

Initial approach and interest in the subject.

Geopolitics combines the study of geography, resources, policies, and various events in a way that allows for a better understanding of the situation and behavior of states in the international system. The study of this branch of science has always added value to the world of international relations and offered certain intellectual advantages in the exercise of diplomacy.

Knowing how to interpret crises, wars, sanctions or simply what is happening around us based on previous scientific analysis strengthens our critical capacity in the face of misinformation and biased narratives. This is not something new; geopolitics emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as an attempt to explain international politics based on geography. It was the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellen who created the concept and term by understanding the state "[...] as a living organism that would evolve according to its space". At that time, authors such as Halford John Mackinder and Alfred Thayer Mahan developed different theories that sparked academic interest in geopolitics.

Today, the study of the international environment is no longer a secondary issue and has aroused great interest, even among younger people, as it represents a factor that can even condition the present and the future. The current struggle between states (in a way anticipated by Haushofer)¹ : the war in Ukraine, the Middle East (Iran), Latin America (Venezuela and Cuba), even the economic situation (stock market, trade, and tariffs...), the possible crisis of authority, the society of disinformation and "fear" are circumstances and scenarios that occupy the front pages of the media. The rivalry and prevalence between major powers is in a way at stake, and increasingly, people are seeking to know and understand: geopolitics is a tool that allows us to know why the price of petrol or gas is rising, or why access to one social network or another may be restricted, or what I should study or the company I could work for, for example.

In this explosion of the globalized information ecosystem, young people prioritize social media over more official media: immediacy, curiosity and narratives have an effect on their knowledge of the current environment and even international dynamics. In this sense, geopolitics provides an interpretative framework that allows us to distinguish

¹ HAUSHOFFER, K. (1928); Obst, E.; Lautensach, H., and Maull, O. Geopolitik: Die Lehre vom Staat als Lebewesen. Leipzig: Teubner.

between possible biased narratives, so that turning to the essence, the classics, the origin, can allow us to consolidate the foundations of knowledge in the present moment.

The international order is in undergoing transformation: we all experience it daily, the future is uncertain in many respects, and today's society is at stake. All generations agree on this issue and accept it. Geopolitics is no longer studied exclusively in a diplomatic or military context; it is a tool for knowledge in the 21st century that has become popular. In this sense, we can establish the initial assumption that the classics can explain why.

The continuity of the vision of the classics.

Nassim Taleb² defends the validity of the classics as an antidote to empty intellectualism and sterile sophistication. Among his arguments is that works such as those of Cicero, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and Epictetus have endured to this day because they remain useful, having been filtered by time. For him, the test of validity is not academic novelty, but resistance to disappearance; what endures deserves attention. Reading the classics means going to direct sources, without intermediaries, and extracting principles applicable to real action, not mere rhetorical abstractions that may be attractive but stray from the value of providing criteria.

One of the most relevant classical geopolitical theories is that of Halford Mackinder³ which, despite being more than a century old, remains one of the pillars of strategic thinking. Among its derivatives is the concept of *the Heartland*, which relates a given geographical area to its ease of exercising power: whoever controls the *Heartland* will dominate the World Island (Eurasia-Africa) and, consequently, the world. This geographical approach, focused on the Eurasian continental area, justified how European Russia, Western Siberia and parts of Central Asia represented areas of strategic interest by ensuring the existence of grain, minerals, energy, and sufficient demographic presence. Thus, Russia acquired the role of protagonist, touched in some way by nature to be a global power.

Mackinder also defines the *Inner Crescent* as a geographical area that identifies the space of friction between land and sea powers and encompasses the European, Mediterranean, and Asian coastal strips. The formula for world balance is based on

² TALEB Nassim (2019): *Jugarse la piel*. Editorial Planeta.

³ On the 1904 paper, *The Geographical Pivot of History*.

preventing the consolidation of an alliance between the continental core and an advanced industrial power in Western Europe, an approach that could be reflected in the fear of any German-Russian convergence.

Alfred Thayer Mahan established a theory centered on naval power and control of the seas⁴. Mahan argued that the key variable – controlling and governing the distribution of political power across land – was in the past (and would continue to be so in the future ...), based on the ability of states to manage the use of the oceans and international maritime passages as a means of transport, on the one hand, and on the other hand, to use them in terms of strategic relevance and military (naval) power⁵.

Similarly, he raised the concept of geographical position, considering that the truly central location was the one that really allowed the transport of goods by sea in terms of time, cost and capacity, while at the same time studying the defensive capacity of certain powers in terms of 'insularity', explaining that certain nations (at that time), England, Japan and also (with particularities), the United States of America, had a number of strategic advantages due to their maritime nature and being surrounded by sea.

The third point, perhaps less well known and developed than the previous ones, was based on the idea of analyzing the availability of docks and naval workshops, in our case we could say "arsenales" (Spanish), which would allow, in terms of support resources, to guarantee support for the naval forces. This consideration took on particular relevance, for example, in the US-Spanish War in Cuba, when the availability of coal and naval bases was essential for sustaining the Spanish continental fleet at the time, in the arsenals of Havana and Cavite⁶, and where: "[...] *the pursuit of an unclear and inconsistent naval policy, the lack of leadership at all levels of our nation, and the lack of clear and defined objectives at the outset of operations had a crucial influence.*"

Mahan's influence was very significant and manifested itself very quickly, particularly on Benjamin Franklin Tracy, Secretary of the Navy, who opportunely proposed a vast shipbuilding plan in 1889, and the Naval Act of 1890, and obviously also on Theodore

⁴ MAHAN A.T. (1918), *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History (1660-1783)*, 12th Edition 1918, Boston, Little Brown and Company.

⁵ TAVRA C. (1996), *Geopolitics, Mahan's thinking*. REVISTA DE MARINA (CHILE), p. 369 et seq.

⁶ ESCRIGAS RODRIGUEZ J. (2009), *The Navy in 1898. A comprehensive approach*. Doctoral thesis. Complutense University of Madrid. Dir. DE LA TORRE R.

Roosevelt, who was appointed Assistant Secretary of the US NAVY in March 1897, and others (Henry Lodge). With this, Mahan justified the American capture of the Philippines, Hawaii, and the Caribbean, with its most strategic location, Cuba, as vital bases⁷ ... Issues that are currently highly topical. At the same time, together with P. Colomb, the British naval theorist and historian, he argued the theory of sea power.

Mahan may also be credited with being the first to use the term *Middle East*, in a September 1902 article entitled "*The Persian Gulf and International Relations*"⁸.

On the other hand, and finally, Nicholas John Spykman⁹ offers a more modern take on Mackinder, but without forgetting Mahan. With his concept of *the Rimland*, which is closely related to the *Heartland*, he specifies that control of the peripheral ring of Eurasia would provide dominance of *the Heartland*, which, together with the coastal strip, would lead to control of the international system. Preventing a single power from dominating this peripheral arc would facilitate the prominence of an extra-continental power (such as the United States): whoever controls the *Rimland* rules Eurasia; whoever rules Eurasia controls the destiny of the world. The policy of containment during the Cold War is part of this vision.

The vision of the Middle East.

The Middle East represents a unique area where maritime routes converge and access to geographical areas has facilitated clashes between great powers. The existence of hydrocarbon reserves and the presence of essential straits such as Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb¹⁰ help us understand the importance of this area in relation to Europe's energy security. Furthermore, the Middle East acts as a hinge between Europe, Asia, and Africa, forming a space of indirect confrontation between multiple international actors. From

⁷ FEDOROVA K. (2012), The historical contribution of A.T. Mahan. Universitas. Journal of Philosophy, Law and Politics, no. 17, January 2013, ISSN 1698-7950, pp. 3-27.

⁸ ADELSON R. (1995), *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902–1922*. New Haven. Yale University Press, pp. 22–23.

⁹ *America's Strategy in World Politics* (1942) and *The Geography of the Peace* (1944).

¹⁰ These choke points are vital to global trade, and control over them can have significant repercussions on the international economy and security. Commonly accepted choke points: **Strait of Gibraltar**: Connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Atlantic Ocean. **Panama Canal**: Allows passage between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. **Strait of Malacca**: Connects the Malacca Peninsula with the island of Sumatra. **Strait of Hormuz**: Essential for oil transport between Asia and Europe. **Suez Canal**: Connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea. **Strait of Bab al Mandeb**: Allows access to the Red Sea from the Suez Canal. Bosphorus and Dardanelles: Connect the Aegean Sea with the Black Sea.

Gaza to Syria or Lebanon, the risk of escalation gives it a certain prominence in geopolitical interests and makes it a key piece in the global balance (for example, conflict in Iran)¹¹ .

From Mackinder's point of view, the Middle East is not part of *the Heartland*, but it is a critical space in *the Inner Crescent*, facilitating the transition between the Eurasian continental core and global maritime routes. The Straits of Hormuz and the Bosphorus are genuine *choke points* that facilitate this connection between the *Heartland* (Russia, Central Asia) and the warm seas. Turkey, for example, acquires structural relevance by controlling access from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, as well as conditioning Russian maritime projection. The Russian military presence in Syria since 2015 responds to this need to consolidate a foothold that enables access to the Mediterranean.

According to Mahan's doctrine, we believe that the Middle East should be considered in terms of *choke points*, as mentioned above, where four of the seven global strategic points are in this part of the world. Secondly, and in relation to this issue, Mahan argues that some states are better equipped than others to exert their influence at sea¹² . For him, the first explanation is always geographical.

Both the location of each state and its terrain, and even the length of its coastline, are relevant factors¹³ . However, the weight of the geographical variable is not sufficient to guarantee prevalence¹⁴ . This can be verified, for example, by the limitations of the former 'Empire of the Rising Sun' which, despite being able to defeat the Russians in 1905 (largely due to the Tsarist difficulties in transferring its Baltic Fleet to the China Sea), was in turn defeated in 1945 by a power that was much more advanced in all the parameters emphasized by Mahan in constructivist terms (and which we have included here in the various sections of our introduction...).

In this sense, we can consider the Middle East to be a key area for world trade, with a limited coastline and regional powers where the current naval powers (we could consider

¹¹ Online news (2026), CNN: *Benjamin Netanyahu calls for regime change in Iran after yesterday's attack*. [Benjamin Netanyahu calls for regime change in Iran after US and Israeli attacks](#)

¹² GONZÁLEZ, Andrés, and AZNAR, Federico. "Mahan and geopolitics." *Geopolítica(s)*. Journal of studies on space and power. Vol. 4, no. 2, 2013, pp. 335-351.

¹³ BAQUES QUESADA J. (2013), *The fundamental lessons of Mahan's work: from geographical determinism to commercial spirit*. IEEE, Madrid.

¹⁴ BRZEZINSKI, Zbigniew. *The Grand Chessboard*. Barcelona: Paidós, 1998.

the US and China) exert their influence on these traffic points and on the coastline. It is noteworthy that at present these two countries have naval bases in this port, alongside the Self-Defence Forces of Japan and France, and to a lesser extent Italy (which supports Spanish and German units).

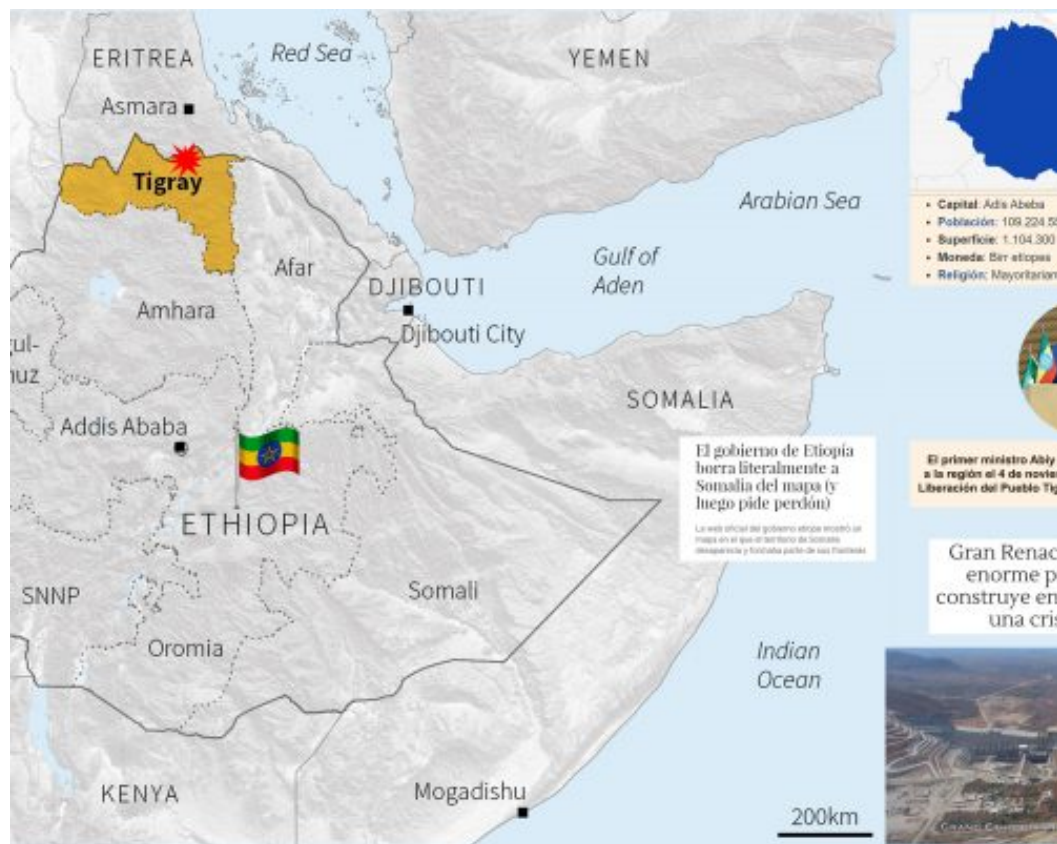


Source: Pressenza&Open Street map. Fair politic Graphics.

From our point of view, Mahan would also be concerned about Ethiopia's access to the sea. Ethiopia is the largest economy in East Africa and has some of the best agricultural land in the entire region, with coffee exports being “particularly noteworthy”. The success of its agriculture and livestock farming relies heavily on its vast water resources, the most important in Africa, which also provide the main source of energy. In this regard, control of the Blue Nile, which accounts for 80% of the Nile's flow (and originates in Ethiopia), is very important.

Historically, Ethiopia has had difficult relations with Somalia, partly due to territorial and religious rivalry, and with Eritrea, which was a province of the country until 1993 and provided access to the Red Sea. Today, relations with both nations have entered a phase

of gradual improvement... However, relations with Sudan and Egypt are going through difficult times, including military threats. The main cause is the management of the Nile River. In this regard, Mahan would be concerned about the situation on both sides of the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz, considering this area as a zone between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean in terms of naval influence. He would probably view the conflict in South Darfur as an attempt by various powers (the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, among others) to gain relevance in the area and, in turn, influence regional geopolitics.



Source: Digital newspaper "El Mundo".

From Spykman's perspective, the Middle East is associated with his *Rimland*. It is that strategic hinge between Europe, Asia, and Africa. The Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb and the Suez Canal are nodes of power. That is why the presence of military bases, energy corridors and regional alliances responds to the logic of preventing a hostile power from consolidating dominance in this segment of *the Rimland*. The military base and seaport in Djibouti created by China is an attempt to penetrate the *Rimland* by gaining some access and influence in the peripheral arc.

For the United States and its allies, maintaining balance in the Middle East means, roughly, preventing Russia or China from transforming that region into a platform for projection towards Europe or the Indo-Pacific.

The situation on the Eastern Flank.

Control of continental spaces that provide energy resources is key to our Mackinder approach, which remains valid in terms of the structural causes that led to the war between Russia and Ukraine. This is perhaps the clearest case, as Ukraine has always been present in this geographical area of *the Heartland*. It has everything: fertile land, energy flows, heavy industry (Donbas) and access to the ever-coveted Black Sea. It is precisely NATO's expansion towards the Eastern Flank that has been seen from the Russian perspective as a reconfiguration of the balance in this decisive area. This happened with Crimea because of its value in guaranteeing control of the Black Sea and enabling naval projection towards the eastern Mediterranean, and it is now happening with Ukraine and its "European breadbasket"¹⁵.

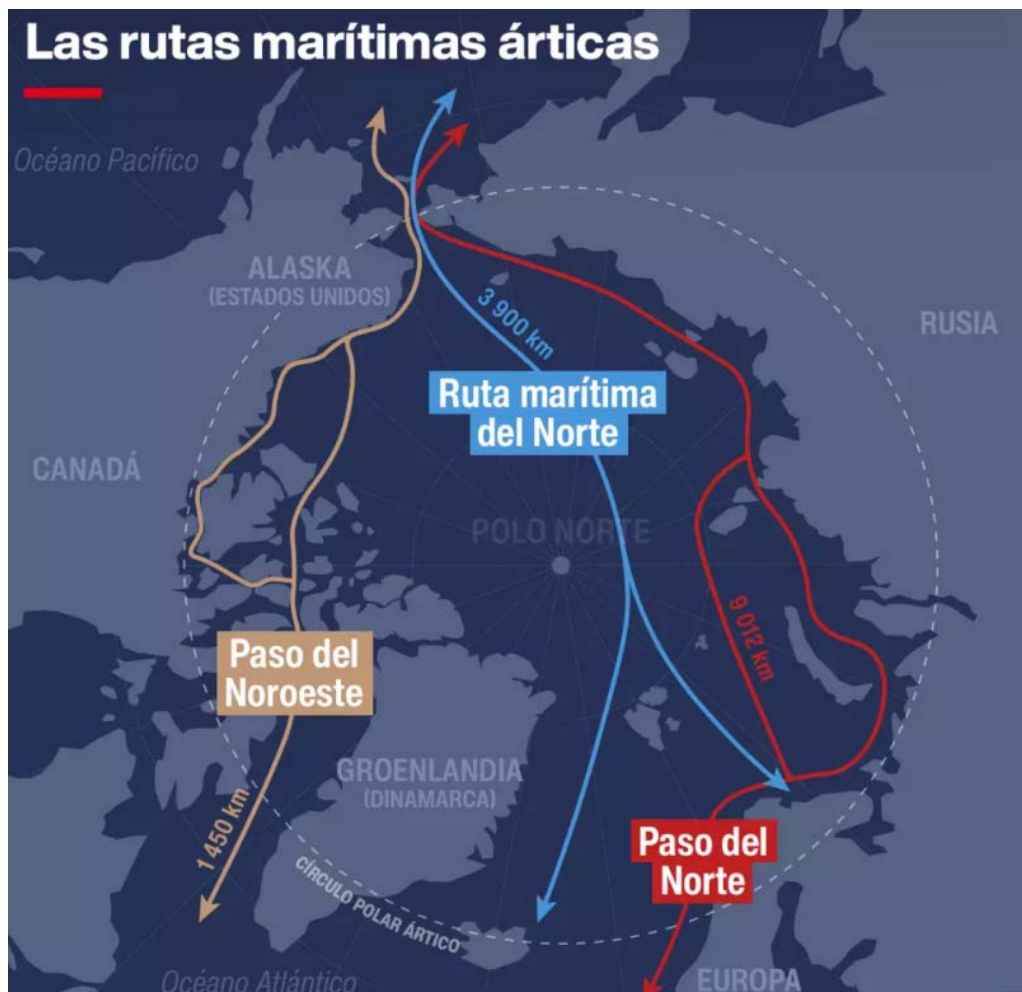
The classic dialectic between land powers and maritime powers is thus combined, adapted to a hybrid and nuclear environment. Mahan would consider this area in terms of geographical factors (an independent variable based on the primacy of geography), and the successes of the state's best positioned in this regard depend greatly on whether they have met the expectations regarding national character.

Mahan sets out his most compelling thesis: states that developed economic models that we would today define as extractive neglected their entrepreneurial spirit and, with it, some of their incipient manufacturing industries. On the other hand, by emphasizing private investment in emerging markets, they consolidated growth dynamics that ultimately allowed them to expand their maritime presence until they established themselves as great military powers and even as "hegemonies". In Mahan's case, he would undoubtedly consider the possibility of establishing trade routes in the Arctic and being able to control them, considering that on 20 September 2025, China inaugurated its first regular container trade route through the Arctic to Europe. The use of this north-eastern sea passage considerably reduces the crossing time from Chinese ports.

¹⁵ Source, online article: [The "breadbasket of Europe" is emptying: nutrient loss in Ukraine threatens global food security](#)

In fact, it normally takes forty days to connect China and the United Kingdom via the classic route through the Suez Canal, or even more than fifty days via the Cape of Good Hope off the coast of South Africa. The line launched by Haijie Shipping, available 10 months a year, will connect several Chinese ports (Qingdao, Shanghai, and Ningbo) with four European ports: Felix Stowe in the United Kingdom, Rotterdam in the Netherlands, Hamburg in Germany, and Gdansk in Poland.

One need not study the recent statements by the US administration too closely to conclude that the ability to maintain control of the route between Canada's Queen Elizabeth Archipelago and Greenland, and more specifically the sea access to the Thule base on the one hand, and freedom of navigation between the island of Svalbard and Greenland on the other, as a matter of global strategic importance, with the sea route between the latter and Murmansk being a geopolitical space to be considered for the possible use of naval forces.



Source: RFI. Fr

Spykman would base his justification on communication between Russia and Europe. Control of Ukraine is associated with access to *the Eastern European Rimland*. For Moscow, Ukraine is a line of containment. Just as for NATO, this geographical area allows for limiting the expansion of a land power towards the *Rimland*.

What we are experiencing in Europe is a struggle to break the balance and secure the *Rimland* to contain the *Heartland*.

The particular and important view of South America.

Mackinder did not pay particular attention to South America, as it was included in his *Outer Crescent*¹⁶, but after more than a century of this interpretation, we need to look deeper to understand. Although far from the power of *the Heartland*, no one can ignore the strength that strategic resources (energy, rare earths, etc.) bring to the southern part of the American continent. The value of South America would be more linked to its capacity to be a global player, for which the desire to cooperate would be the starting point. It is precisely its fragmentation and lack of clear leadership that keeps it on the strategic periphery. South America is not *the Heartland*, but it can become an arena for indirect competition between powers, as demonstrated by the strategic move that led to the United States' control of Venezuela. Control of strategic resources will be key.

Mahan would consider access to the South Atlantic and Pacific maritime routes a preferred geopolitical space both in terms of the use of naval forces and the establishment of naval bases to ensure dominance of the world's largest maritime area¹⁷. In the past, this was not equally valued. In a context of energy transition, these resources take on systemic relevance. The Panama Canal, although geographically located in Central America, connects directly with South America's strategic projection, and constitutes an essential maritime hub in the Sino-American rivalry.

For all these reasons, this geographical area has become a key arena in global geopolitics, with a growing role in defense strategies and transcontinental international military alliances. An important point in this arena is the strategic *FOIP (Free and Open*

¹⁶ Online source: [The Geographical Pivot of History - Wikipedia](#)

¹⁷ TREVIÑO RUIZ J.M. (2025), The Indo-Pacific scenario, a new geopolitical chessboard where the future of the global order is defined, online article: <https://www.defensa.com/opinion/escenario-indo-pacifico-nuevo-tablero-geopolitico-donde-define>

Indian and Pacific) decision, for a free and open Indo-Pacific by the US, highlighted by recent statements by US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth that "[...] *the Indo-Pacific will be the priority theatre for US operations in the coming years. s thus seeking to strengthen its military presence in the region in the face of China's growing military power in the area.*"

Beijing has also intensified its presence in the region, reviving the old "Nine-Dash Line" theory, based on an old map from 1935, which included the Spratly and Paracel archipelagos as its own territory, building *unsinkable aircraft carriers* on reefs in the Spratly Islands, despite protests from its neighbours the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Borneo. Japan's 2022 National Security Strategy, affected by Chinese claims over the Senkaku Islands, refers to China as *an unprecedented strategic challenge*.

The possibility of an invasion of Taiwan by the Chinese Armed Forces is a potential war scenario that is increasingly worrying the international community. In December 2025, Chinese President Xi Jinping declared that "[...] the reunification of our motherland is unstoppable" in his New Year's message, adopting a firm tone in Taiwan just days after Beijing conducted its largest military exercises around the autonomous island. Taiwan's position is firm, although the economic ties between China and Taiwan are evident: is Taiwan a part of China? The possibility of a regional war in a period of about five years is possible, with the possibility of regional escalation¹⁸. For China, Taiwan is simply an "internal matter" in which the US "should not interfere"¹⁹. Furthermore, US support may not be fully guaranteed.

However, the island is separated from the Asian mainland by the Taiwan Strait, which ranges from 130 to 180 km in width, with weather conditions that are often adverse for an amphibious landing. Similarly, Taiwan's defense has not been idle since General Chiang Kai-shek arrived on the island in 1949, after being defeated by Mao's Red Army. For this reason, the entire island is defended by naval minefields, coastal artillery with anti-ship missiles, an effective air defense system and powerful and motivated armed forces

¹⁸ JACKSON A. and CHETWYND P. (2025), AFP, online article : "Taiwanese president warns that China will not 'stop' if it seizes the Island".

¹⁹ Keynote speech by H.E. Wang Yi at the Symposium on the International Situation and China's Foreign Relations (2025). Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

against invaders, with a GDP dedicated to defense of 3.32% by 2026 and, above all, with the support of the United States, which in certain plans contemplates the possibility of sending up to three aircraft carrier battle groups for a conflict scenario, as the Seventh Fleet did in a way in 1958, when, during a regional crisis, it was reinforced and its ships helped the nationalist government to protect the islands' supply lines²⁰. This was like what happened in 1995 during the crisis caused by what Beijing considered to be President Lee Teng-hui's verbal excesses in favor of independence.

This situation led China to launch a series of missiles into Taiwanese airspace, as a warning, and over the strait, as well as mobilizing troops in Fujian province (which prompted a US mobilization in the strait). The situation was repeated in early 1996, just days before the first free and democratic presidential elections in the island's history. Washington again showed its strength by sending its fleet to Taiwan, and Lee won the election.

But Mahan would undoubtedly also have been concerned about China's strategy of building ports and establishing shipping lines between mainland China and various ports in Latin America. This was something that Mahan had already considered and which was applied in the various naval battles that took place in the First World War, both in the Falkland Islands and in Coronel Bay in Chile, where the United Kingdom suffered its first naval defeat since the 18th century, with Admiral Christopher Cradock losing two impressive naval units, the battleships Goodhope and Monmouth, leaving the Pacific in German hands (for a short time).

The port of Chancay in Peru, which is on its way to becoming the most important port in South America, developed by COSCO Shipping, has reduced transport time between Asia and South America by up to 30 days, especially from the port of Nansha, and has encouraged the construction of infrastructure in mainland China at the ports of Tianjin and Dalian, facilitating trade with the ports of Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, and Ecuador.

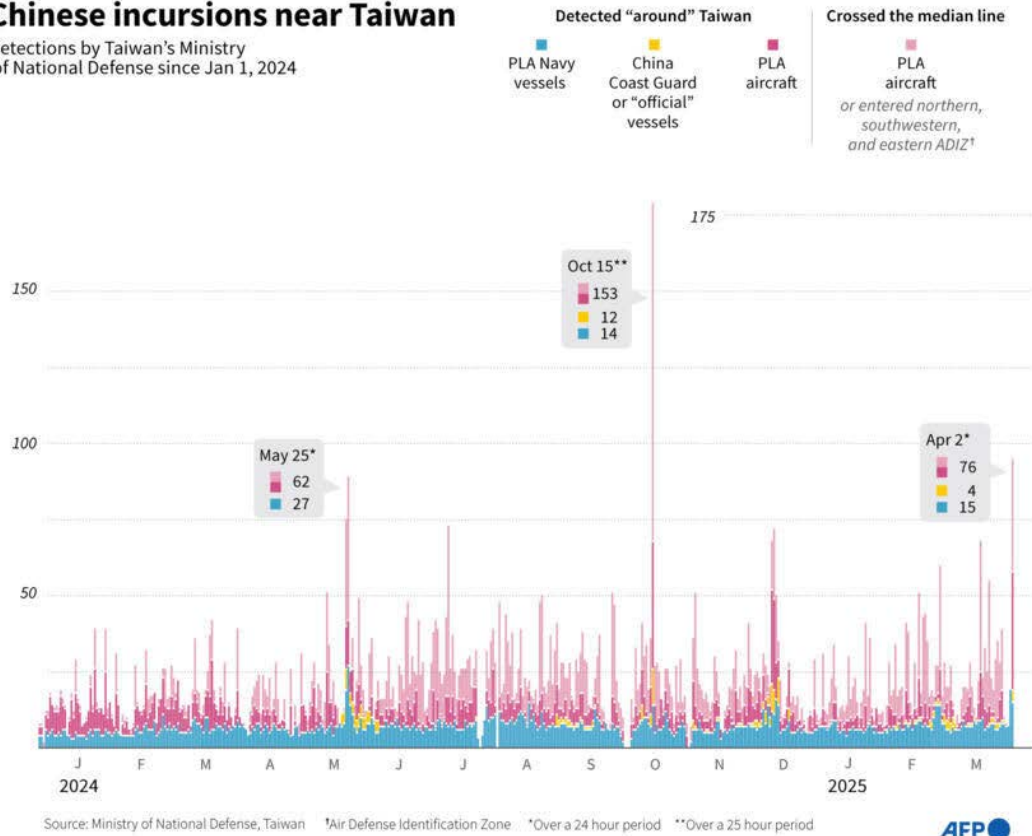
These initiatives not only improve connectivity between China and Latin America, but also reinforce China's economic influence in the region, partially displacing the commercial

²⁰ PRIETO (2025), The role of the US in the Taiwan issue, China Policy Observatory. Online article: <https://www.politica-china.org/el-rol-de-estados-unidos-en-la-cuestion-de-taiwan-evolucion-historica-y-situacion-durante-la-presidencia-de-donald-trump/>

dominance of the US and Europe.

Chinese incursions near Taiwan

Detections by Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense since Jan 1, 2024



Source: AFP. Online resource.

Spykman is right to focus more on the Western Hemisphere, since US security is linked to limiting the influence of powers in areas that could affect the American space. South America, although peripheral to Eurasia, is part of the global balance of power. Control of its coastlines and maritime routes indirectly affects the Eurasian *Rimland*. The Panama Canal is a key element in interoceanic strategic mobility. Its stability guarantees US naval flexibility, a central element in the control of *the Asian Rimland*. South America is not the centre of the system, but it is an area where indirect competition influences the global architecture.

Analysis of the situation on the African continent.

Africa is also part of the *Outer Crescent* defined by Mackinder. Like South America, the African continent combines critical resources (rare earths, cobalt, uranium), and the

demographic variable positions it in a key future scenario. The Sahel represents that space of friction where everything happens and where everything can happen, given the large number of state and non-state actors present. The factor here is that influence is not only exerted through territorial occupation; there are multiple options: economic, technological, diplomatic, military influence, etc. Stability in this strip has a direct effect on the European Rimland, which is why the African continent represents a field of indirect projection of Eurasian power.

Mahan believed that control of Gibraltar, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal connects Africa with Eurasian trade routes. China's military and economic presence in Djibouti and strategic African ports reflects the extension of *the Heartland* into peripheral maritime areas. The thalassocrat vision²¹ has led various powers to achieve certain successes throughout history²². This view appears to be shared by Kissinger (1994), who begins his *Diplomacy* by revealing the shift from the presidency of the 'friend of the big stick' to that of President Woodrow Wilson.

In other words, in the United States, these two schools of thought, that of the United States as a "beacon" and that of the United States as a "crusader", have been in conflict since the Spanish-American War of 1898. Currently, the second may prevail, with nuances.

We need to be practical, and so far, the US strategy of penetration in Africa through the strengthening of the security sector, the development of democracies, and the establishment of trade alliances and the delivery of humanitarian aid through agencies such as US Aid and others, is not an adequate recipe for societies that value the existence of de facto powers that guarantee a certain stability while social and economic progress is made²³.

Although there are many limiting factors, possibly one of the most important is the high cost of capital in Africa, which is 2.4 times higher than in the rest of the world. We would link this issue to Mahan's consideration of the "economic and social factors" that would

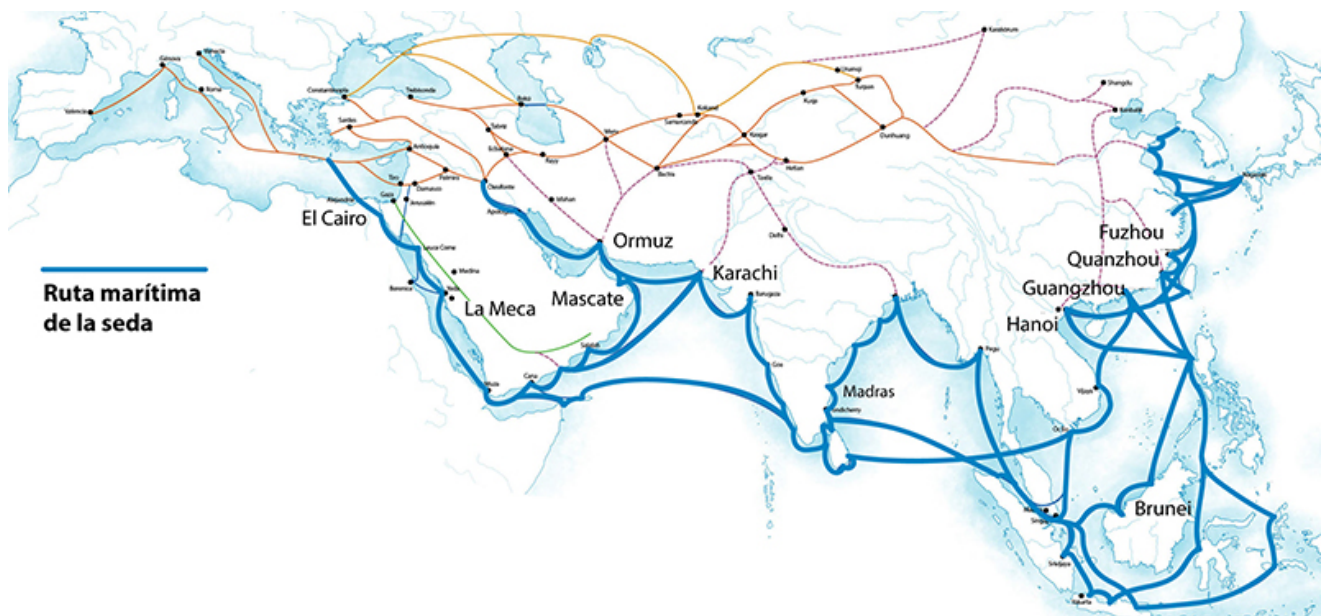
²¹ THUCYDIDES (1990) *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Madrid: Gredos.

²² GONZALEZ Martín, Andrés, and AZNAR Fernández-Montesinos, Federico (2013) "Mahan and Geopolitics." *Geopolítica(s)*. *Journal of Studies on Space and Power*, vol. 4, no. 2, 335-351.

²³ UN ANNUAL REPORT (2025), *Boosting African Development*,
<https://www.un.org/es/annualreport/2025/development-in-africa>

undoubtedly affect the expected results: of these, I would highlight the negativity of social factors and the availability of natural resources, respectively, which Africa has in such abundance.

Along with this, special consideration should be given to the fact that he could gain control of the Cape of Good Hope and the Portuguese sea route, which, in the event of a blockade of the Suez Canal, something we cannot dismiss as science fiction, could become a reality in the event of a hypothetical regional conflict. Zheng He (1371-1433) was the greatest Chinese maritime explorer in history, and the most important in Asia, as well as the commander of the largest navy the world had ever seen until the First World War. He is especially famous for his seven naval expeditions, carried out between 1405 and 1433, during the early Ming dynasty, which some legendarily identify with the voyages of Sinbad. His contributions are key to understanding the advanced history of Chinese cartography and give us an idea of the Chinese perception of trade in the Indian Ocean (and the importance it attaches to trade routes), especially the new Silk Road proposed by Xi Jinping in 2014, which has a maritime component that would certainly not be irrelevant to Mahan.



Source: Confucius.mag

Since Spykman, the destabilization of this segment has weakened the Western *Rimland*.

Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa, is home to bases for multiple powers. African mineral resources (cobalt, rare earths) are essential for technological industries in the Asian and European *Rimland*.

Finally, China's growing presence in Africa and Latin America introduces a new element. From a Spykmanian perspective, China's economic and technologic 's penetration in the Western Hemisphere could erode the US strategic balance. China's growing presence in infrastructure and mining reflects the penetration of *the expanded Heartland* (mainland China) into areas traditionally linked to US maritime power.

General conclusions.

The analysis of current geopolitics using the visions of the classics allows us to establish assumptions, determine hypotheses, and draw conclusions. It is a suggestive and easy-to-understand tool that allows us to analyze current events. However, to be completely objective and in accordance with the scientific method, about the current situation, it would be appropriate to carry out an analysis in terms of, at least, historical and geographical variables (already mentioned) and technology and information, education, economy, society and ecology, and nuclear (**TEESEN**).

However, on the issues discussed, and as a first conclusion, Mackinder's theory, far from being a historical relic, offers a powerful interpretative framework for understanding current competition. *Heartland* and *Rimland* are not static categories, but they continue to express a structural truth: the control of strategic continental spaces and maritime connection nodes that conditions the architecture of global power. In the 21st century, this logic is combined with social resilience, hybrid warfare and technological competition. Geography has not disappeared; it has become intertwined with new dimensions of power.

On the other hand, from Spykman's perspective, the 21st century confirms his structural intuition: the fate of the international system is decided in the *Rimland*. Ukraine, the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific and the Horn of Africa are not isolated conflicts; they are segments of the peripheral arc where the transition of power is being played out. Control of *the Heartland* matters, but dominance of the Eurasian coastal belt determines who shapes the world order. The resilience of *Rimland* societies—infrastructural, energy, cognitive—thus becomes central to contemporary strategic competition.

The wars in Ukraine and Iran are not just territorial disputes. Those are strategic struggles for the configuration of the European peripheral arc (hence the support of the *Coalition of the Willing and allies/partners*). If Russia, for example, consolidates its dominance in Ukraine, it expands its influence in the *Rimland*. If Ukraine integrates into Western structures (the European Union), the containment belt is reinforced (and vice versa).

Something similar happens to the US in Latin America (hence the "Monroe Doctrine"). On the other hand, and finally, to paraphrase Aznar, the history of humanity can be seen as a confrontation between naval and land power, between thalassocracy and continental power. This "Mahanian" view is reductionist, simplistic and, like all views, partially fallacious, but this analysis can be made and is possibly well understood; in fact, it can be extremely effective. Thus, the Greco-Persian Wars, which pitted Greek thalassocracy against the continental power represented by the Persian Empire, ultimately resulted in the victory of naval power...

Similarly, a similar analysis can be made today, although on this occasion the conflict may be between two naval powers, one of which seeks a certain prevalence in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and where, as in the past, two (or more) economic systems (with many nuances) are once again opposed: the free market (indebted) and the "socialist" market economy (capital - and labor-intensive...) and certain variables related to social progress (in Africa, America and Asia, particularly), in addition to other aspects (already mentioned), forming a truly complex geopolitical system with key areas (e.g. Taiwan, the Philippines, choke points, Ukraine and the network).

Ultimately, it is a question of using classical geopolitical analysis, but introducing other variables of an economic, informational, diplomatic, or social nature. This is the nature of events and society in the 21st century, which was in a way foreshadowed by the authors we have analyzed, and which undoubtedly contributes to a doctrinal view of the complex and volatile global situation.

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