

## Outline

- Introduction
- Geopolitical terms
- Geopolitics definition
  
- Alfred Mahan (1840 - 1914)
- Halford Mackinder (1861 - 1947)

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## Introduction

- **Geopolitics: the study of the geographical distribution of power among states across the world, and especially rivalry between major powers.**
- **State-centric: the goal of geopolitics is to advance the interests of the state**
- **A focus on geography: every place is understood in terms of its relationship to a state's interests**
- **Maximizing your own power involves weakening the power of others**

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## Two elements of geopolitics

1) **State-centric foreign policy prescriptions: the specific measures a state should take to achieve or maintain power.**

2) **World-view through which the goal and the methods are defined: the geopolitical code.**

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## Geopolitical terms

- **Geopolitical code:** The operating code of a government's foreign policy that evaluates places beyond its borders.
- **Geopolitical world order:** A more or less stable set of international power relations dominated by an agenda set by the major powers (e.g. the Cold War).
- **Geopolitical transition:** Transition from one geopolitical world order to another. (e.g. from Cold War to post Cold War)
- **Geopolitical culture:** The dominant geopolitical ideology of a society - can be multiple cultures within a country

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## Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840 -1914)

- Naval Historian
- Head of US Naval Academy 1870's and 1880's

GOAL: Replicate the success of Great Britain for the U.S.

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## Mahan's Six Geographic Characteristics of a World Power

- TERRITORY – Size matters (resources)
- POPULATION – bigger the better
- GEOPOLITICAL POSITION – Island
- STRONG GOVERNMENT
- NATIONAL CHARACTER
- STRONG NAVY AND GOOD HARBORS

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**MAHAN'S 5 POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS FOR THE U.S.**

BUILD A STRONG NAVY

EXPAND INTO THE PACIFIC AND THE CARIBBEAN

BUILD THE PANAMA CANAL

CONTAINMENT OF RUSSIA

FORM ALLIANCE WITH THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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**Sir Halford Mackinder**

- Founded Geography Dept at Oxford to address decline of B.E. and get people to think Imperially; M.P.



- Three Innovations

- 1) Global or "god's eye" view of world; "objective"
- 2) Division of globe into seats of power with singular homogenous identity
- 3) "Geographical causation of history" the world now a closed system

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**Mackinder's five central themes on political geography and world history**

The basis for political geography is physical geography

Geography lends itself to defense (especially with respect to sea vs. land)

A focus on European history is central to understanding world history

The evolution of history is based upon a struggle between land and sea powers

The world is an closed system – no more external areas: heightened resource competition

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