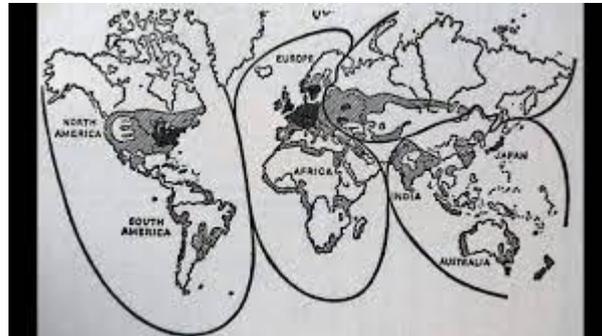


Research on "Sociology and Strategic Doctrines"

by

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The Yalta order was overwhelmed by the end of the Cold War and replaced by the disorder of nations. Consequences of the collapse of the Berlin Wall were on the one hand the overcoming of the structural simplicity of the bipolar system and on the other the early closure of the twentieth century, defined, in fact, the short century.

By losing the particular form of the system of war represented by the mercurial opposition of the two blocs, an expression of irreconcilable and alternative value systems, the victory of the Western model of democracy over the model of socialist states has been sanctioned. The defeat of communist ideology did not mean, however, the end of history. Liberal democratic institutionalism, after having imposed itself in the cycle of the European Civil War on Nazi-fascism, prevailed in the bipolar confrontation on Soviet socialism, placing itself as the only survivor of the great ideologies of the '900. Despite this, it is not possible to speak of a universal language (defined by Popper as "the myth of the frame"). Functionalist institutionalism, and its expressions at the international level, global and regional organizations, with a common Anglo-Saxon matrix, tend to superimpose their philosophy on diversified and incompatible realities. The end of the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union suggested that the export of democracy was the only guarantee of peace and a requirement for the revival of the United Nations and inclusive systems of collective security. In reality, there has been an increase in conflict that has

manifested itself above all at the level of ethno-identity and religious conflicts, demonstrating the weakness of the idea of institutionalist homologation and the impotence of the UN in crisis management (an example is the modest results obtained in the missions in Somalia, Cambodia and Bosnia).

The purpose of the considerations advanced in relation to institutionalism is to demonstrate the importance of geopolitics as a tool for analyzing international relations to recover the spatial dimension of international politics that has been de-territorialized by the simplification of the world divided into blocks. However, care must be taken not to confuse the term geopolitics with political geography or international politics. In fact, the objective is different: to study the relationships between physical geography, human geography and the choices in political terms that, in the past and in the present, are taken by the elites who decide the future of nations in the form of political and economic dispositions of states within the complex world social mechanisms. Geopolitics, therefore, in addition to including the political and geographical spheres, relies on sociology as a science that studies the interaction between the physical environment in which man lives and the forms of political life that regulate his actions.

But what exactly is meant by geopolitical perspective? The term in question was first used in 1899 by the Swedish political scientist and sociologist Johan Rudolf Kjellen and defined as the science of the state as a geographical organism, as it manifests itself in space. The state as a country, as a territory or, more significantly, as an empire. Geopolitics, therefore, studies the influence of geography on politics and history, that is, the relations between space and power. Starting from this assumption, the passage that allows geography and sociology to converge is short. Biological foundations, human behaviors, economic and political relations are primary and connected elements, belonging to the logical groupings that correspond to human, natural, social, political, cultural and economic geography. The knowledge of every single aspect is fundamental to determine the strength of a nation, the potential and the criticalities. And establishing a contact between geographical roots and the power of a state was the premise from which Kjellén started when he coined the term

"geopolitics". Other scientists have ventured into a definition of it, from Karl Haushofer to Saul Cohen, from Michel Foucher to Alain de Benoist. In particular, General Haushofer, professor of geography at the University of Munich, considers geopolitics as "the basis for every scientific policy and for every rearrangement of space on the surface of the earth, especially for a people of great culture, hard hit and prostrate, located in the heart of an overpopulated and declining continent with regard to its importance in the world". He also considers it "one of the rare means of bringing thousands of men to common points of view and in the same living space, at least on fundamental issues of vital importance for all". Of the definitions, the perspective was shared that geopolitics investigates the influence of the spatial factor on political action while rejecting the scientific connotation given to the discipline.

Geopolitics is an intellectual process, a metaphysics of competition for the domination of space that reinterprets past history and anticipates predictions for the future with the aim of determining in advance the directions of expansion and security threats. Geopolitics combines "a geographical schematization of diplomatic-strategic relations with an interpretation of diplomatic attitudes according to the way of life and the environment (sedentary, nomadic, terrestrial, marine peoples). In general, therefore, the discipline allows us to regain possession of the material element of international politics by insisting on a precise foundation that it is not possible to modify the geographical space, enriched over time by new dimensions through nuclearization and verticalization that define a global character".

But how does geopolitics manage to contribute to the analysis of international relations?

The institutionalist approach is based on a twofold order of ideas. On the one hand we find the tendential development of the original anarchist structure of the system in a hierarchy, on the other hand we are witnessing the common conviction according to which the spread of the democratic model determines a lowering of the levels of competition and conflict since the principle is assumed that a democratic state does not make war on another democratic state. This perspective follows a linear and progressive

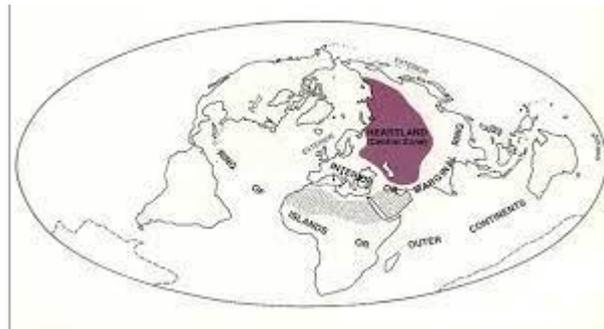
development of international relations and adopts the idea of a shift from disorder to order that did not actually happen, as the events after 1990 demonstrate. Moreover, the legal superstructure of international organizations tends to homologate situations in which actors acting that have absolutely peculiar ethnic, cultural and political characteristics, operating in geographical and geopolitical areas different from each other, not taking into account, therefore, economic, social and technological otherness.

This is to be considered an error of institutionalism. The approach that advances a cyclical theory of international relations is different, so the analysis takes into account the weights of power and, in particular, the degree of concentration / diffusion of power both in individual regions and globally. This approach compares different geographical areas of the world by detecting the temporal discrepancies, at the regional level, with respect to the main trends of diffusion / concentration of power.

Here geopolitics becomes relevant after the explosion of the borders of Eurasia precisely because of its interpretative importance of the space-time dimension and because it overcomes the determinism and propagandism characteristic of the period between the two world wars recognizing, instead, the objective constraints and the potentialities of the political action of the states with respect to the space in which they operate in the so-called primitive form of the Bear (the earth) and the Whale (the sea).

The concept of geopolitics has evolved over time also due to the continuous transformations of the human, economic, political and technological factors of the states and during this evolution specific theories have been formed. The theories of continental power of the twentieth century support the superiority of land over the sea. According to this view, the states that manage to dominate the Euro-Asian continental mass achieve a superiority of power over the peripheral maritime powers, Europe and Japan, and external ones, the United States. The theories of continental power originated from a specific common historical situation, the control of the seas by England, and represent a rationalization of the Euro-Asian question, or the possibility of a Russian-German alliance then extended to Japan. Events that make it possible to envisage such a possibility were

the support of the Wilhelmine Reich to Russia in the war against Japan in 1905, the Separate Peace of Brest-Litovsk in 1918, the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922 and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939. The problem in question was taken into consideration, according to opposing points of view, by the English geographer Sir Halford Mackinder and the German general Karl Haushofer in order to derive conduct parameters to make the Russian-German approach impractical (position of the geographer) or to achieve it (position of the German general).



H.J. Mackinder (1861–1947)

Mackinder's original thought[2] comes to life from the consideration that human history is integrated into the life of the world organism, idealizing a necessary union between history and geography. The English geographer argues that human ambitions use and suffer geography and that history continually rethinks geography through the capabilities of technology. The planet is a totality, a whole fact for nine twelfths of maritime space and for the remaining part of land emerged. Hence the metaphor elaborated by Mackinder of the dyadic land-sea pair to indicate the contrast between the World Ocean (Arctic, Antarctica, Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean) and the World Island, Europe-Asia and Africa. The outing Islands, the United States and Australia that appeared in the events of world politics in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries remain outside. According to Mackinder's theory there is a space called pivot area first and heartland then, whose domination guarantees control of the Eurasian landmass and consequently of the world. Around this space of primary importance it is possible to find spaces that radiate in concentric semicircles. There is the inner crescent (innercrescent) that protects the heartland, and which includes Siberia, the Himalayas and the deserts of the Gobi, Tibet

and Iran. Outside are the coastal regions (costlands), Europe, Arabia, India, Indochina and maritime China, where there is the greatest concentration of the world's population.

On the edge of this belt are the outer crescent islands, Great Britain and Japan and then move on to the last semicircle, the island crescent, which includes Australia and the Americas. On this wide stage the balance of power of the European states of the first 900 are played. And this is the scenario that Britain must consider to avoid one of the worst nightmares, the exclusion from the island of the world with the deprivation of its markets. One sentence encompasses Britain's need: "He who controls the heart of the world commands the island of the world, he who controls the island of the world commands the world."

The geographical location of heartland changes depending on historical contingencies. In 1904, for example, at a time when the innercrescent states permanently occupied the outercrescent overturning the balance of power and establishing the superiority of the maritime powers, the pivot area was between Central Asia and the Arctic Ocean. The landscape soon changed. Russia began to quickly organize the connecting area by building a vast railway system to facilitate internal maneuvers while Germany, facilitated by economic and demographic growth, brought the challenge to the heart of the British power by starting the construction of an offshore fleet capable of contending with Great Britain for control of the seas and making it a symbol of German Weltpolitik.

The expansion of the Wilhelmine Reich was interrupted by World War I but, despite Germany's defeat and territorial, military and economic downsizing, Mackinder continued to see Germany as a potential danger and moved the heartland west, including Central and Eastern Europe to the Elbe-Adriatic line and the Baltic and Black Sea Basins. According to the English geographer, it was necessary to free Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland and Romania from German influence and to give substance to the territorial and ethnic planning imposed with the punitive peace of Versailles. Mackinder's reasoning expands with the outbreak of World War II to consider a third peripheral player who intervened on the world stage, the United States. A third dimension, therefore, broadens

the pivot-heartland theory by retreating the location of the heartland to the east, along the Leningrad-Moscow-Stalingrad line and attributing a fundamental importance to the Atlantic Ocean, the middle sea between Europe, America and Africa. According to the English geographer, just as the railways, by increasing the internal maneuvering capabilities of continental power, achieved superiority over the maneuvering of external lines of the fleets of maritime powers, aviation could offer superiority to continental power by hitting the peripheries without air bases being destroyed by maritime powers.

Mackinder's concern remains to create effective and lasting cooperation between America, Britain and France by assigning a task to each. America had to provide a defense in depth, Britain was to constitute a fortified advanced island, and France had to provide the continent with a bridgehead that could be defended. The break between the United States and the Soviet Union after the Second World War and the establishment of a bloc of communist states extended to Eastern Europe, did nothing but connote the heartland as an impenetrable and hostile area, a threat to the liberal democracies of the innercrescent. Hence, the elaboration of Mackinder's containment doctrine and Western propaganda relating to the immanent Soviet threat against the peninsular and island belt surrounding the Eurasian landmass.

Haushofer (1869–1946)

The purpose of German geopolitics has been to imagine Germany's position and role in the world. A particular influence was advanced by the thought of Friedrich Ratzel, the most distinguished exponent of the political geography of the Reich between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ratzel translated the aspirations of a nation that had recently become a state into a coherent and functional theoretical whole of Wilhelmine resistance politics. The geographer advocated a fundamental relationship between state and soil by stating that the state undergoes the same influences as every human life and that man is not conceivable without the earthly soil as well as his greatest creation on earth, the state. Only through the control of the soil can the state guarantee control of the resources necessary for its independence. From this statement we understand the

competition that is created between neighboring states and that often focuses precisely on the possession of territories. Ratzel, then, also advances the problem of the polyformism of Germany, a nation seen as a middle empire, closed to the center of Europe and threatened both east and west, whose survival is linked to the colonization of borderlands.

Haushofer's geopolitics[3] is based on Ratzel's convictions and, in addition, represents the result of the imposition of the Versailles clauses on a nation defeated by a war despite having its army firmly present in foreign territory, a nation that considers defeat and downsizing a betrayal of the political class. The German general, reworking Mackinder's theses, focuses his reflection on three main topics giving life to a decidedly realistic vision of the world.

The first argument concerns the concept of living space, a source of resources that allow the accumulation of power and a pre-requisite for autarchy, the control of which is favored by the presence of German ethno-cultural minorities outside Germany.

The second argument sees the pan regions (macro territorial aggregates based on pan-germanism, pan-Germanism, pan-Asianism and pan-Americanism) at the base of the reorganization of the world.

According to this view, the conflict between states arises because of the clashes between the demographic potential of a population and the productive capacities of states. Translated into historical terms, Haushofer attributed the difficulties of international relations to Britain's resistance to the deployment of unifying forces of each geopolitical pole gathered around the main actors, Germany for Pan Europe, the Soviet Union for Pan Russia, Japan for Pan Pacific and the United States for Pan America. The last argument considered by Haushofer is the contrast between continental power and maritime power.

The general agrees with Mackinder in affirming that those who dominate the World Island dominate the world and adds, moreover, that the Tripartite Pact between Italy, Germany and Japan of 1936, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Treaty are the basis of the realization of the unification of the heartland with consequent definitive interdiction of the maritime powers from the heart of Eurasia. Germany's attack on the Soviet Union would soon disprove Haushofer's idea. However,

the idea remained that the enemy of Germany should not be sought in the east but among the maritime powers since the conflicts have always been linked to the dialectic between the "freedom" of the sea and the "order", the Nomos, of the land.

While theories of continental power are the result of geographical studies, theories of maritime power arise from naval strategic thinking. It is possible to identify two different conceptions relating to the supremacy of the sea over the land. The first refers to the analysis of the American admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, the second reports the conclusions of the British admiral Julian Corbett. Both are well-known historians and academics of maritime strategy.

A.T. Mahan

Mahan's reflection[4] begins from the assumption that the sea is a great way of communication, a wide space through which men can move in any direction while privileging certain movements over others. Maritime transport is for Mahan more advantageous than land transport both in terms of capacity and in terms of costs. The United States in order to satisfy the need for domination of the seas, due to its geographical position, had to make use of specific tools ranging from naval power to the amphibious projection capacity of the power itself, from the possession of strategic bases to the breadth of commercial traffic. A.T. Mahan

The aim was to be the control of Hawaii, the Philippines in the Pacific Ocean and Cuba in the Atlantic Ocean indispensable for the security of the strategic junction of the Panama Canal. Right between the Panama canal and Suez is, according to Mahan, the center of world power. It thus comes to consider the continental mass Eurasia irrelevant to world hegemony. In contrast, the band between the 30th and 40th parallels is an area of instability that marks the separation of Russian and British interests. Consequently, the goal was to be an alliance with Great Britain to be extended to Germany and Japan in an anti-Russian function.

Mahan's thought on the need for control of the sea and trade retains a kind of circularity. Foreign trade is seen as indispensable to ensure American economic vitality, overseas

bases are necessary to support trade, a combat fleet is critical to defending the bases and flow of trade. The latter, finally, is called upon to provide the overall income necessary to finance the Navy.

Corbett

While Mahan affirms the autonomy of naval strategy, Corbett[5] advocates the subordination of naval doctrines to general strategy. Although naval power alone cannot determine the outcome of a conflict, it is still a determining factor in victory because it forces the continental enemy, accustomed to operating on internal lines, to disperse forces along coastal development. The naval instrument, according to Corbett, is indispensable for projecting its power on the ground by intervening on the opponent and weakening the resistance capacity of the populations. In a context where forward from the sea has more relevance than sea control, Corbett's thinking takes on greater importance and attention.

In conclusion, it is possible to affirm that the behaviors, attitudes and vocations of the Bear and the Whale have made it possible to imagine geopolitical models of realignment at the regional or global level at a time when international relations have been characterized by a trend of fragmentation of power. The processes of macro-aggregation have the task of allowing the re-elaboration and renewal of cultural values, ethnic motives, religious aspirations, spatial ties and constraints taking into account the economic, political and technological transformations to which states are subjected.

That is why geopolitics today takes on a new importance in terms of international relations. Although the historical context has changed a lot compared to the years in which geopolitics has sunk its roots, phenomena such as globalization or transnational terrorism have made it necessary to rework theories related to national security. As a result, geopolitics has again been called upon to study the mutual influences of physical geography, sociology, politics, economics and technology on the power of states.

[1] geo-economist former professor of Economic Geography at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan and at the Royal University of Pavia

[2] H.J. Mackinder is a political geographer with a variety of disciplines including history, law, and biology. He was a diplomat, president of the London School of Economics and Political Science and explorer. His best-known theory is that of the Heartland.

[3]K. Haushofer is a German political scientist general who, despite his diplomatic and scholarly activity, had a basic military training, having entered the Bavarian army at the age of eighteen and having attended war school, the Artillery Academy and the Military Academy. In 1913 he enrolled in geography courses in Munich so the Great War found him on the Western Front as a geopolitics officer as well as an artillery officer.

[4] A.T. Mahan is an American historian, admiral, and president of the Naval School in Newport. He fought in the Civil War, wrote numerous books and publications that influenced the evolution of the Navy around the world.

[5] J. Corbett is a British historian and geostrategic. He wrote various works that helped shape the reforms of the Royal Navy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.