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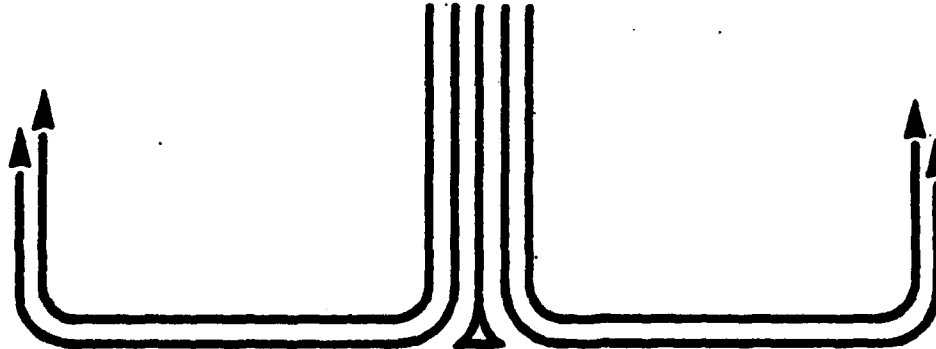
GEOPOLITICS: THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING
SOVIET REGIONAL BEHAVIOR

MAJOR BRUCE D. SLAWTER

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<p>The body of theoretical knowledge known as traditional geopolitics plays an important supporting role in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy. Understanding this role, one can begin to build a usable theoretical framework for analyzing Soviet behavior in strategically important regions of the world. This study, an article written for publication in <u>AIR FORCE Magazine</u>, shows how Mackinder's theoretical notion of systemic conflicts between heartland-controlling land powers and rimland-controlling sea powers is consistent with the Marxist-Leninist Theory of War—the ideological basis for Soviet foreign policy. The article then explains how the USSR is pursuing its fundamental geopolitical goal—increasing its influence in the rimlands of peninsular Europe and Asia—by providing the reader an up-to-date synopsis of ongoing Soviet activities in three key regions of the world: Europe, Southwest Asia, and the Caribbean basin.</p>			
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**AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
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PREFACE

Ever since George F. Kennan wrote his 1947 Foreign Affairs article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," Americans have endeavored to develop a consistent theoretical method for analyzing Soviet foreign policy. But even today, the field of Sovietology is far from being an exact science; it has yet to produce a flawless framework.

This article, which was written for publication in AIR FORCE Magazine, suggests that the time has come to reconsider the writings of the great geopolitical theorists, such as Mackinder, Spykman, and Gray, in developing a conceptual basis for understanding the long-term intent of Soviet policy. In the past, Americans have neglected traditional geopolitical theory for two reasons. First, we are an insular air-sea power; we have never suffered catastrophic destruction of population and property from invading Eurasian land powers--as the Soviets have. Second, much of early geopolitical theory was incorporated into Nazi Lebensraum doctrine in the 1930s; consequently, the theory's potential as an analytical tool remained largely unrecognized after World War II, as American scholars and careerists in the US foreign policy bureaucracy tended to distance themselves from concepts associated with Nazism.

The fact remains that traditional geopolitical theory does provide a valid framework for analyzing Soviet regional behavior, for the USSR's overall foreign policy tends to be driven mainly by geopolitical considerations. As this article shows, one begins to find unequivocal evidence of this linkage by examining the notions of systemic conflict and geographical power politics--implicit concepts found both in Soviet doctrine and in the writings of the great geopolitical theorists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Geopolitics: The Key to Understanding Soviet Regional Behavior

by

Bruce D. Slawter, Major, USAF

When General Aleksei A. Yepishev travelled to Kabul in the spring of 1979, it wasn't to offer fraternal words of encouragement to the failing Taraki-Amin regime.¹ Since World War II, the Soviets had made a tremendous investment in Afghanistan. They had built, through vast amounts of economic and military aid, a sizable political-military infrastructure. The Chief of the Main Political Directorate of the Soviet Army wasn't about to see it collapse like an avalanche in the Hindu Kush.

Within a year of General Yepishev's visit, the Taraki-Amin regime had been replaced, and Soviet troops were engaged in intensive fighting with the Mujahideen of the Afghan resistance. President Jimmy Carter responded by withdrawing SALT II from the Senate ratification process, imposing a partial embargo of grain sales to the USSR, and prohibiting US athletes from participating in the Moscow Summer Games. It would seem likely that Politburo strategists anticipated the strong reaction the Soviet invasion would evoke in the West. Perhaps they reasoned that there were compelling geopolitical reasons for a permanent Soviet presence in Afghanistan--long-term benefits which overrode the short-term political costs.

"Geopolitics," a term first coined by Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellen in 1916,² is often given as the reason for Soviet

adventurism. However, in the context of Soviet grand strategy, it is usually dismissed as mere Russian expansionism. In fact, the body of theoretical knowledge known as traditional geopolitics is much more, and continues to play an important supporting role in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy. Understanding this role, one can begin to build a usable theoretical framework for analyzing Soviet behavior in regions of the world such as Europe, Southwest Asia, and the Caribbean—regions remaining strategically important to the US well into the twenty-first century.

Traditional Geopolitics

Geopolitical theory can be viewed as a subset of power politics.³ But whereas power politicians rate a nation's strength by its relative political, military, and economic might, geopoliticians tend to view the capability to occupy or control key physical areas of the earth's geography as the quintessential feature of national power.

In his paper written in 1904, "The Geographical Pivot of History," British geographer Sir Halford J. Mackinder provided the conceptual framework for geopolitical theory by dividing the world into three vast regions: the pivot area, the inner or marginal crescent, and the lands of outer or insular crescent. The first region, the pivot area, was defined as the territory of Tsarist Russia from Moscow eastward to the edge of eastern Siberia, plus Central Asia. The second region, the inner or marginal crescent, surrounded the pivot area. This included North Africa, peninsular Europe, and the rest of Euro-Asia (the

World-Island). Finally, Sub-saharan Africa, Australia, Oceania, and the Americas constituted the lands of outer or insular crescent.

Mackinder later changed the name of the pivot area to the heartland, and redefined its geographical dimensions westward to include Eastern Europe. His inner or marginal crescent is given the name rimlands by subsequent theorists such as Nicholas J. Spykman and Colin S. Gray.⁴ (See Map)

According to the theory, the heartland is considered to be the strategic "high ground" in historic conflicts over World-Island hegemony. In these conflicts, the opposing nation-state actors have been land powers controlling the heartland, on the one hand, and sea powers controlling the rimlands, on the other.

The nation controlling the heartland is considered to be favored by the natural force of geography in its quest for control of the World-Island. But to dominate the World-Island, according to the theory, the heartland-controlling land power--today the USSR--must first achieve control over the rimlands of Western Europe and Asia.

Soviet Ideology and Systemic Conflict

This hegemonic conflict over control of the World-Island is consistent with the dialectic adopted by Marx and Lenin as the foundation for their theories on socialism. But whereas Marx used the dialectic to describe class conflict, Lenin expanded Marxist theory to include some enduring notions about systemic wars.⁵ These notions--really only theoretical assumptions--continue to provide the

ideological bases from which Soviet foreign policy proceeds, today.

Although it takes into account the various forms of modern warfare, Lenin's theory maintains that wars are really only violent political acts between opposing social systems. They are essentially systemic conflicts and, therefore, can be classified as either just or unjust. Just wars—revolutionary wars and wars of national liberation—are considered progressive in nature. Unjust Wars—conflicts waged to advance the interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie—are reactionary. Lenin recommended that conflicts be categorized by "type", first, in order to describe their logical pattern of evolution (fundamental dialectics), and second, to determine what the proletariat's attitude towards the conflict ought to be.

The current attitude espoused by the regime in the Soviet Union is that "Present-day Capitalism is not only an obsolete reactionary system which retards historical progress, but a dangerous aggressive force which threatens world civilization."⁶ According to the Soviets, the struggle of the working class to overthrow the world capitalist system goes on, and will inevitably result in the triumph of socialism; it is only the resistance of the West to this eventuality which makes war between capitalist states and socialist states a real possibility.

The totalitarian nature of the Soviet regime perpetuates the acceptance of Marxism-Leninism in the USSR as the doctrinal basis for conducting foreign affairs. Certainly, there have been some domestic modifications within the USSR since World War II, as the personalities of the leaders from Stalin to Gorbachev have differed. Yet, the basic

ideological character of the ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) has remained essentially unchanged; and with it, the fundamental Soviet view of systemic conflict between socialism and capitalism.

The CPSU teaches that Soviet history validates these ideological notions about systemic conflict. For instance, the Soviets claim that the capitalist powers of Britain, France, Japan, and the US supposedly conspired to invade Russia in 1918 in order to strangle the struggling Bolshevik state. The German invasion in June of 1941 is further evidence, in the Soviet mind, of the desire of the West to see the Soviet people enslaved.

Although WWII ended over 40 years ago, the CPSU considers it necessary, for party-elite survival, to keep alive the psychological impression that the Soviet Motherland is still engaged in an epic struggle against hostile capitalist forces. It does this by constantly replaying in the CPSU-controlled media the memories and themes of wartime austerity, Nazi horrors, and heroic sacrifices during The Great Patriotic War, along with the usual dosages of anti-American and anti-NATO rhetoric.

Ultimately, the CPSU wants its subjects to learn two crucial geopolitical lessons from all this: first, each of the USSR's major wars were fought primarily on the heartland of Soviet soil; and second, the main aggressor during each war came from peninsular Europe.

Soviet Geopolitical Objectives in Europe

Stalin's basic foreign policy objective from the end of WWII until

his death in 1953 was to create a political-military system in Europe which would preclude another invasion of the USSR from the West. As we have seen, according to the Soviet historical perspective, this goal was based upon sound geopolitical logic.

Before his death, Stalin was successful in establishing Eastern Europe as a military, political, and ideological buffer zone. He accomplished this by continuing to garrison large groups of Soviet forces in liberated East European nations well after the surrender of Nazi Germany. This, in turn, enabled him to install and buttress pro-Moscow socialist regimes in the region.

Stalin's successors have remained committed to retaining geopolitical suzerainty in Eastern Europe. They demonstrated their resolve to uphold what eventually became known as the Brezhnev Doctrine when they smashed the Hungarian Revolt in 1956, invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, and forced martial law upon Poland in 1981.⁷

However, during the US's involvement in Indochina, the Soviets' geopolitical goals subtly expanded from consolidating their power base behind the Iron Curtain to increasing their clout throughout the entire peninsula of Europe. Measures such as the opening-up of lucrative segments of the USSR's economy to West European businessmen and the monumental Soviet nuclear and conventional arms build-up, among other things, did much to enhance Soviet influence in West European affairs.

Today, the Soviets continue to exert their influence through aggressive, sophisticated public relations campaigns targeting West European unity, and by arms control offensives designed to codify the

favorable correlation of forces achieved in recent years. Basic Soviet foreign policy objectives in Europe have clearly evolved to the following: a) the break-up of NATO; b) the diminution of US involvement in the politico-economy of Western Europe; and c) the quick defeat of Western [NATO] forces, and occupation of key areas of peninsular Europe, should war ever break out.

Problems in the Southern Rimlands

While the Soviets have been consolidating and expanding their power in Europe, they have been only partially successful, in any geopolitical sense, in increasing their influence in the rimlands of the Middle East and Southwest Asia. By and large, the USSR's policy has been centered on so-called client-states such as Syria, Libya, and Iraq. Soviet efforts have succeeded primarily in causing some limited disruptions in the energy-dependent politico-economy of the West, by adding fuel to regional tensions and conflicts.

However, since 1979, the Soviets have been trying to implement an overtly direct type of hegemonic policy in Afghanistan--client-state occupation--with the geopolitical goal of establishing irrevocable control over what they consider to be a strategically important country in the Asian rimlands.

In retrospect, it seems irrational that the Soviets chose to invade Afghanistan in December of 1979. Apparently, the penetration of the region was on the Soviets' geopolitical agenda, but most likely not until the mid-1980s. Moving up the timetable was a risky gamble

designed to salvage Soviet grand strategy from the rubble of the Afghan Marxist experiment, before it was too late.

Afghanistan's natural gas reserves and geographical proximity to the Persian Gulf have always enticed Russian interests. Afghanistan is a land-locked state. However, by occupying the country, the Soviets place themselves within 600 kilometers of the entrance to the Persian Gulf (The Strait of Hormuz), and a mere 500 kilometers from the warm-water ports of Shah Bahar in Iran and Gwadar in Pakistan.⁸

After the Second World War, the Soviets took advantage of the intensified territorial dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan to significantly expand their influence in the region. During this period, the Afghans' objective was to regain lands inhabited by their Pashtun kinsmen, but claimed and occupied by Pakistan. The opportunity for the Soviets came in 1954, when Pakistan joined SEATO and signed a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement with the US. The government of Afghanistan, feeling isolated and ignored, responded by looking to the USSR for moral support and military aid.⁹

In 1956, the USSR and Afghanistan signed a military assistance agreement, whereby the Soviets began modernizing the Afghan military. Soviet weapons were introduced, and significant improvements in organization and combat readiness were made. By the mid-1960s, the Afghan Army, for all practical purposes, had become dependent on the Soviet Armed Forces for training, equipment, and logistical support.¹⁰

The coup in April of 1978 brought the Khalq faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) to power. From the outset, the

new government encountered stiff resistance. The dilemma seemed to be that the Khalq regime, as an atheistic Marxist dictatorship, was not a proponent of Islam. Many of the Moslem faithful, therefore, considered the Khalq government to be illegitimate.¹¹

Part of the regime's identity problem can be attributed to its limited power base. Party organization was relatively strong among the professional military and the city-dwelling intelligentsia. However, only ten percent of Afghanistan's population lived in cities.¹² Still, the government's zealously progressive reforms were designed to benefit the small urban population at the expense of the more traditional Moslem tribal groups in the countryside.¹³

Within a year of the 1978 coup, the Afghan Army found itself engaged in fire fights with the Mujahideen in remote areas of Nuristan, Paktya Province, and the Kunar Valley. Russian pilots were brought in to fly combat sorties for the inexperienced Afghan Air Force. By the time of General Yepishev's pre-invasion mission in April of 1979, there were 3,000 Soviet advisors in Afghanistan, and Russian officers were directly supervising Afghan Army units during combat operations.¹⁴

Despite seven years of Soviet occupation, the Parcham faction regimes of Kamal and Najibullah (successors to the Khalq regimes of Taraki and Amin) have failed to win the support of the Afghan population.¹⁵ The central government, by virtue of 118,000 Soviet troops currently deployed in Afghanistan,¹⁶ remains in control of Kabul and several other cities. However, more than two-thirds of the population continue to live beyond the authority of the regime.¹⁷

There are recent signs that the Soviets may be softening their position concerning the removal of their forces. In January of this year, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze returned from Kabul with the announcement that Moscow will support the "framework" established by UN Under Secretary for Special Political Affairs Diego Cordovez for establishing a timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet troops.¹⁸ This development is noteworthy; for the Soviets' previous position has always been that the issue was a matter solely between themselves and their clients in Kabul.

Despite all this, it is doubtful that the Soviets will readily abandon their investment. Over the years, they have spent billions of rubles and thousands of Soviet lives to build highways, tunnels, airfields, and command & control centers. Moreover, they have succeeded in altering, in Malthusian fashion, the demographic make-up of the country through the killing or forced exile of millions of Afghan civilians.

Najibullah recently underscored this sentiment that Moscow remains committed to its investment in Afghanistan by stating: "It is appropriate to remind those who are supporting and financing the undeclared war, that in case of continued aggressions against Afghanistan, the Soviet Union will not leave us alone. National reconciliation does not mean the destruction of the state and the defeat of the party. Such wishes will never materialize."¹⁹ Apparently, Afghanistan will continue to play an important geopolitical role for the USSR as a regional power base in the rimlands of Southwest Asia.

Soviet Policy in the Caribbean

While the USSR's continued occupation of Afghanistan illustrates how the Soviets pursue geopolitical objectives directly, their policy in the Caribbean basin, by contrast, suggests a more subtle, indirect approach. Potentially, this policy could have disastrous consequences for not only the insular crescent of the Western Hemisphere, but for peninsular Europe, as well.

Unfortunately, US Central American Policy, at the present, is on the defensive; perhaps this explains why the issue of Soviet geostrategic intentions receives so little attention. The debate seems to be focused on the potential of Cuba and Nicaragua to promote regional instability, and whether or not the US should continue to send aid to the Contras—indeed real dilemmas for US policy in the region.

However, the larger danger comes from Soviet military capabilities against the US's vulnerable southern flank during a war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact in Europe. By examining current war-fighting capabilities of the Soviets and their clients in the Caribbean, the central objective of Soviet policy for the region becomes clear.²⁰

Should war break out in Europe, the Caribbean region's sea lanes would become vital to any US logistical effort to send military forces, equipment, and supplies to NATO. In the event of hostilities, six US Army divisions, plus a Marine amphibious brigade, would be sent to Europe from the CONUS. Several of the units would be airlifted by MAC and link up with equipment already stored at in-theater POMCUS sites.²¹

However, given the vulnerabilities and constraints of POMCUS, and

the present limitations of MAC to airlift large quantities of outsized cargo in a short period of time, a large proportion of US forces would have to be transported through the region by Military Sealift Command ships. Up to three divisions would embark from ports on the Gulf of Mexico.²² Additional divisions from the West Coast, if transported by sealift, would need to transit the Panama Canal in order to make it to Europe before the war's end. These forces, together with a portion of the resupply items of US forces already fighting in Europe, could be subject to interdiction by Socialist air and sea power as they transited the sea lanes of the region.

Cuba may represent several things politically to the Soviet Union, but in the geostrategic sense, it is an extremely valuable piece of geography positioned at the jugular vein of its most powerful adversary. As such, Cuba has become the most important forward deployment base in Soviet war-fighting strategy.

The Cuban Navy is presently capable of interdicting the region's sea lanes with its 3 Foxtrot-class attack submarines, 2 Koni-class frigates, 23 fast-attack missile ships, and 38 patrol craft.²³

Cuban air power could also be used to harass surface shipping. Its assets include 4 ground-attack squadrons (3 with Flogger-Fs) and 16 interceptor squadrons (MiG-21s and Flogger-Es).²⁴

Formal Soviet military presence on the island includes a combat brigade of 2,800 soldiers, 2,100 ELINT technicians, and an estimated 3,100 military advisors.²⁵

Military activity is centered at Cienfuegos, a scant 235 nautical

miles south of Miami. This is significant when one considers that the combat radius of the MiG-21s and MiG-23s deployed on the island are 280 nautical miles and 520 nautical miles, respectively. The MiG-23s, for instance, could hit targets as far north as Jacksonville, Florida.²⁶

As the main port-of-call for the Soviet Navy in the Western Hemisphere, Cienfuegos is frequented by Foxtrot-class submarines, Turya- & Zhuk-class fast-attack ships, Osa- and Komar-class missile boats, plus frigates and intelligence-collecting trawlers. The Soviet Navy has completed 25 ship visits to Cuba since 1969.²⁷

In recent years, the Soviets have spent a great deal of effort upgrading Cuban and Nicaraguan air defenses and airfields. At least three Cuban airfields have been renovated to support Tu-95s. In Nicaragua, high-performance fighter revetments have been completed at Sandino. Two airfields on the Atlantic coast and one on the Pacific coast have been constructed to support fighter aircraft. When completed, the 3200-meter runway at Punta Huerte will be capable of handling fighters, transports, and Backfire bombers.²⁸

The Soviet Navy also has several ambitious projects in mind for Nicaragua. Plans include the construction of a trans-isthmus canal and major port facilities for both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.²⁹

During a war between NATO and the nations of the Warsaw Pact, Socialist air and sea power in the region, if not pre-empted by US military action, could effectively prevent the timely reinforcement of NATO forces fighting in Europe. Given the opportunity, Soviet and Cuban forces could interdict US shipping at several of the region's choke

points, and at the same time threaten the Panama Canal.

Depending upon the length of any preliminaries before the actual start of the fighting, the Soviets might even attempt to make a last-minute effort to alter the region's correlation of forces. A mix of Soviet surface combatants and submarines could attempt to enter the region and link up with previously deployed combatants and support vessels. During this pre-war phase, this Soviet naval group could draw support for fuel and provisioning from facilities in Cuba and Nicaragua. The Soviets could also ferry in from Europe a number of aircraft, such as Backfires and TU-95s, in order to shore up their air power.

Once the fighting in Europe actually started, US forces would need to locate and destroy Socialist submarines and surface ships menacing the region's sea lanes. Air defense facilities, airfields, and naval ports in Cuba and Nicaragua would have to be eliminated in an operation quite costly for the US in both time and resources.

The probability exists that several submarines would avoid detection and continue to threaten US shipping at the region's choke points. During a six-month period in WWII, approximately 50 German U-Boats, though outnumbered 2-to-1 in opposing Allied ASW assets, sank 260 ships in the Atlantic-Caribbean theater. Today, Soviet submarines have the odds reversed.³⁰

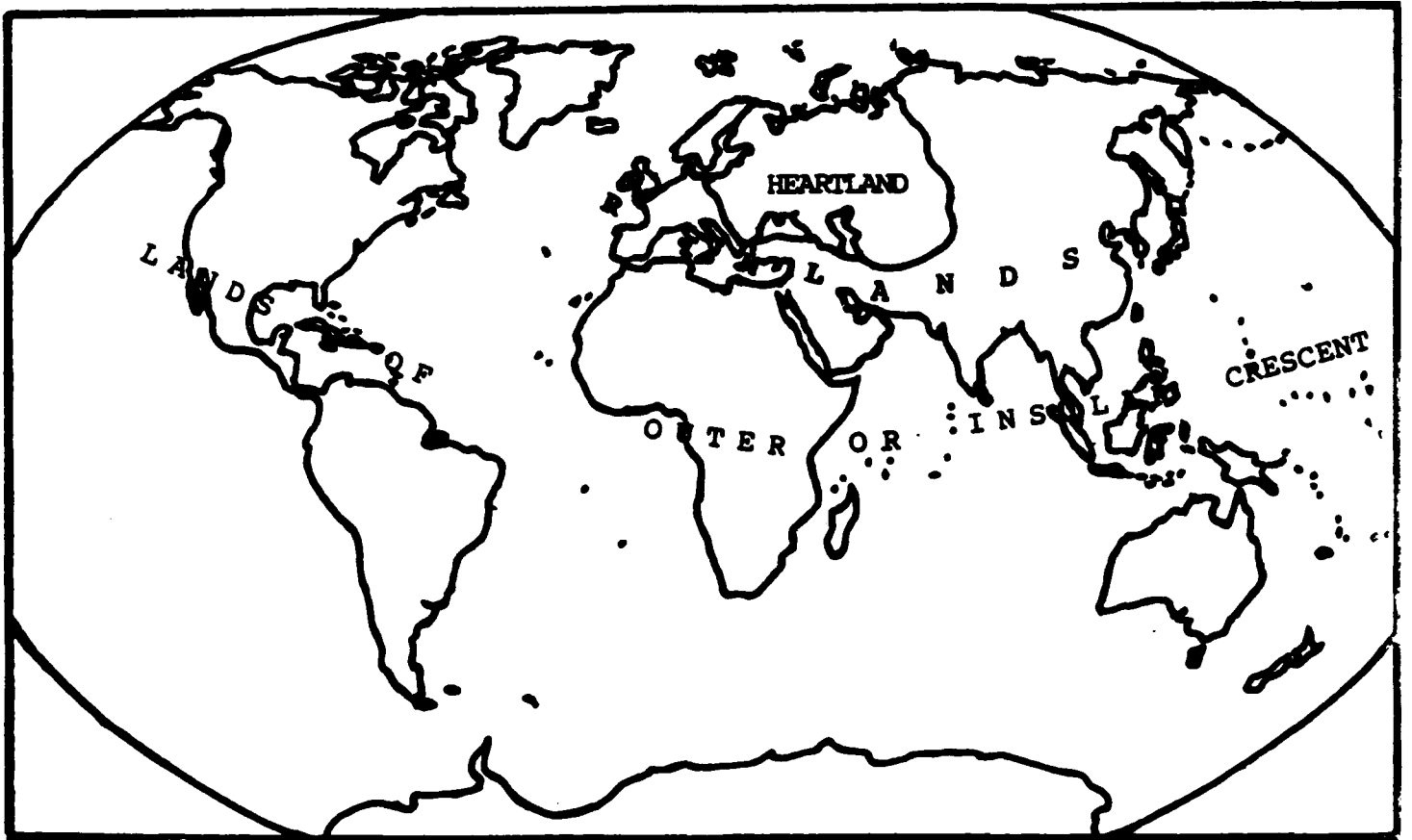
In the final analysis, the Soviets, by building up their military power in the Caribbean basin, are hoping that the US will be compelled to give top priority to securing its own southern flank, should war break out in Europe. By initially diverting US attention to the

Caribbean, the strategic reinforcement of NATO could be delayed long enough for the Warsaw Pact to achieve victory. Ultimately, the Soviet leadership would be willing to sacrifice its own forces in the Caribbean in order to win the greater geopolitical prize.³¹

Conclusion

As we approach the twenty-first century, geopolitics will continue to influence the formulation of Soviet foreign policy, and Soviet interests will remain focused on the United States and the rimlands of the Eurasian World-Island. This is not to say that Soviet adventurism in other regions of the world will diminish. As one Soviet commentator put it, "The Soviet Union will never make deals to abide by the so-called rules of the game or accept the imperialist position on preserving the social status quo in the world."³² To be sure, the USSR will invariably seek ways of increasing its influence in international affairs. At the same time, it will continue to underwrite efforts throughout the world to diminish the clout of the US.

By and large, traditional geopolitics continues to provide a valid theoretical framework for analyzing Soviet regional behavior. The Soviets, because of their messianic Marxist-Leninist ideology and long history of foreign invasions, tend to conceptualize foreign relations in terms of systemic conflict and geographical power politics. True to the tenets of geopolitical theory, the Soviet Union—the quintessential World-Island land power—will continue to place control of the rimlands of Europe and Asia behind national survival on its list of priorities.



A GEOPOLITICAL VIEW OF THE WORLD

NOTES

¹ Richard Burt, "Heavy Russian Toll in Afghanistan," The New York Times, Apr. 13, 1979, p. 8.

² Robert Strausz-Hupe, Geopolitics (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), p. 40.

³ For a detailed discussion of the relationship of "power" to the study of geography, see Colin S. Gray, The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era: Heartlands, Rimlands, and the Technological Revolution (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, Inc., 1977), pp. 2-6.

⁴ Ibid., p. 14; Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau, A Strategic Atlas Comparative Geopolitics of the World's Powers, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), p. 23.

⁵ For a treatment (from the Soviet perspective) of the Marxist-Leninist Theory of War, see S.N. Kozlov, The Officer's Handbook, trans. (Washington D.C.: USGPO, 1977), pp. 39-47.

⁶ Ibid., p. 43.

⁷ Andrew J. Glass, "Soviets May Move to Cut Losses," The Montgomery Advertiser, Jan. 12, 1987, p. 14A.

⁸ Chaliand, op. cit., p. 94.

⁹ It was perhaps natural that the Afghan government of Prime Minister Mohammed Da'ud turned to the Soviets during this tense period. Formal Soviet-Afghan ties had been established in 1921 with a Treaty of Friendship, which granted the Soviets transit rights across Afghanistan. In 1926, A Treaty of Neutrality and Non-Aggression was concluded, with revisions in 1931 and 1936. For a synopsis of Soviet-Afghan relations from 1921-1967, see Afghanistan: A Country Study (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1980), pp. 227-229.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 395.

¹¹ Loren Jenkins, "Afghan Uprisings," Newsweek, Apr. 16, 1979, p. 16

¹² Afghanistan: A Country Study, op. cit., p. 61.

¹³ Jenkins, op. cit. For instance, independent land owners were irate at the regime's attempt to redistribute land by manipulating property mortgages. Other unpopular decrees included the abolishment of the tradition of paying dowries and the commissioning of a new national flag which omitted the symbolically important color of Islamic green.

- 14 Chris Sherwell, "Soviet Union Mired in Afghanistan," The Christian Science Monitor, May 24, 1979, p. 3.
- 15 Craig M. Karp, "The War in Afghanistan", Foreign Affairs, Summer 1986, p. 1035.
- 16 The Military Balance 1986-1987 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1986), p. 46.
- 17 Karp, op. cit., p. 1031.
- 18 "Foreign Minister Says Soviet Withdrawal Is Negotiable," The Montgomery Advertiser, Jan. 8, 1987, p. 7.
- 19 Philip Taubman, "Afghan Truce Said to Begin, but Kabul Claim Is Doubted," The New York Times, Jan. 16, 1987, p. 6.
- 20 For a thorough treatment of the geostrategic implications of the Soviet build-up in the Caribbean, see Ashley J. Tellis, "The Geopolitical Stakes in Central American Crisis," Strategic Review, Fall 1985, pp. 45-56.
- 21 "POMCUS" is the acronym for "pre-positioning of material configured to unit sets." There are presently four such depots in the European theater. For a discussion of strategic mobility concepts and deployment goals, see Ian O. Lesser, "The Mobility Triad - Airlift, Sealift and Pre-Positioning in American Strategy," Whitehall, London: a paper published by the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 1985.
- 22 Tellis, op. cit., p. 49.
- 23 Jane's Fighting Ships 1986-87 (London: Jane's Publishing Company, Ltd., 1986), pp. 23 & 124.
- 24 The Military Balance 1986-1987, op. cit., p. 185.
- 25 Ibid., p. 46.
- 26 Department of Defense, Soviet Military Power 1985, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1985), p. 120 (see map entitled, "Combat Radius of MiG-21 and MiG-23 Aircraft").
- 27 Jane's Fighting Ships 1986-87, op. cit., p. 131.
- 28 Tellis, op. cit., pp. 47-48.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., p.51.

³¹ Given the geopolitical linkage between the Caribbean region and the rimlands of Europe described in this scenario, it can be argued that MacKinder's theory of conflicts between heartland-controlling land powers and rimland-controlling sea powers has been modified to reflect the bipolar competition between the USSR and the US—the premier insular nation. In fact, MacKinder's original geopolitical paradigm remains valid throughout, as the author has shown in the foregoing description of the strategic interdependence between the Caribbean region and Europe in the context of a general war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Any problem with this sort of analysis is most likely a semantical one dependent upon whether the reader views NATO as a European phenomenon or as a mere appendage of US foreign policy. The important point is that Soviet behavior reflects a clear recognition that successful foreign policy must be based on geopolitical principles, i.e., the USSR acts as though it knows it must exert hegemonic influence over the rimlands of the World-Island to complete its conquest of Eurasia. Furthermore, to argue that geopolitics has little impact on the formulation of Soviet foreign policy simply because the Soviets themselves do not publicly espouse MacKinder is analogous to proclaiming a schizophrenic mentally sound on the basis that he knows nothing of Freud.

³² G. Kim, "The Soviet Union and the National Liberation Movement," Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya, Sep. 1982, pp. 19-33, trans. Soviet Press Selected Translations, September-October 1982, p. 196.

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