel. In his book *Politische Geographie* [Political Geography], published in 1897 in his native German, Ratzel developed the theory of states as life forms, which was very influential until World War II. Inspired by his first-hand knowledge of the USA, where he experienced the American frontier spirit (Turner, 1893), Ratzel believed that a state, like a (primitive) organism, must either grow or die but can never be idle. On this basis, he developed the concept of "Lebensraum" and his already mentioned "Gesetz der wachsenden Räume" (law of the growing spaces, or rather laws of growing political units). Before we discuss Ratzel's theory, it has to be mentioned here that the term "Lebensraum" itself was not coined by him, but most likely by one of his contemporary compatriots, Oskar Peschel (1826-1875). Still, it was Ratzel who popularized it. Along with "Blut und Boden" (blood and soil), it was later used by the Nazis in their catchphrase "Lebensraum im Osten" (living space in the East), and has thus often been interpreted as a pretext for starting World War II.²

² Friedrich Ratzel (1896). *Die Gesetze des räumlichen Wachstums der Staaten*. The English

Reading Ratzel's "laws" (Table 1), it becomes obvious that Ratzel was strongly influenced by biologism and social Darwinism. His ideas also reflected German colonial ambitions after the foundation of the new Empire in 1871.³ Yet, by the time his *Politische Geographie* (1897) was published, there was barely any room left for further aggrandizement without risking a major war.

One of the academics most thoroughly influenced by Ratzel's ideas was Rudolf Kjellén, a Swedish political scientist, who invented the term *geopolitics*, firstly used in an article published in the Swedish journal *Ymer* in 1899. Kjellén eventually further developed the organic state theory, particularly in his book *Staten som livsform* [The State as a Living Form]⁴, originally published in Stockholm in 1916.

Even though his ideas and the terminology he used turned out to be very influential worldwide, the availability of his works in foreign languages remains very limited. While *Staten som livsform* was translated into German twice (1917 and 1924), it has never been fully translated into either English or French. There are, however, two Japanese

translations shown in Table 1 are partly taken from Ratzel (1896). The territorial growth of states. Yet, as Ratzel's English article is a mere abstract of his German work, not every aspect of his law(s) can be found in the English text. Therefore, some of the translations were done by the authors. When the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, the organ of German geopolitics, was launched by Karl Haushofer and others in 1924, it opened with an article by Fritz Hesse, which discussed Ratzel's "Gesetz der wachsenden Räume". See reference list for details.

³ Until the 1880s, Germany and Italy were the only major European powers that did not have any colonies. Ratzel supported German colonial acquisitions and was directly involved in the foundation of the Kolonialverein [Colonial Society] in 1882, and its successor, the *Kolonialgesellschaft* [German Colonial Association] in 1887. He was also among the founders of the jingoistic *Alldeutscher Verband* [Pan-German League] in 1891.

⁴ In chapter five of his book, there are two subchapters whose titles clearly elucidate how far Kjellén promoted the "state-as-organism" theory: "Die Geburt des Staates" [The birth of the state] and "Der Tod der Staaten" [the death of the states]. Quoted here from Kjellén, 1924, p. 125.

Table 1. Friedrich Ratzel's "Gesetz der wachsenden Räume"

| English | Original (German) |
|--|---|
| 1) The areas of states grow with [the level of] their culture. | 1) Der Raum der Staaten wächst mit der Kultur. |
| 2) The [territorial] growth of states follows other incidences of growth amongst peoples, which necessarily precede them. | 2) Das Wachstum der Staaten folgt anderen Wachstumserscheinungen der Völker, die ihm notwendig vorausgehen. |
| 3) The growth of states proceeds through the annexation of smaller territories to amalgamation, while at the same time the attachment of the people to the soil becomes ever closer. | 3) Das Wachstum der Staaten schreitet durch die Angliederung kleinerer Teile zur Verschmelzung fort, mit der zugleich die Verbindung des Volkes mit dem Boden immer enger wird. |
| 4) Borders are the external organ of states and thus a means of growth as well as fortification. Borders change along with the state as an organism. | 4) Die Grenze ist als peripherisches Organ des Staates sowohl Träger seines Wachstums wie auch seiner Befestigung und macht alle Wandlungen des Organismus des Staates mit. |
| 5) The state in its growth strives for the possession of politically important points. | 5) Der Staat strebt im Wachsen nach Umfassung der politisch wertvollen Stellen. |
| 6) The initial incentives for territorial growth derive from the outside. | 6) Die ersten Anregungen zum räumlichen Wachstum der Staaten werden von außen hineingetragen. |
| 7) The general tendency towards a territorial balance [between states], spreads the territorial growth from state to state and increases [the desire for growth] continuously. | 7) Die allgemeine Richtung auf räumliche An- und Abgleichung pflanzt das Größenwachstum von Staat zu Staat fort und steigert es ununterbrochen. |

translations of the book (Kjellén, 1932, 1936), as products of the Japanese geopolitics boom in the 1930s and early 1940s (Spang, 2006, pp. 146-149⁵). Assuming that only rather few international scholars worldwide read either Swedish or Japanese, most academics who want to study Kjellén's works have to rely on

⁵ The forthcoming book *Karl Haushofer und Japan* by the same author will deal with this topic more extensively.

the previously mentioned early 20th century translations into German.

Kjellén not only dealt with geopolitics but emphasized five main aspects of the state, which – according to him – can be interpreted as the basic features of every (academic description of a) nation. It must be noted that Kjellén mentions geopolitics first, while he

discusses questions of government at the end⁶:

1. ***Der Staat als Reich (Geopolitik) [The state as empire. Geopolitics]***. Refers to the geographic peculiarities of the territory (in German: *Raum*) of a nation, its borders, and possible problems arising from its location and shape;
2. ***Der Staat als Volk (Ethnopolitik) [The state as a people. Ethno policy]***. Deals with the general public, focusing on its racial and psychological characteristics and the question of loyalty towards the state;
3. ***Der Staat als Haushalt (Wirtschaftspolitik) [The state as a national budget. Economic policy]***. Deals with state finances and questions of self-sufficiency and autarky, which Kjellén interpreted as the best way to avoid the risks of ever-changing international relations;
4. ***Der Staat als Gesellschaft (Soziopolitik) [The state as a society. Social policy]***. Concerned with the society in general as well as social and cultural aspects of a nation;
5. ***Der Staat als Regierungsgewalt (Herrschaftspolitik) [The state as governmental power. Governing policy]***. Refers to a nation's bureaucratic, political, and military management, and discusses the question of how far they are rooted in the national territory (in German: *Wurzeln im Boden*).

Sea Power vs. Land Power

One of the most long-standing modern geopolitical discourses is based on the famous sea power theory of the American naval historian Alfred T. Mahan (1840-1914). In his 1890 book *The influence of sea power upon history*, he emphasized the predominance of naval supremacy over land power, a debate that to some extent has continued ever since. This question is also at the heart of Mackinder's geopolitical thinking.

⁶ Due to the language problems mentioned in the main body of the article, the terminology represented here is in German, based on Kjellén (1924).

Representing a decidedly British point of view, Mackinder developed a guideline to protect the most important strategic interests of the major sea powers. In his famous 1904 article "The pivot of history", Mackinder emphasized that a possible German-Russian joint control over Eastern Europe and Northern Asia might pose an imminent danger to the contemporary status quo, i.e., the British-dominated colonial world order. In 1919, he summarized his ideas in three famous sentences (Mackinder, 1919, p. 194⁷):

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

After World War I, Karl Haushofer became the leading proponent of geopolitics in Europe. While he was strongly influenced by Ratzel's concepts from his early days, he most likely learned about Mackinder's theories much later. Most of all, it was his journey to East Asia along with his sojourn in Japan and his return trip via Siberia (1908-1910) that shaped his world view. During an extended leave of absence, Haushofer got a Ph.D. in Geography in 1913, before World War I helped him to quickly rise through the middle ranks of the army's officer corps. After his military career, which ended with his promotion to Major-General, Haushofer taught political geography and geopolitics at Munich's Ludwig-Maximilians University until his retirement in 1939. In 1924 he (co-) founded the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* (Journal for Geopolitics), which he (co-) edited until it was suspended due to Germany's "total war" effort in 1944.

His military background, international connections, and extensive knowledge of

⁷ The "heartland" consisted roughly of most Russian territory east of Moscow up to, but not including, the region close to the Northeast Asian coastline. The southern parts of the "heartland" reached into the northern regions of today's Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and China. This landmass was not accessible by sea, and therefore considered a fortress. By the term "world-island", Mackinder meant the combination of Europe, Asia, and Africa. For a map of Mackinder's 1904 "pivot of history" concept, please go to the following article by Aizawa and Spang.

geography enabled Haushofer to become an influential figure in academic, military, and political circles in Germany. He constantly emphasized the importance of geographical knowledge as a prerequisite for any ambitious German foreign policy. His own grand design advocated a tripartite cooperation between Germany, Russia (later the USSR), and Japan. This conceptual alliance, which Haushofer called “trans-continental bloc”, was well-known in policy circles in contemporary Berlin, Tokyo as well as in Moscow (Spang, 2006, pp. 146-149).⁸ Although this contradicted important parts of National Socialist doctrine, such as anti-Communism as well as Hitler’s anti-Slavic racism, and – most importantly – the 1941 attack on the USSR, Haushofer’s well-known close relation with Rudolf Hess, the deputy leader of the Nazi Party, meant that he has often wrongly been viewed as a friend of Adolf Hitler, and as an integral part of the Nazi regime by contemporaries and later observers⁹. This misinterpretation is one of the main reasons why the term “geopolitics” fell out of favor after World War II.

Early Postwar Geopolitics

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say the term had become a total taboo. As early as 1948, it was Japanese political scientist Rōyama Masamichi, who called for a revival of a renewed Japanese geopolitics, while the

⁸ The forthcoming book *Karl Haushofer und Japan* (2012) by C. W. Spang will deal with the Haushofer boom in Japan, as well as – to a lesser degree – with the reception of Haushofer’s ideas in the USSR.

⁹ See Bassin (1987) for a detailed description of the relation between German geopolitics and National Socialism. The forthcoming book *Karl Haushofer und Japan* (2012) by C. W. Spang will deal with this relation as well. To give just one telling example of what ordinary Germans thought about Haushofer’s connection with Hitler, we want to draw our readers’ attention to a quote from Stefan Zweig. The Austrian writer had met Haushofer and his wife on board a steamer in Asia before World War I, and later referred to Haushofer in the following way (1943, p. 146): “*I kept up cordial relations with the Haushofer family; we exchanged letters and visited each other in Salzburg and Munich. [...] But one day in Munich, when I chanced to mention his name, someone said, in a matter-of-course tone, ‘Ah, Hitler’s friend.’*”

Zeitschrift für Geopolitik was re-launched in Germany in 1951. Furthermore, geopolitics was continuously taught in military academies and staff colleges, particularly in the USA and the Soviet Union, often under labels such as “strategic studies” or “political geography”. It is therefore not surprising that geopolitical concepts continued to shape foreign policy views in East and West alike.

Similar to Mackinder’s fears of 1904, early U.S. postwar administrations were worried that unlimited Soviet control over Eastern Europe could turn out to be the first step towards Soviet domination over the globe. To counter such a “worst case” scenario, Washington strove for limiting Soviet influence in Europe and elsewhere. Therefore, the wartime writings of Nicolas J. Spykman (Dutch-American, 1893-1943) were studied closely. In opposition to Mackinder’s heartland theory, Spykman had come up with his so-called “rimland” theory, putting the main emphasis on the territories encircling the heartland, but not on the heartland itself. Rejecting Mackinder’s early 20th century prediction regarding the looming prospect of German-Russian world dominance, Spykman believed in the following paradigm: “*Who controls the rimland rules Eurasia; Who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world*” (Spykman, 1944, p. 43). Dominating the areas surrounding the USSR (i.e., the “rimland”) would – according to Spykman – mean obtaining control over the Eurasian continent. Thus, his idea became one of the main pillars of Washington’s “containment policy”¹⁰, vis-à-vis the Soviet Union during the early postwar era.¹¹

¹⁰ “Containment” was the key concept of U.S. foreign policy during the early phase of the Cold War. The term was initially coined by American diplomat George F. Kennan, and is often used to describe the foreign policy of the Truman administration (1945-53), which aimed at restraining the spread of Communism and Soviet influence worldwide. To reach these goals, diplomatic, economic, and military efforts were undertaken to establish a joint Western front against the Communist bloc, which culminated in the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949. As a result, its eastern counterpart, the Warsaw Pact, was created in 1955.

¹¹ In fact, Spykman’s ideas are still discussed with

While geopolitical ideas were thus applied, the word itself did not reappear in public discourse before the extensive usage of the term by Henry Kissinger and other U.S. foreign policy advisors such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, who popularized it again in the 1970s. As a result of this trend, a number of Japanese books appeared with the word *chiseigaku* [geopolitics] in their titles as well¹². In that period, numerous studies started to revive the use of geopolitical perspectives on global strategy, possibly because the economic crisis (first oil shock in 1973) and the rising influence of the People's Republic of China, which took over Taiwan's UN Security Council seat in 1971, meant that the West had lost some of its dominance. Geopolitical language once again entered discussions about foreign policy strategies. Eventually, this continued during the final stages of the Cold War, when U.S. foreign policy was frequently interpreted as a "chess game" in order to achieve supremacy over the USSR and its allies.¹³

Outlook

Classical geopolitical thinking influenced international relations before and after both

respect to U.S.-Russian relations. See for example the abstract of M. P. Gerace (1991), which ends with the following interesting prediction: "*An irony here is that while the flaring up of U.S.-Soviet conflict in the 1980s reassured Mackinder's relevance, the decline of this conflict may make Spykman more timely than ever.*" See also Boon von Ochssée (2007).

¹² The short-lived Japanese geopolitics revival around 1980 is beyond our main focus, and therefore cannot be dealt with in detail. It should be mentioned here, though, that some of these books explicitly referred to German geopolitics as a model. See, for example, Kuramae, 1982, pp. 192-96. The author went as far as interpreting Haushofer's ideas as the basis for Ronald Reagan's Near Eastern policy.

¹³ In this respect, it is worth noticing that the 1972 World Chess Championship match between Bobby Fischer (USA) and Boris Spassky (USSR) in Reykjavík (Iceland), received unprecedented publicity due to its character of a proxy war between the two superpowers. Fischer won the match 12.5 to 8.5. The image of chess was later taken up by Brzezinski for the title of his 1997 bestseller *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*.

World Wars. Yet, all of these theories are somewhat flawed. A common dilemma is the fact that none of them is nearly as objective as they claim to be. In fact, they all show rather nationalistic and ideological traces. This problematic aspect of geopolitics has been aptly summarized by Peter J. Tayler, who wrote: "In the case of geopolitics, it has always been very easy to identify the nationality of an author from the content of his or her writings" (Tayler, 1993, p. 53).

Also, the unprecedented degree of technological development since many of these theories were formulated, have often rendered the original conclusions irrelevant. While the geographical realities have remained stable, travel, warfare, and the exchange of information have seen revolutionary changes, particularly since the introduction of the personal computer and the internet. Ratzel's "Lebensraum" concept, for example, was influenced by the American frontier spirit of the 18th and 19th century, yet nowadays the earth is much more populated and marked by economic and political globalization as well as regional integration. Mackinder's "pivot of history" (or heartland) theory aimed at the prolongation of British control over the globe, but colonial empires are a thing of the past now. Just like Mahan's theory of traditional sea power, all these early 20th century ideas did not take into account air power and nuclear weapons because they did not exist a century ago.¹⁴ Since the Soviet launching of the Sputnik 1 satellite in 1957 and the American Apollo 11 lunar mission in 1968 (to name just the most famous endeavors), space and missile technology has also become more and more important in international relations.¹⁵ Furthermore, the

¹⁴ Looking at the latest development of sea power, it must be mentioned here that the recent upsurge of pirate attacks in the Arabian Sea and the Malacca Strait as well as the military actions against these commercial pirates mean that conventional sea power is currently experiencing some kind of revival.

¹⁵ The "Strategic Defense Initiative" (SDI) – started by Ronald Reagan during his first term in office – was the initial move towards space-based defense systems in U.S. military strategy. Despite much enthusiasm about SDI, often dubbed as "Star Wars", the ever rising costs of the project lead to its suspension by Bill Clinton in 1993. It took until

(mostly) uncensored flow of knowledge and capital has been changing the world, thus having a strong and lasting effect on relations not only between states but also between other “global players” such as international organizations, multinational companies, as well as NGOs.

Nevertheless, if we scrutinize the moves of the major powers during the 20th century, it seems that classical geopolitics has had a remarkable influence. Fifteen years ago, Colin S. Gray (1996: 258) summarized this with respect to U.S. foreign policy in the following way: “From Harry S. Truman to George Bush, the overarching vision of U.S. national security was explicitly geopolitical and directly traceable to the heartland theory of Mackinder.” This can be shown by the fact that the West continued to be afraid of Russia after Communism collapsed. Various moves to counter Moscow’s influence, like integrating many Eastern European nations into NATO and the EU, seem to verify Gray’s argument. One might interpret these steps as a modernized version of the old World War I idea of a German dominated “Mitteleuropa” (Central Europe), or the liberal but decidedly catholic Pan-European movement, initiated by Tokyo-born Austrian Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi.¹⁶ More recently, there are some Russian geopoliticians who want to counter this policy by arguing for some kind of trans-continental bloc between Paris, Berlin and Moscow.¹⁷

2002 before George W. Bush revived it again. SDI has affected international politics significantly and brought along serious implications for U.S.-Russian relations, especially with regard to the planned missile defense shield over Eastern Europe. Since the 1980s, investment in space exploration, space technology and weaponry has developed into an integral part of national security, not only in the U.S. and Russia but also in fast-developing China, which in 2003 became the third country capable of sending human beings into space.

¹⁶ During World War I, Friedrich Naumann and others dreamt of a German-dominated Central European “Großraum”. In the mid-1920s, Coudenhove-Kalergi founded the Pan-European Union and later influenced European integration after 1945. As the project was strictly anti-Communist, Coudenhove-Kalergi did not consider the USSR as a possible part of the suggested union.

¹⁷ Amongst them is Alexander Dugin, currently one

Nowadays, the world’s most powerful nations are again directing their attention to securing the resources they need. An example of this is the ongoing race for the North Pole and its natural resources.¹⁸ The USA, particularly during the George W. Bush administration, unilaterally tried to secure its own wide-ranging strategic interests, and by doing so acquire a position of world dominance. Similar efforts by non-U.S. allies often lead to sanctions or other forms of international interference.¹⁹

Since the infamous 9/11 attacks, the USA have been waging a “war on terrorism”, initially considered legitimate but later severely criticized by a number of traditional U.S. allies such as Germany and France, as well as the United Nations. The fact that the “war on terrorism” has so far often included bombardments with frequent collateral damages means that the second invasion of Iraq in 2003 in particular can be interpreted as a scantily disguised effort to secure access to the rich oil reserves of the region.

Looking at the ideas of Nicolas Spykman, Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Samuel Huntington and others, it seems that

of the most prominent Russian geopoliticians. Dugin actively advocates anti-American ideas and somehow seems to be inspired by Haushofer. Promoting opposition to the USA, his publications have become highly influential in Russia since the Jelzin era. For a brief account of his ideas in English, see an interview that was published in *The Journal of Turkish Weekly* in 2004. In a 2008 interview with Megan Stack (LA Times), Dugin advanced similar ideas.

¹⁸ That is why Norway with its long northern coastline, which could be used as a springboard to the North Pole, might become more and more important as a key ally and NATO partner in the future. While Mackinder’s heartland and the North Pole are otherwise not comparable, they share at least cold temperatures and virtual inaccessibility.

¹⁹ If we compare the international excitement about the (suspected) nuclear weapons programs by Iran as well as North Korea, and compare this with the never officially declared Israeli possession of nuclear armaments – which is generally accepted by Western governments – it is obvious that there are double standards at work. An historical example in the academic field would be the way Karl Haushofer and German geopolitics was demonized by Allied wartime propaganda, while U.S. geopolitics flourished concurrently.

international relations theory has long been influenced by some (American) intellectuals whose thinking was based on classical geopolitical thinking.

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