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Between Mahan and Mackinder: The Strait of Magellan as a Southern Geopolitical Pivot

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Abstract:

The essay demonstrates that the southern maritime corridor encapsulates, within a single geographic space, Mahan's logic of chokepoint dominance and the circum-Eurasian insular arc articulated by Mackinder and Spykman. Under full Chilean sovereignty, control over the Strait of Magellan ensures Atlantic–Pacific continuity, provides strategic redundancy in the event of disruptions in Panama or Suez, and projects a containment line that completes the maritime encirclement of the Heartland. With bathymetric conditions suitable for neo-Panamax vessels and an advanced Vessel Traffic Service (VTS), the strait grants Chile significant oceanic influence, reinforcing its role as a "southern pivot" in global security and logistics.

Keywords:

Strait of Magellan, choke points, insular arc, southern pivot

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Introduction

Throughout global maritime history, certain interoceanic passages have acquired strategic relevance far beyond their physical scale. In the current scenario —marked by renewed tensions between Iran, Israel, and the United States— the Strait of Hormuz has once again emerged as a focal point of international concern. Iran's potential ability and declared willingness to block this vital waterway has triggered alarm over the implications such a move would have on oil prices, the flow of global trade, and the overall stability of the international order. Once again, the Middle East stands as a critical node in the geopolitics of the seas, highlighting that control over key straits is not merely ancillary, but fundamental to the configuration of global power.

Although the crisis has not yet caused a sustained or large-scale diversion of maritime traffic, the ongoing instability in the Middle East serves as a stark reminder of the vulnerability of the world's major geostrategic corridors. Within this context, alternative routes such as the Strait of Magellan are regaining strategic prominence —not only due to their ability to ensure operational continuity in the face of critical disruptions, but also because they embody a form of structural resilience that neither technological progress nor artificial routes have managed to supplant. In times of systemic uncertainty, the value of southern corridors is being redefined, and with it, the relevance of the Magellan Strait as a silent yet decisive axis in the global maritime architecture.

Since the Portuguese navigator Fernando de Magallanes, under the Spanish Crown, traversed the strait in pursuit of a new economic route, this southern corridor has been far more than a conduit between oceans: it has served —and continues to serve— as a linchpin in the logic of maritime control and strategic balance. In a global environment characterized by persistent uncertainty across supply chains —exacerbated by climate-related shocks, disruptions at chokepoints such as Panamá and Suez, and intensifying geopolitical tensions— the Strait of Magellan re-emerges as a resilient, legally sound, and strategically consolidated alternative.

Based on the premise that geopolitical interests do not vanish but rather adapt to changing international dynamics, this article posits a clear and straightforward hypothesis: the Strait of Magellan retains full relevance as both a geopolitical concept and strategic objective, owing to its capacity to guarantee interoceanic circulation and its potential to become a maritime power node in the 21st century.

This essay, using an analytical approach that integrates classical strategic theories (Mahan, Mackinder, and Spykman) with contemporary operational data, aims to demonstrate that the Strait of Magellan is not a historical relic but a critical strategic asset.

Background

The Strait of Magellan is the southernmost natural maritime corridor on the planet, linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans under the full sovereignty of the Republic of Chile (Figure 1). Its course —approximately 330 nautical miles long— extends from its eastern mouth at Punta Dungeness to the Evangelistas Islets in the Pacific. It presents a complex morphology that alternates narrow passes as tight as 3.7 km, channels up to 35 km wide, and sinuous sections protected by sub-Antarctic archipelagos. Its bathymetry —ranging from 28 meters at its shallowest points to 1,080 meters at Cape Cooper Key— allows the passage of vessels with drafts of up to 70 feet (≈ 21.3 m) without compromising manoeuvrability, ensuring compatibility with the neo-Panamax fleet[1].

In regulatory terms, the Boundary Treaty of 1881 and the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1984 between Chile and Argentina guarantee the freedom of navigation “at all times and under all circumstances” for vessels of any flag, while reaffirming Chile's exclusive sovereignty and governance over this globally significant passage. That authority is exercised through a robust maritime control system that enhances safety in the planet’s southernmost chokepoint. At its core lies the Strait Maritime Traffic Control (CONTRAMAG), a Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) that integrates coastal radar, AIS, and S-57 electronic charts to monitor ship routes through the channel in real time.

During the 2023–2024 period, a drought associated with El Niño —ranked as the third most intense since 1950— exposed the fragility of the Panama Canal: daily transit slots dropped from 36 to 22 vessels, and maximum draft was restricted to 13.11 meters (Labrut, 2024). Although traffic gradually normalized by early 2025, the Canal Authority acknowledged that the Río Indio reservoir (estimated at USD 1.6 billion) is essential to ensuring medium-term water security (Miller, 2024). These limitations led to delays of up

[1] Neo-Panamax (also written *New Panamax* or *Neopanamax*) refers to the class of vessels specifically designed to take advantage of the dimensions of the Panama Canal’s third set of locks, inaugurated on June 26, 2016. The term distinguishes these ships from the original *Panamax* vessels—constrained by the 1914 locks—and from *Post-Panamax*ships, which exceed even the expanded canal’s capacity.

to 21 days, increased operating costs, and rerouting toward alternative routes.

Figure 1

Official nautical chart from the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service of the Chilean Navy (SHOA) – Chilean Navy. Strait of Magellan – Evangelistas Islets to Punta Dungenes.

Note: The image shows the complete navigational route (red line) through the Strait, comprising its entry point from the west in the Pacific Ocean (Evangelistas Islets) and its eastern mouth at Punta Dungenes, where it connects to the Atlantic Ocean (SHOA, 2015; updated 2025).

One of the primary beneficiaries was the Strait of Magellan: traffic through the passage rose by 25% year-over-year during January–February 2024, and by 83% compared to 2021, driven by restrictions in Panama and growing energy demand in the Southern Cone. This increase was confirmed by the Chilean Navy's Directorate General of the Maritime Territory and Merchant Marine (DIRECTEMAR). Meanwhile, the "Third Set of Locks" (2016) doubled Panama's theoretical capacity but required additional tugboats and initially caused congestion; the 2023 crisis revealed that the canal's expansion only delivers its potential when water availability is sufficient. While the Río Indio reservoir and automation measures aim to safeguard the canal, geopolitics adds another layer of

uncertainty: the United States continues to press for the neutrality stipulated in 1977, while expressing concern over China's port expansion projects in Balboa and Colón (Stewart, 2025).

Amid such uncertainties, the Strait of Magellan is emerging as a first-order interoceanic corridor. Its bathymetry exceeding 20 meters, advanced navigational infrastructure, and robust legal regime —when analysed through Mahan's logic of chokepoints and Mackinder's insular arc— position this southern passage as a critical "pivot" for 21st-century maritime security and logistics.

Magellan and the logic of Sea Power: A convergence node between Mahan, Mackinder, and Spykman

To understand the logic behind the great strategic thinkers, it is illustrative to return to the year 1518, when the Capitulations of Valladolid entrusted Ferdinand Magellan with the royal mission of discovering a western route to the Moluccas —the coveted Spice Islands— and thereby challenge the Portuguese monopoly over the eastern passage via the Cape of Good Hope (Indias, 1518). This endeavour, conceived with an early geopolitical vision, pursued not only a commercial objective but also embodied a foundational act of maritime projection —an idea that would be theorized centuries later by scholars such as Mahan, Mackinder, and Spykman. Those expeditions were forged in a context where sailors described the fortieth and fiftieth southern latitudes with a somber aphorism: "*Below forty, there is no law; below fifty, there is no God*" (anonymous sailor, 16th century). The Spanish Crown viewed the opening of its own route not only as a commercial opportunity—to secure the lucrative spice trade—but also as a means to reinforce its global maritime projection (Fernández-Armesto, 2022).

The "Armada de la Especiería", composed of five ships and 265 men, departed from Seville on August 10, 1519. After a laborious and highly eventful voyage, Magellan discovered on October 21, 1520, the long-sought passage leading to the Pacific Ocean —today known as the Strait of Magellan— which he traversed in just under five weeks (Suárez, 2020). The return of the *Victoria* in 1522, commanded by Juan Sebastián Elcano after Magellan's death and carrying twenty-six tons of dried cloves in its hold, confirmed the route's profitability and made Spain the first global power to complete the

circumnavigation of the Earth (Mira Caballos, 2022). This achievement fostered the concept of a strategic corridor under the control of a maritime power, thus anticipating the theory of chokepoints developed centuries later by Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914), laying the historical naval foundation for the contemporary significance of the Strait of Magellan.

Indeed, in his seminal 1890 work *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, Alfred Thayer Mahan argued that the prosperity of any maritime power rests fundamentally on its sea power[2] —defined as the capacity to "secure" or "deny" maritime lines of communication (SLOC[3]) to both enemies and potential adversaries. Mahan's thesis found a particularly receptive audience within the U.S. political elite of the late 19th century. Convinced that the United States was destined to play a leading role on the international stage, these leaders concluded that the first strategic requirement was the establishment of a powerful, technologically advanced navy —an essential precondition for global hegemony. Like Carl von Clausewitz in the realm of land warfare, Mahan grounded his strategic thinking in a meticulous study of history, seeking to identify the key factors behind the success or failure of great powers and their respective campaigns. He contended that maritime power has been a decisive force throughout history, enabling states to dominate trade routes, project influence, and ultimately safeguard their strategic interests.

Furthermore, he argued that effective maritime control depends on two fundamental pillars: first, a blue-water navy capable of projecting force across great distances; and second, the possession of forward-deployed bases located near critical maritime chokepoints where global shipping routes converge. In his classification of "first-order straits" —those that shape interoceanic transit and thus condition global commerce— Mahan included Gibraltar, Suez, and the Strait of Magellan. He emphasized the strategic value of the latter as the only natural passage that connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, avoiding the perils of Cape Horn and shortening the voyage around the Cape of

[2] Regarding the differences between "naval power" and "maritime power," the latter is broader in scope, as it encompasses numerous means and activities conducted at sea (including the merchant navy, fishing and scientific fleets, coast guards, maritime traffic and trade, offshore resource extraction, shipbuilding, naval forces, etc.). In contrast, naval power refers specifically to the military navy and its operations. Thus, naval power can be understood as a (fundamental) component within the broader concept of maritime power. Available in: Romero, A. *The Rise of China as a Maritime Power.* IEEE, 12 july 2023. https://www.defensa.gob.es/ceseden/-/el-auge-de-china-como-potencia-maritima.

[3] Sea Lines of Communication, SLOC (AAP-06, 2020).

Good Hope by approximately 1,400 nautical miles (Lambert, 2021).

Currently, data from the International Chamber of Shipping indicate that, as of 2024, more than 11% of the world's gross tonnage passed through at least one of three major straits —Panama, Suez, or Magellan— thus reaffirming the enduring relevance of Mahan's intuition regarding the strategic concentration of maritime power in key chokepoints. Furthermore, recent studies from the Center for Naval Warfare Studies (CNWS)[4] at the U.S. Naval War College (NWC) confirm that the Strait of Magellan remains operational 98% of the year, whereas the Panama and Suez canals face average annual disruptions of approximately 12 and 18 days, respectively (Konrad, 2025).

The report highlights that closures of the Magellan Strait are almost exclusively caused by transient natural factors —such as sudden willíwaw[5] gusts or visibility under 0.5 nautical miles— and rarely exceed 12 hours. In contrast, Panama regularly faces operational windows of several days when the Gatún Lake level drops below 26 meters, while Suez endures interruptions stemming from security incidents or vessel groundings that require complex refloating procedures.

From the perspective of the global maritime industry, strategic straits such as Magellan have regained relevance amid the growing frequency of disruptions along traditional routes. While major shipping lines tend to treat chokepoints as unavoidable geographic constraints rather than sources of competitive advantage, global port operators and maritime service providers —including shipyards, bunkering firms, and maritime insurers— recognize the commercial value of establishing a presence near these bottlenecks (Filipoff, 2020; Weitz, 2021). Although not traditionally classified alongside Panama, Suez, or Malacca, the Strait of Magellan increasingly stands out as a fallback corridor of "high logistical elasticity," due to its capacity to absorb traffic diversions during periods of congestion or temporary closure along lower-latitude routes. In an ecosystem where over 90% of international trade depends on maritime transport, the geographic concentration of traffic in critical chokepoints endows the southern passage with a

[4] It analyzed ten interoceanic corridors using satellite AIS data, ERA5 meteorological records, and closure reports issued by local authorities. The study calculated the effective availability (days per year without draft restrictions or full closures).

[5] It refers to a brief but extremely intense katabatic wind that descends from mountain slopes toward coastal areas, producing sudden gusts that can exceed 90–120 km h^{-1} (25–33 m s^{-1}). This wind speed is documented in the American Practical Navigator ("Bowditch"), where the williwaw is described as "a sudden, cold, and very violent squall, characteristic of the Strait of Magellan and the Aleutians" (Weather elements, s.n.).

strategic potential not yet fully capitalized upon.

Thus, the doctrine of advanced bases and chokepoints formulated by Mahan continues to define the strategic hierarchy of contemporary maritime trade: whoever possesses naval assets and logistical infrastructure in Gibraltar, Suez, or Magellan holds a decisive lever to protect —or influence— global supply chains (McCranie, 2024).

From a complementary perspective —though different from Mahan's logic of chokepoints— it becomes necessary to incorporate into the analysis the geopolitical framework put forth by the Englishman Halford J. Mackinder (1861–1947)[6]. In his lecture "The Geographical Pivot of History," delivered in 1904 before the Royal Geographical Society (RGS)— the United Kingdom's leading geographic institution founded in 1830 —Mackinder (1904) established his famous strategic equation: whoever controls Eastern Europe will control the Eurasian Heartland and, by extension, will exert decisive influence over the "World-Island[7]". To neutralize the supremacy that a purely continental actor could exert from the Eurasian Heartland, he also proposed that oceanic powers —thanks to their insular or peninsular locations— were in a position to form a peripheral control belt which he called the "outer crescent," a concept later consolidated in strategic literature under the name of the "insular arc." This maritime belt —which spans the globe from the North Atlantic to the Western Pacific— is structured into three functionally complementary segments: The Euro-Atlantic sector: it extends from the United Kingdom to Gibraltar and the Mediterranean. Its historical mission lies in preventing a land power from dominating Europe's maritime outlets (Mackinder, 1904); The middle or Middle East–Indian sector, which links the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, the Gulfs of Oman and Persia, and the northern Indian Ocean. It clearly became evident that control over this stretch safeguards the main energy routes connecting Europe and Asia (Spykman, 1944); and finally, the Indo-Pacific sector, which extends from the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea to the Philippine archipelago and Japan, concentrating the most heavily trafficked chokepoints of global trade of that era (Sloan & Gray, 2016).

[6] Geographer, politician, diplomat, geopolitologist, political scientist, and university professor.

[7] The "World-Island" represents, for Mackinder, the gravitational center of global land-based power, whose domination would confer a privileged position to project hegemony over the rest of the planet, particularly against peripheral maritime powers. He argued that this World-Island constituted the geographic and strategic core of the Earth, as it concentrated: the largest share of the world's population; the greatest reserves of natural resources; and the most extensive and enduring political history. This concept served as the foundation for the development of 20th-century geostrategic thought, including the containment of the Heartland during the Cold War.

For this containment device to be effective, maritime powers must: (a) deploy forward bases and logistical nodes on strategic islands and capes —such as Gibraltar, Diego Garcia, or Guam; (b) establish diplomatic-military alliances that ensure a sustained presence in these areas and guarantee adequate levels of operational interoperability among allied forces (e.g., NATO in the Atlantic and trilateral pacts in the Indo-Pacific); and (c) maintain mobility and denial capabilities that enable the closure or control of key straits in times of crisis (Gibraltar, Suez, Bab el-Mandeb, Hormuz, Malacca).

Although Mackinder did not explicitly mention the Strait of Magellan in his 1904 address before the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), his formulation of the "insular arc" as a peripheral geostrategic belt reflects an oceanopolitics[8] logic that allows the integration of the southern straits —Magellan[9], Beagle Channel, and Drake Passage— as terminal components of such a device. This chain, which begins in Gibraltar, crosses through Suez and Bab el-Mandeb, skirts the Indian Ocean via the Strait of Malacca, and concludes in the Western Pacific, is conceived to constrain the projection of any power established in the Eurasian Heartland (Mackinder, 1904; Spykman, 1944). From this perspective, the southern passages of the Southern Cone complete the maritime containment architecture, reinforcing the Mahanian principle of choke point dominance as a guarantor of oceanic mobility. Recent studies —such as those developed by Robert Kaplan (2012) and operational analyses by the U.S. Naval War College, including Konrad (2025)— have underscored the maritime dimension implicitly present in Mackinder's strategy, recognizing that global security in the 21st century depends not only on the control of the Rimland but also on the assurance of critical Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC), especially those under the sovereignty of states with tricontinental projection, such as Chile.

The current U.S. doctrine, as articulated in Joint Publication JP 3-0, *Joint Campaigns and Operations* (2022), reinforces this vision by affirming that the sustained control of strategic choke points is an indispensable condition for operational freedom of action and logistical superiority in multidomain environments.

Undoubtedly, from an operational standpoint, the Magellan – Beagle – Drake system

[8] Oceanopolitics: An Alternative for Development (Martínez Busch, 1993).

[9] This academic interpretation stems from an expanded reading not explicitly stated in 1904, but nonetheless compatible with the logic of maritime containment extended toward the southern polar region.

performs a unique triple strategic function unmatched elsewhere:

(a) Interoceanic Redundancy: It provides a natural route linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, securing the global flow of goods and energy resources against disruptions at artificial chokepoints located at lower latitudes (e.g., Panama, Suez).

(b) Sovereignty and Legal Framework: The Strait of Magellan lies under the exclusive sovereignty of Chile, while the complementary corridors —the Beagle Channel and the Drake Passage— are governed by international agreements and provisions that clearly delineate jurisdictions and navigation regimes, in accordance with the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1984 (Decree 401, 1985). Together, these routes form a strategic maritime control system under Chilean operational predominance. This framework, supported by the naval capabilities of the Chilean Navy's Third Naval Zone and an advanced maritime surveillance and traffic management infrastructure, provides a secure southern front that strengthens the initiative of allied maritime powers in the South Pacific axis. Consequently, the Magellan – Beagle – Drake complex functions as a cohesive geostrategic node, articulated through effective sovereignty, binational cooperation, and modern maritime control instruments.

(c) Antarctic Pivot: The geographical proximity between the Strait of Magellan and the Antarctic Peninsula —known as the O'Higgins Land— positions Chile, and particularly the city of Punta Arenas, as a top-tier logistical platform for scientific, logistical, and cooperative security operations on the Antarctic continent. According to the *Visual Encyclopaedia of Antarctica* published by the Chilean Antarctic Institute (INACH, 2022), more than 90% of Antarctic missions originating from South America are projected from Punta Arenas. This city hosts specialized facilities such as the International Antarctic Centre (CAI) and the INACH headquarters, and it also possesses an international airport adapted for flights to various bases on the Antarctic Peninsula. Thanks to this integrated infrastructure, Punta Arenas is consolidated as one of the five internationally recognized Antarctic gateway cities, playing a key role in intercontinental connectivity with the sixth continent.

This logistical projection is further reinforced by Chile's active participation in multilateral forums of polar governance, such as the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and the Southern Ocean Strategic Framework. These platforms enhance its position as a middle power with scientific, environmental, and strategic ambitions in the southern

polar region, consolidating its leadership as a bridge between Latin America and the international Antarctic system.

(d) Maritime Strategic Depth: The southern corridor system is not merely a transit or connection route —it constitutes a space of dissuasive strategic depth (Yarger, 2006). This depth— rooted in the ability to control multiple parallel routes, maintain naval presence, and deploy graduated responses to threats —allows for the absorption of regional or extra-regional pressure without directly compromising the centre of gravity. In this sense, the Magellan – Beagle – Drake complex functions as a maritime buffer zone, from which Chile can project sovereignty, screen external presence, and generate an operational margin of defense in scenarios of tension in the Southern Cone.

In this context, the Strait of Magellan serves not only as a strategic interoceanic corridor but also extends the geopolitical reach of Mackinder's insular arc toward the southern polar region. This projection enables Chile to integrate logistical capabilities, scientific presence, and effective sovereignty within the framework of the Antarctic Treaty System. Its role is further strengthened by the status of Punta Arenas as the principal Antarctic gateway city, and by the country's active involvement in multinational programs of scientific research, logistical cooperation, and cooperative security —consolidating Chile as a geostrategic hinge between South America and the sixth continent.

Considering the strategic thought of Mackinder, Spykman, and Mahan, it can be stated with confidence that Chile is positioned as a hinge node in the contemporary maritime architecture. The stewardship of the southern passages —the Strait of Magellan, the Beagle Channel, and the Drake Passage— not only ensures the continuity of interoceanic trade but also contributes to completing the circum-Eurasian arc outlined by Mackinder and refined by Spykman. While the former emphasized that the containment of land power required an insular arc encircling Eurasia, the latter stressed that global equilibrium depended on strategic dominance of the Rimland, understood as the densely populated and geoeconomically vital coastal zone.

However, the operational viability of this maritime belt relies on Mahan's logic of controlling chokepoints: as is well known, Mahan argued that effective control over these narrow passages is a prerequisite for securing —or denying— maritime lines of communication (SLOC), a condition essential for projecting naval power and safeguarding national interests on the global stage (McCranie, 2024).

When this logic is applied to the Southern Cone, doctrinal convergence becomes evident: Mackinder and Spykman provide the strategic framework that positions the southern straits as the terminal link in the global containment structure; Mahan contributes the operational dimension, emphasizing that whoever controls these corridors —and possesses the naval capabilities to ensure their use and control —holds a significant form of strategic leverage: the ability to pursue power objectives through relatively limited means, by capitalizing on comparative advantages such as geography, technology, or diplomacy[10] (Freedman, 2013). This advantage translates into the capacity to absorb disruptions at critical routes such as Panama or Suez and to project influence over the global maritime order (Konrad, 2025).

From this perspective, the Strait of Magellan is unequivocally configured as a southern pivot within the global geostrategic architecture:

- An ocean-grade navigation route, essential for the resilience of international trade.
- A geopolitical control node that enhances maritime deterrence against continental powers.
- A privileged logistical platform for scientific and security cooperation in Antarctica.

In sum, Chile's stewardship of the southern maritime corridors embodies the operational synthesis of the three principal geostrategic paradigms. By integrating Mackinder's insular arc, Spykman's Rimland framework, and Mahan's logic of chokepoints, Chile assumes a central role in the maritime security architecture of the twenty-first century. The significance of the Strait of Magellan, therefore, transcends its commercial value: it is embedded in the structural logic that underpins global strategic balance, consolidating maritime primacy as a cornerstone of international stability and prosperity.

Key Aspects	Alfred T. Mahan	Halford J. Mackinder	Nicholas Spykman
Strategic Approach	Dominion of the oceans through naval fleets and bases at strategic points.	Containment of the Heartland through a peripheral insular arc.	Control of the Rimland (coastal fringe) as the key to global balance.

[10] Capacity of an actor to achieve power-related objectives using relatively limited resources by leveraging a comparative advantage—whether geographical, technological, economic, or diplomatic—that amplifies its effects beyond the direct proportion of means employed.

Geopolitical Center of Gravity	Maritime routes and chokepoints as Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC).	Eurasian Heartland as the geographical pivot of history.	Rimland: densely populated and strategically decisive littoral zone.
Role of the Sea and Maritime Chokepoints	Important for power projection; control of strategic chokepoints is vital.	Secondary; the sea serves to encircle continental power.	Critical importance of naval dominance over continental edges.
Vision of Power and Control	Naval power projected from the sea toward the continent.	Land power contained by a maritime belt (outer crescent).	Balance of power achieved through maritime control of the Rimland.
Relationship with the Strait of Magellan	Magellan as a key natural choke point; part of the strategic triptych with Suez and Gibraltar.	Magellan not explicitly mentioned but integrated as the terminal link of the insular arc.	The Strait reinforces control over the South American Rimland; aligns with the vision of peripheral containment.

Source: Author's own elaboration based on Mahan (1890), Mackinder (1904), and Spykman (1944), in relation to the analysis of the Strait of Magellan developed in this study.

Conclusions

1. A comprehensive analysis of the Strait of Magellan, viewed through the lens of major schools of geostrategic thought, demonstrates that this southern corridor is far more than a simple interoceanic transit route: it is a first-order strategic asset that concentrates, within a single geographical space, the operational and doctrinal logics advanced by Mahan, Mackinder, and Spykman. Its location, bathymetry, legal framework, and capacity to absorb logistical flows during disruptions of critical routes such as Panama or Suez position it as an indispensable link in the maritime architecture of the 21st century.

2. First, from a Mahan´s perspective, the Strait of Magellan embodies the notion of a chokepoint under effective state control, ensuring governance over a globally significant route and anchoring a robust system of surveillance, security, and response. Second, in Mackind´s terms, the strait fits functionally into the "insular arc" encircling the Eurasian Heartland, serving as its southern terminal. Third, Spykman's Rimland doctrine is updated in this context by emphasizing that the balance of global power depends on control over maritime peripheries—where Chile acts as a tricontinental hinge.

3. Additionally, Chile's Antarctic projection —anchored in the city of Punta Arenas— transforms the Strait not only into a corridor for economic and military mobility but also into a geopolitical platform for asserting sovereign presence, promoting scientific cooperation, and actively participating in the governance of the White Continent.

4. In sum, the Strait of Magellan constitutes a structural pivot in the global maritime order. Its custody by Chile represents the operational intersection of geography, strategy, and sovereignty, consolidating the country as a central actor in the stability of the international system based on maritime dominance. In this vein, Chile's engagement in forums such as the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and its adherence to the Southern Ocean Strategic Framework reinforce its legitimacy as a middle polar power —equipped with diplomatic, scientific, and logistical capacities to contribute to the cooperative governance of the Southern Polar region. The geostrategic dimension of the Strait, therefore, is complemented by a multilateral diplomatic projection that grounds sovereignty in constructive international praxis.

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