

# The strategic management of geopolitical interests

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Geopolitics is traditionally defined as the scientific study of the influence of geography on political actions of states although this term is quite broad and encompasses several meanings as it is used over the years. Previous centuries had incorporated this concept with entente (French word for understanding or diplomacy) and subsequently superseded by another French word that is detente (or the relaxation of tensions). Geopolitics can be considered as within the realm of the world of politics as practiced by heads of state or statesmen. As such, it pays to have a focus on the many ways by which geography can influence the actions and behaviors of most states. One of the most enduring theories about geopolitics is the one proposed by Sir Halford Mackinder. In his influential work entitled “ The Geographical Pivot of History”, he had proposed that Eurasia (most of Central Asia) is the main strategic point from which great land power emanates from. 1

His theory and published works had a marked influence on subsequent heads of state in their conduct of foreign and state policies. Despite the passage of several years, it continues to be an influential work and one of the foremost proponents of his theory is former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. In this regard, Brzezinski subscribes to the same principle that the massive landlocked area of Eurasia is still the so-called “

key position” in most military strategy formulation; whoever possesses Eurasia will win the strategic battle. Brzezinski continues to see the world in terms of black and white; not in shades of gray. This is a dangerous carryover of the Mackinder theory about see-saw struggles between land and sea power over previous centuries (or fight of East vs. West, Christianity vs. Islam, whale vs. white bear, Europe vs. Asia, etc.).

Along this line, Brzezinski believed that Eurasia is the chief geopolitical prize in a fight for world dominance because it possesses great potential for development from its raw materials. With the United States considered as maritime power itself (which succeeded Great Britain), the current occupant of this big land mass which is Russia (or the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which was the successor of the Russian Empire) is considered as a threat to the U. S. for global power. In this aspect, Brzezinski is similar to Mackinder in his global outlook or world view of historical events. His assertion regarding Soviet threats (communism) is but a repetition of Mackinders theory regarding threats of Russian expansionist tendencies, as was described in earlier years, as akin to a glacier sliding or gliding forward that cannot be stopped. 2

However, it is in one key aspect where Brzezinski differed from Mackinder; the Soviet expansion is not inevitable. It can be stopped similar to counter moves played in a chess game. A key feature of Brzezinskis geopolitical philosophy was positive and peaceful engagement in the region of Eastern Europe in a non-confrontational manner to undermine Soviet influence there. He did not want to antagonize the countries of central and eastern Europe so as not to drive them towards the Soviet Union; instead he argued against the

policy of rollback or push back. He was therefore in favor of continued engagement with these countries to assuage their fears of Western influence and gradually abandoned detente based on his predecessors (Kissinger) realpolitik. He also did not share the fear of Mackinder about Russia (or the former USSR) as being a solid kind of bloc; it is made up of many nationalities and ethnicities which eventually caused its collapse. 3

#### Bibliography

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