# Theories of Geopolitics

Professor Athanasios G. Platias,

Department of International & European Studies, School of Economics,
Business & International Studies, University of Piraeus

Πανεπιστήμιο Πειραιώς
**University of Piraeus**

*"Whosoever commands the sea commands the trade; whoever commands trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself."* –Sir Walter Ralegh, 1616.
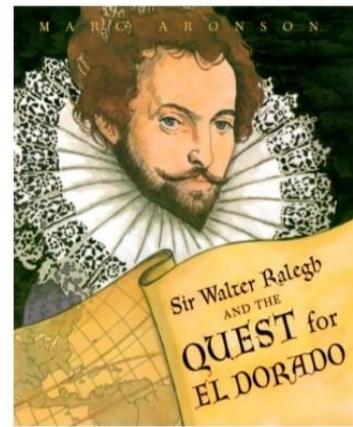
# Theorists

- Herodotus (c.484 – c.425 B.C.) (Cyrus the Great)

- Thucydides (Themistocles, Pericles) (c. 460 – c. 400 B.C.)

- Kautilya (c. 350 - 283 B.C.)

- Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914)

- Sir Halford John Mackinder (1861-1947)

- Karl Ernst Haushofer (1869-1946)

- Nicholas John Spykman (1893-1943)

- George Frost Kennan (1904-2005)

- Henry Alfred Kissinger (1923-)

- Samuel Phillips Huntington (1927-2008)

- Graham Tillett Allison Jr. (1940-)

# Herodotus (c. 484 – c. 425 B.C.)
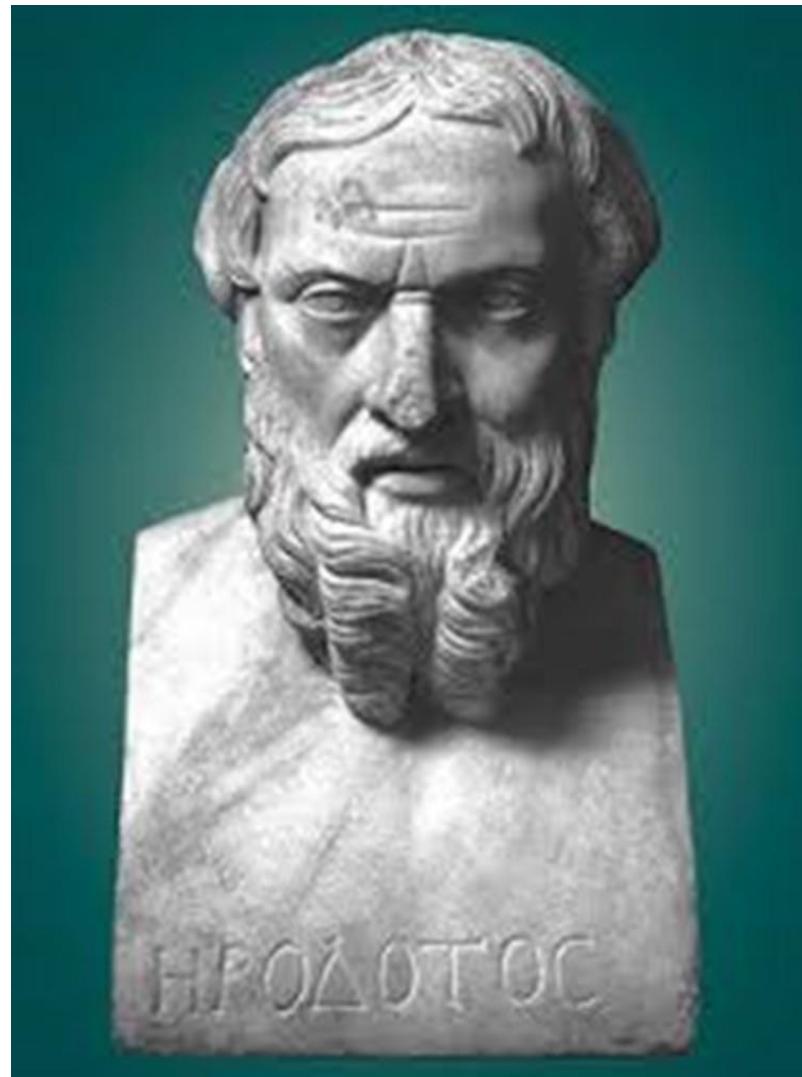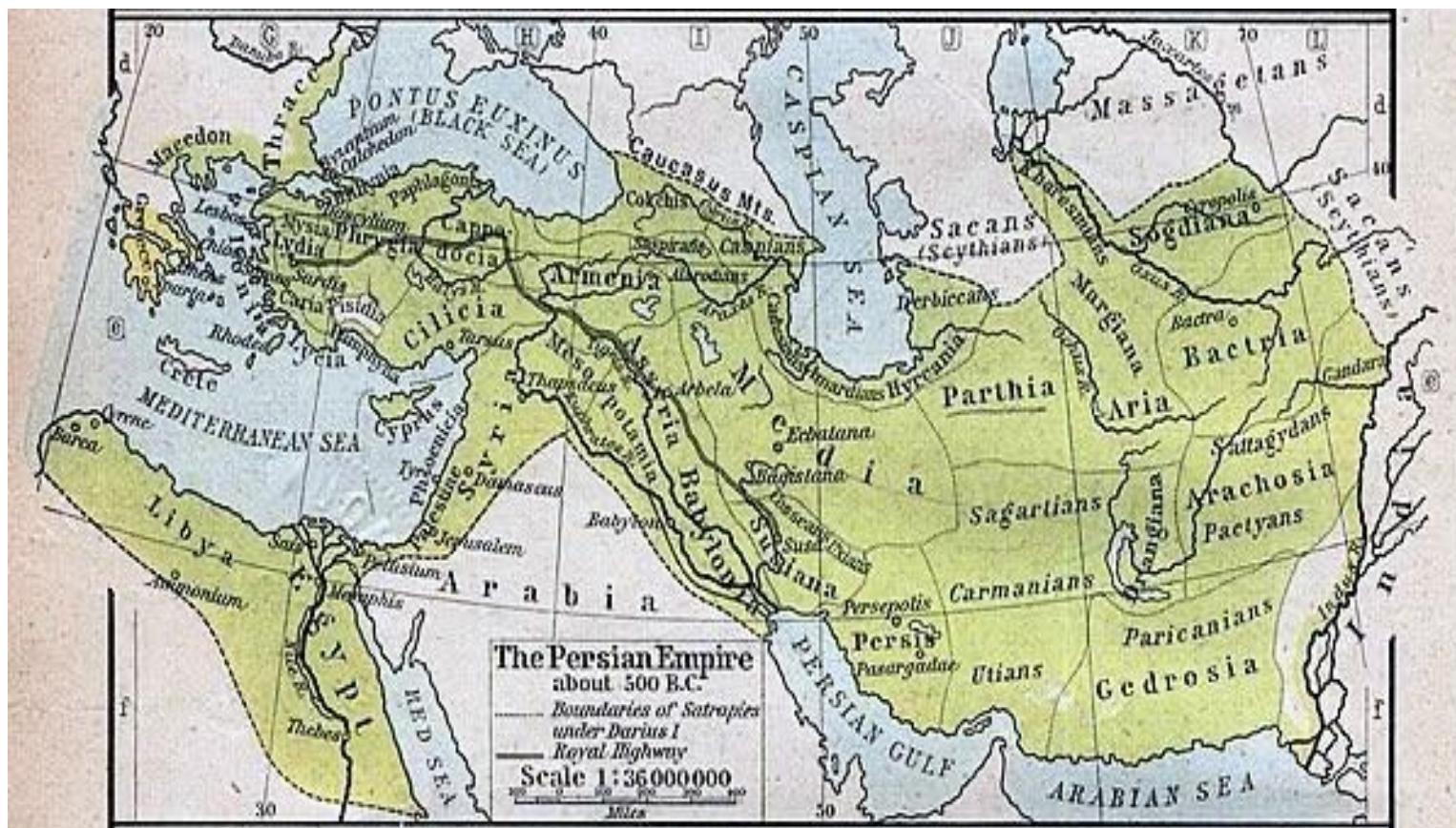
*Herodotus (c.484 – c.425 B.C.)*
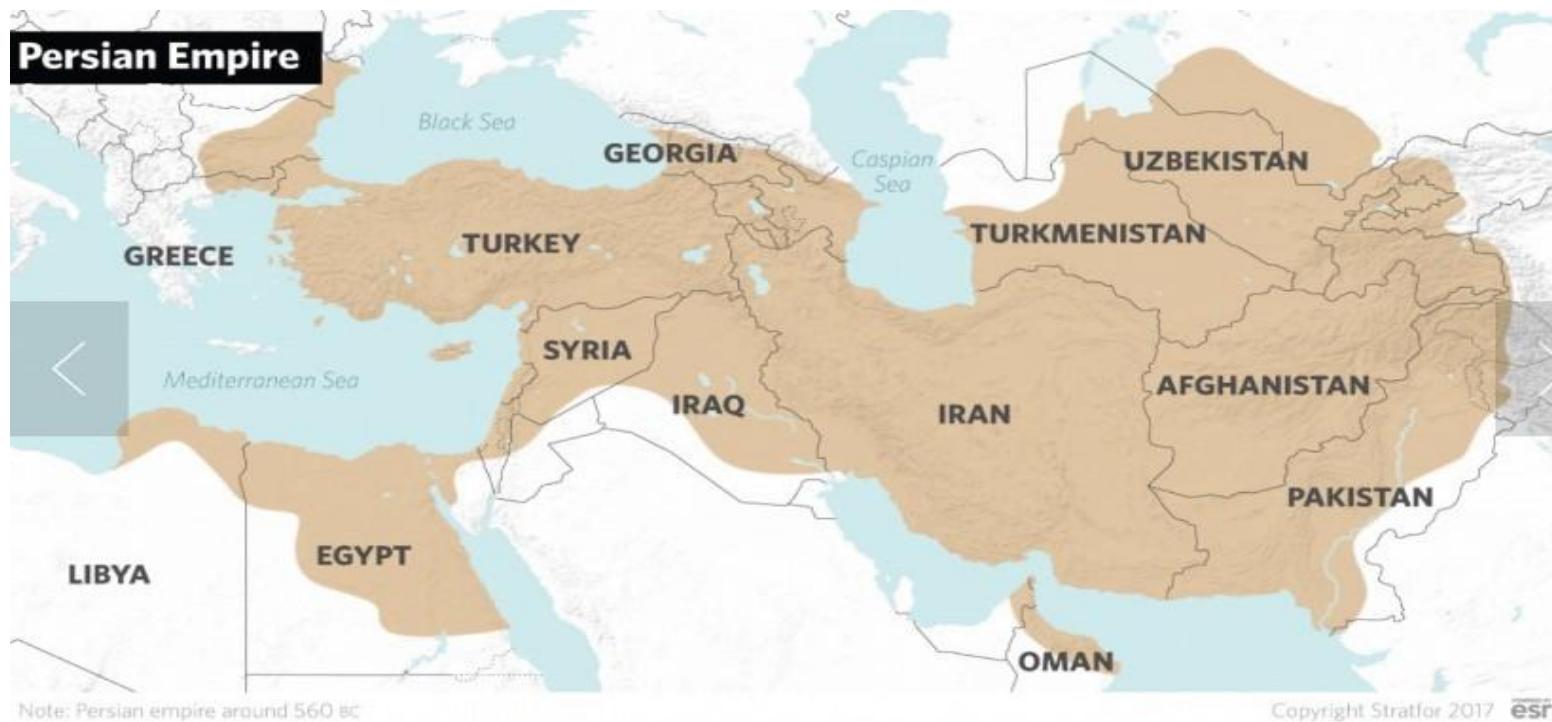
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# Thucydides (c. 460 – c. 400 B.C.)
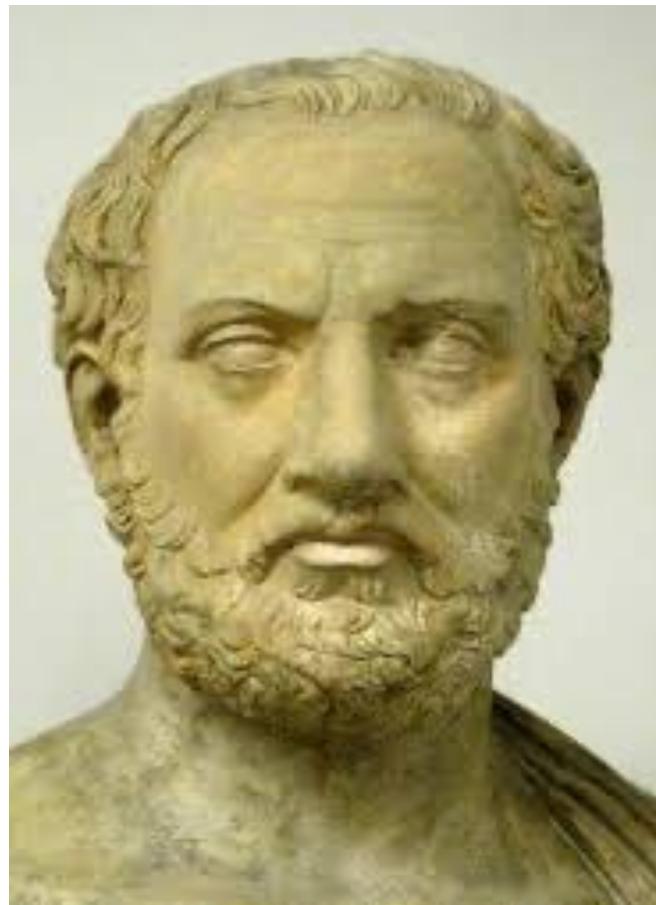
Pericles (c. 495 – c. 429 B.C.)

Themistocles (c. 524 – c. 459 B.C.)

# The Virtuous Maritime Circle
# invented by Themistocles

**2.**
Maritime Empire/
Maritime Trade

**1.**
Thalassocracy/
Sea Control

**3.**
Wealth / Resources

**4.**
Naval Strength
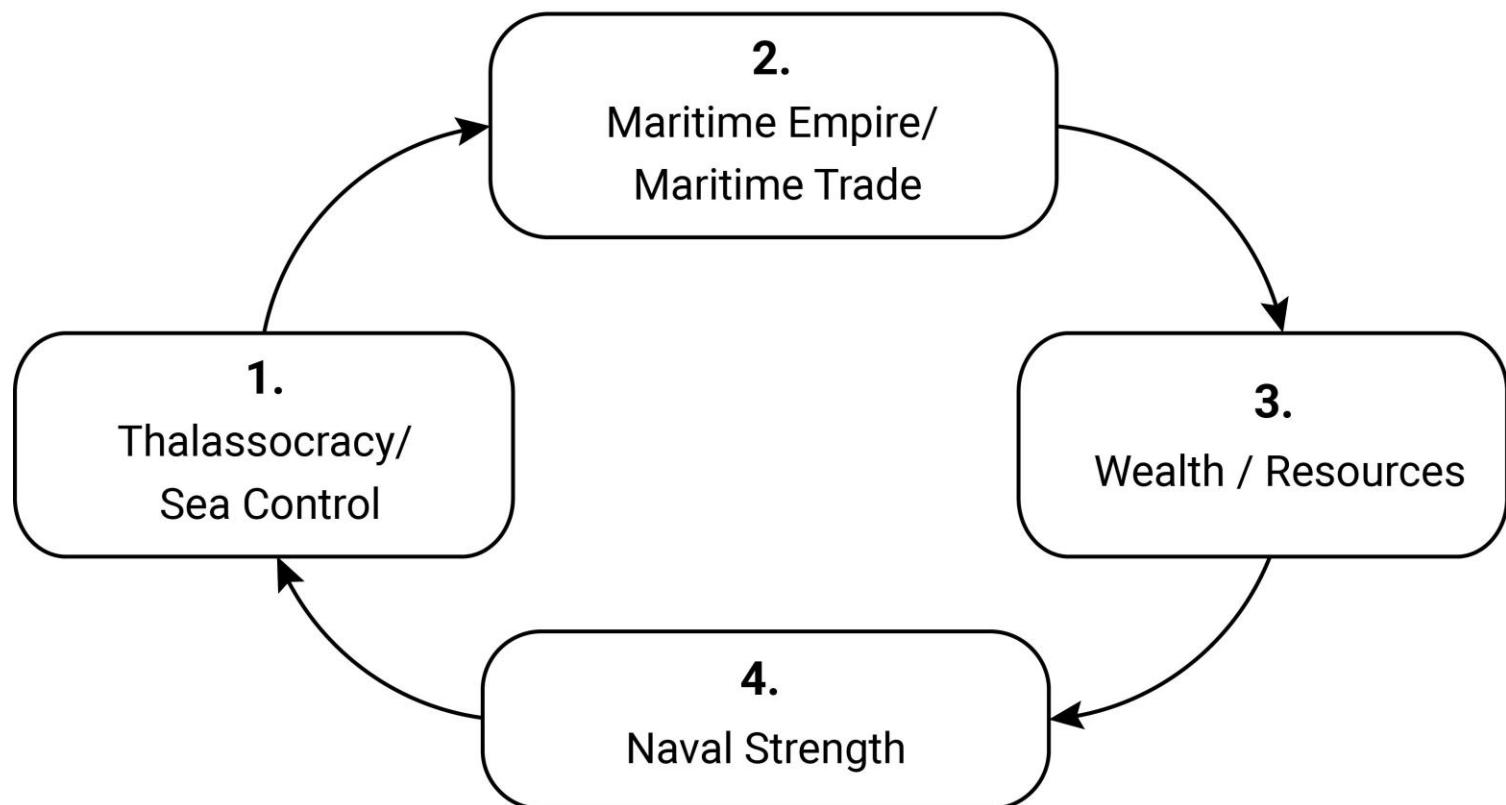
# Trireme

# Kautilya (c. 350 - 283 B.C.)



'Roger Boesche's political science class sparked my general interest in politics. He was a wonderful, wonderful teacher.'

— **Barack Obama**, as quoted in the *New York Times*

**KAUTILYA**
The First Great Political Realist

**ROGER BOESCHE**
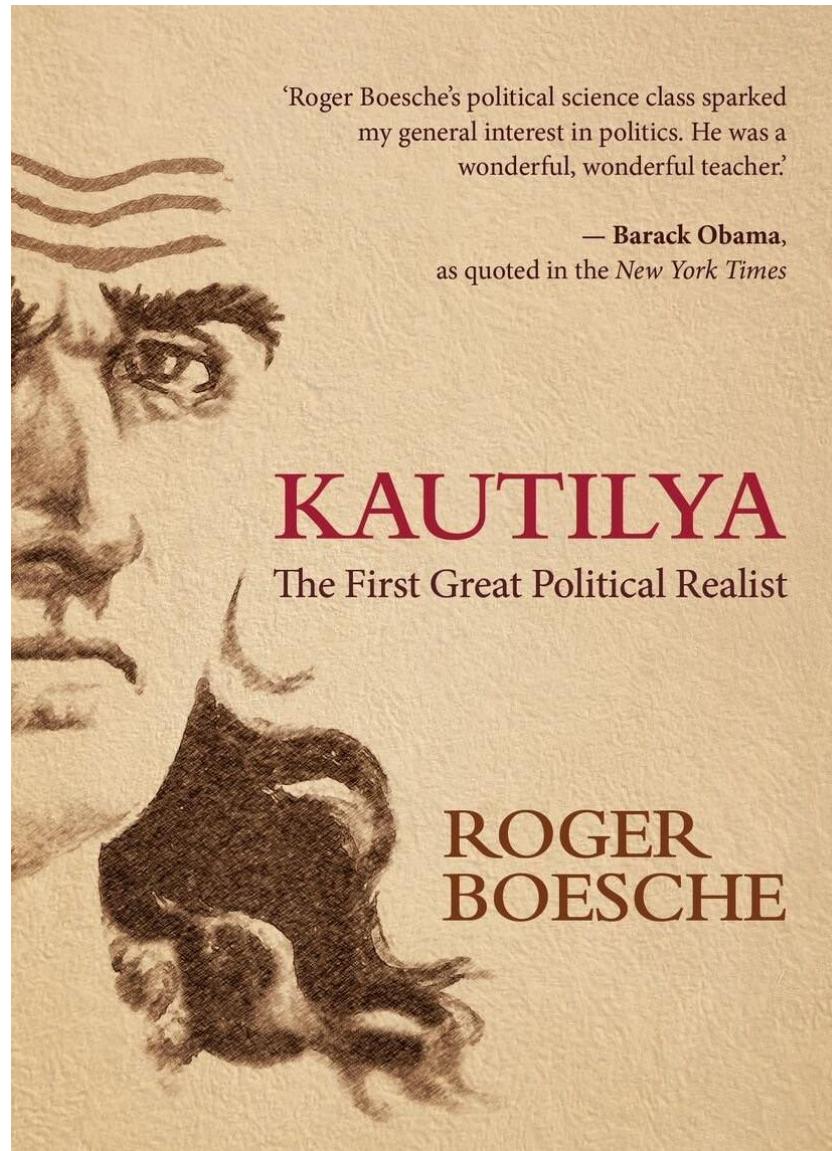
# The enemy of the enemy is a friend (Kautilya)
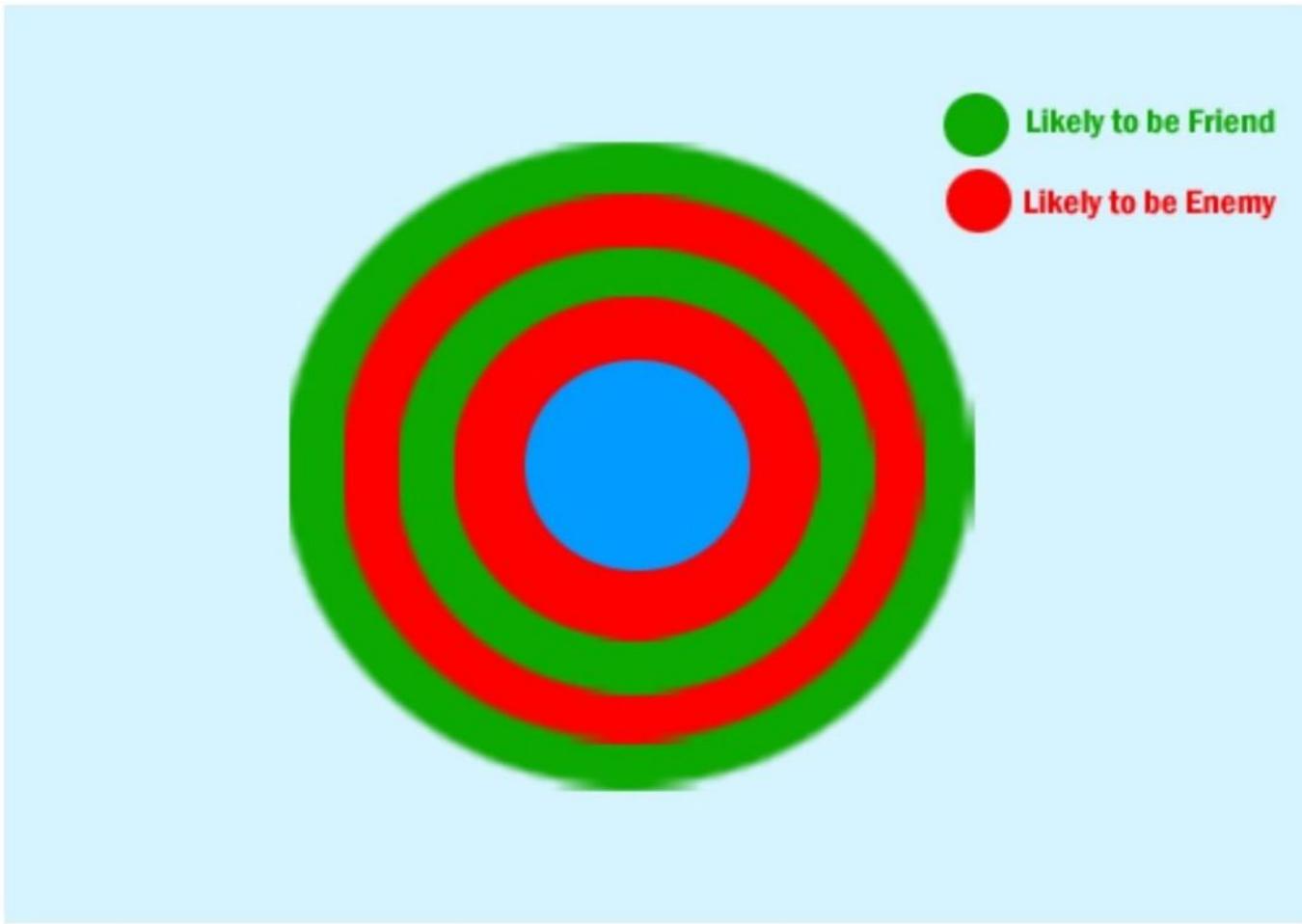
Kautilya proposes that the nations which are his neighbors and are also neighbors of his enemies are neutral and should always be treated with respect. **He believes that this circle is dynamic in nature and the King should work towards expanding his central position and employ means to reduce the power of the other kings in his vicinity.**

Friend's Friend

Enemies Friend

Friend

Enemy

KING

Dharmakshethra.com
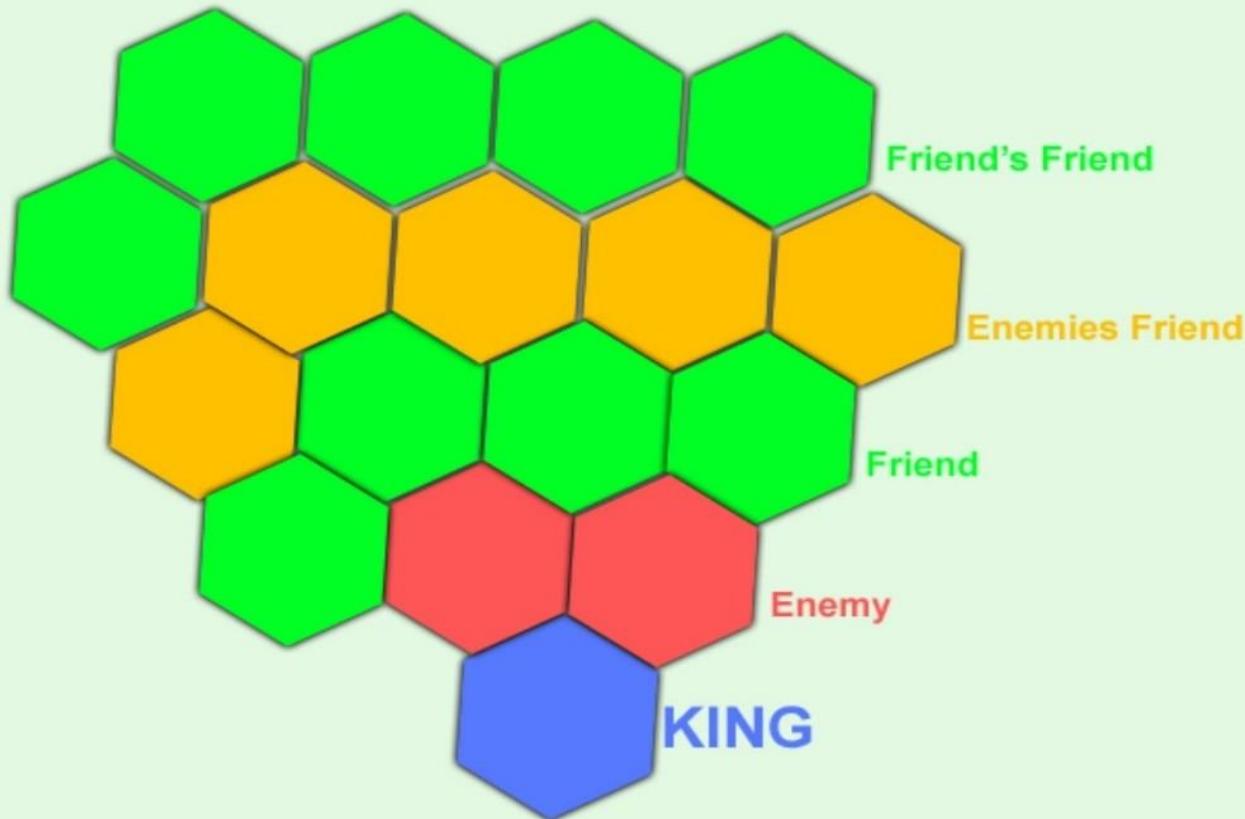
# Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914)

# Alfred Thayer Mahan Principle

# Why is sea power important?

Four fact make sea power important:

1. Over 70 per cent of the world's surface is covered by ocean.
2. Over 90 per cent of international trade, when measured in weight and volume, travels by water.
3. The majority of the world's major cities and urban population lie within 200 kilometres of a coastline.
4. international law provide for 'for freedom of the seas'.

# 90,000 TONS OF DIPLOMACY

*NORTHROP GRUMMAN*

# Sea power
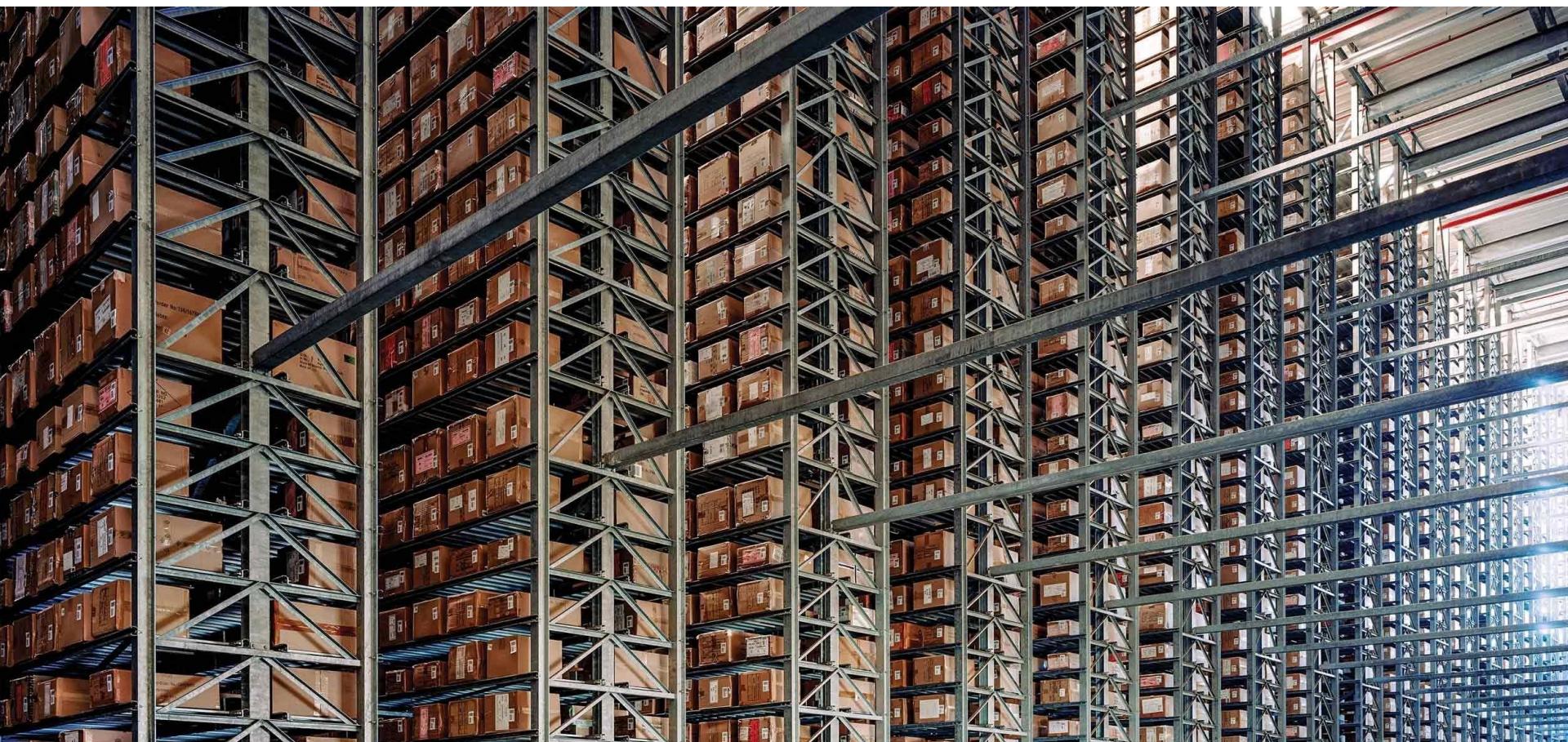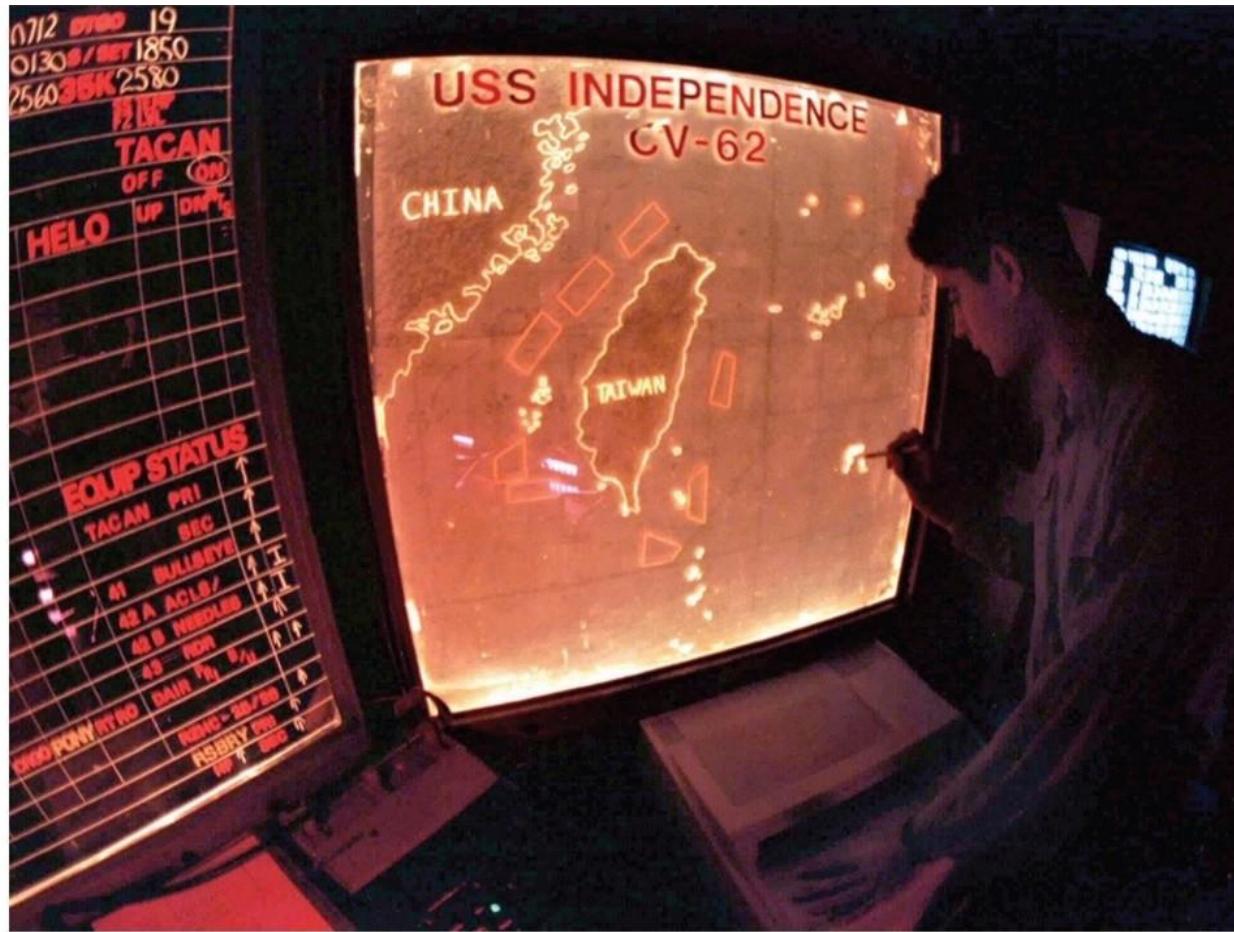
**LOCATING POSITION, 1996** Air Controller on the USS *Independence* checks the current position of the aircraft carrier on an electronic map which keeps track both of ships and of its air wing. China had told the United States not to send its navy into the Taiwan Straits.

**NAVAL PROPAGANDA, C.1803–4** A French propaganda cartoon map presenting Napoleon as seeking the freedom of navigation as a universal goal. The struggle between the land and the sea power required each to triumph in the favoured sphere of the

# Sir Halford John Mackinder (1861-1947)

# Mackinder's World, 1904
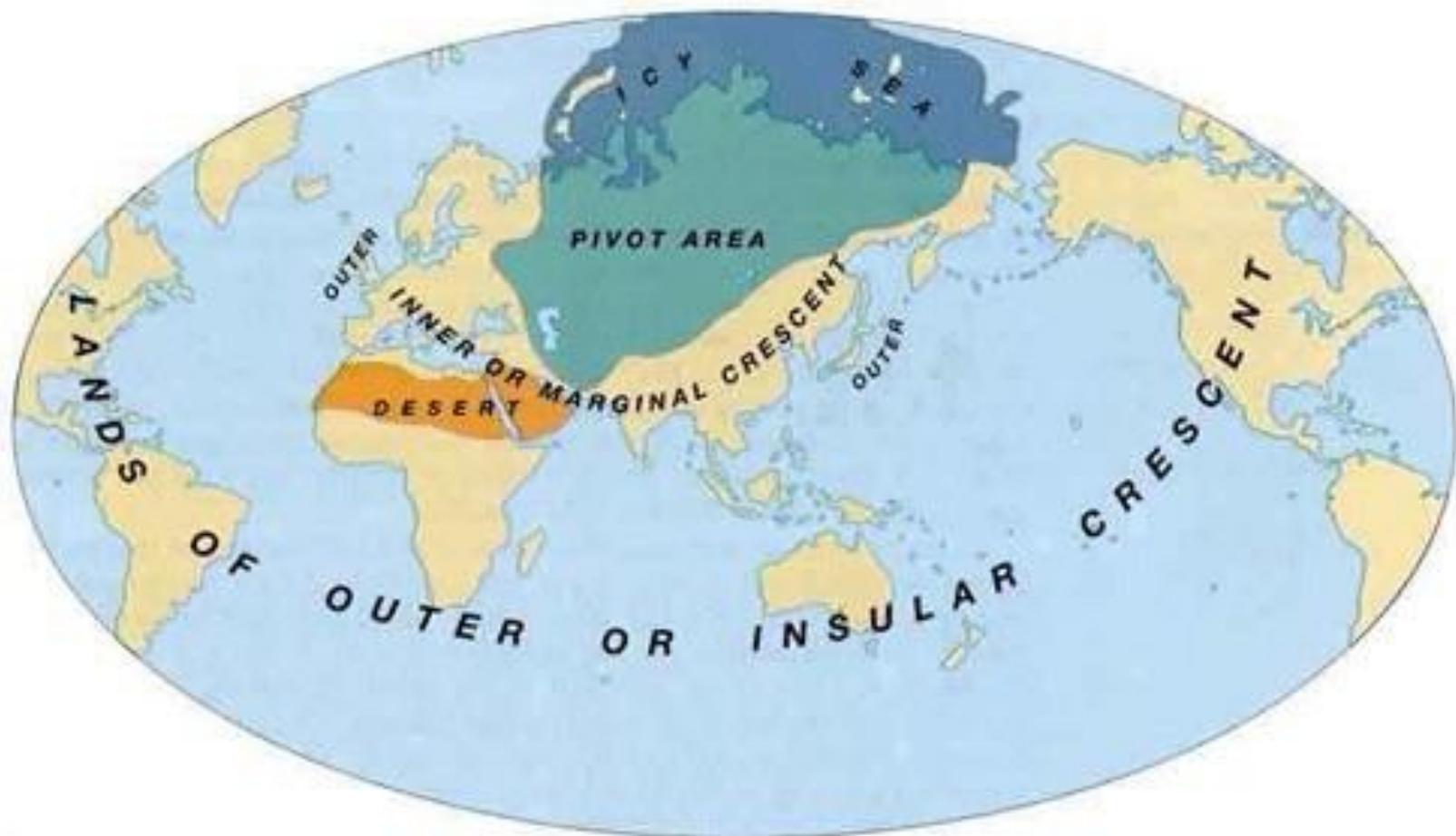
# Karl Ernst Haushofer (1869-1946)
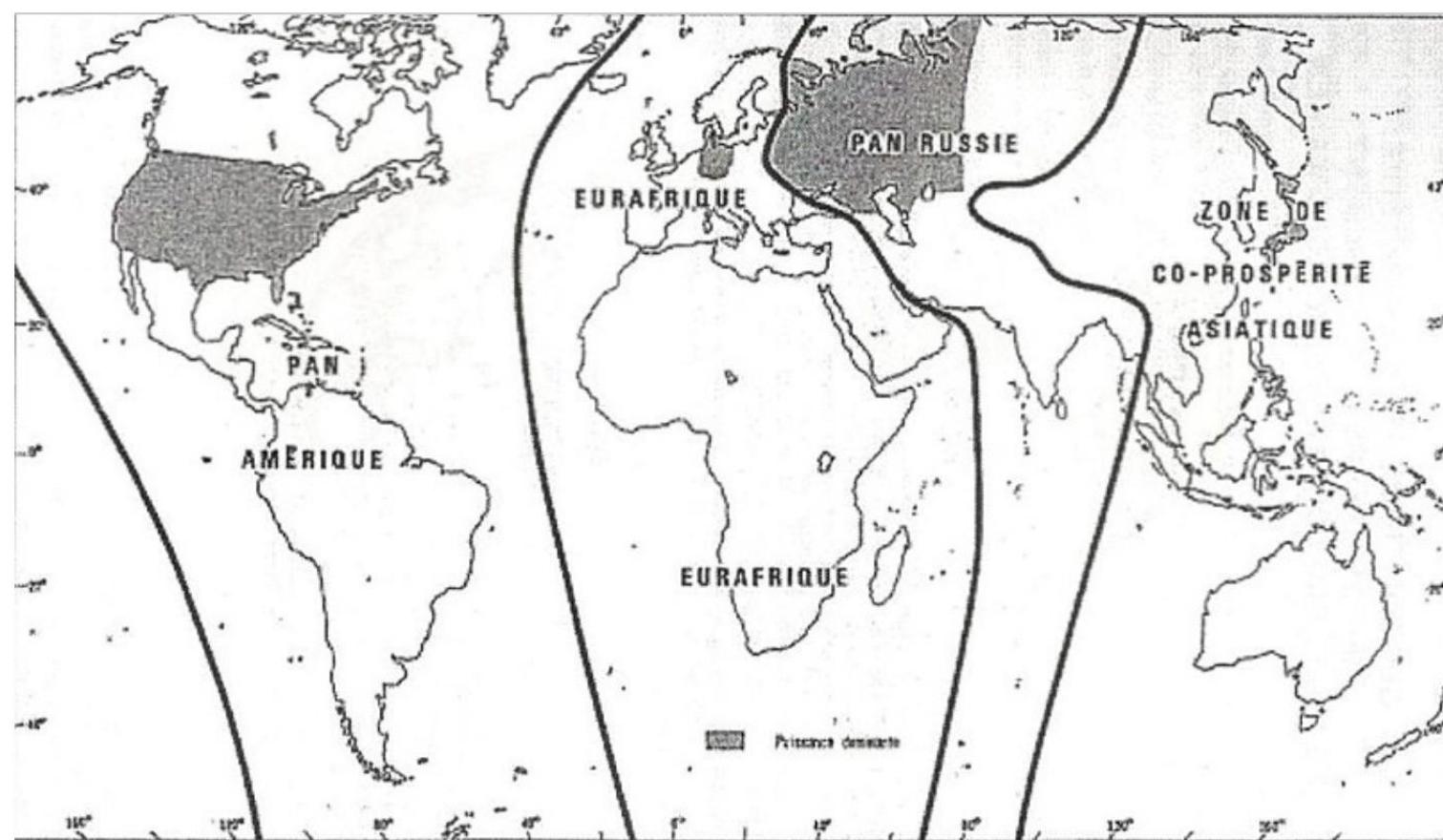
# Nicholas John Spykman (1893-1943)

# Spykman's Theory
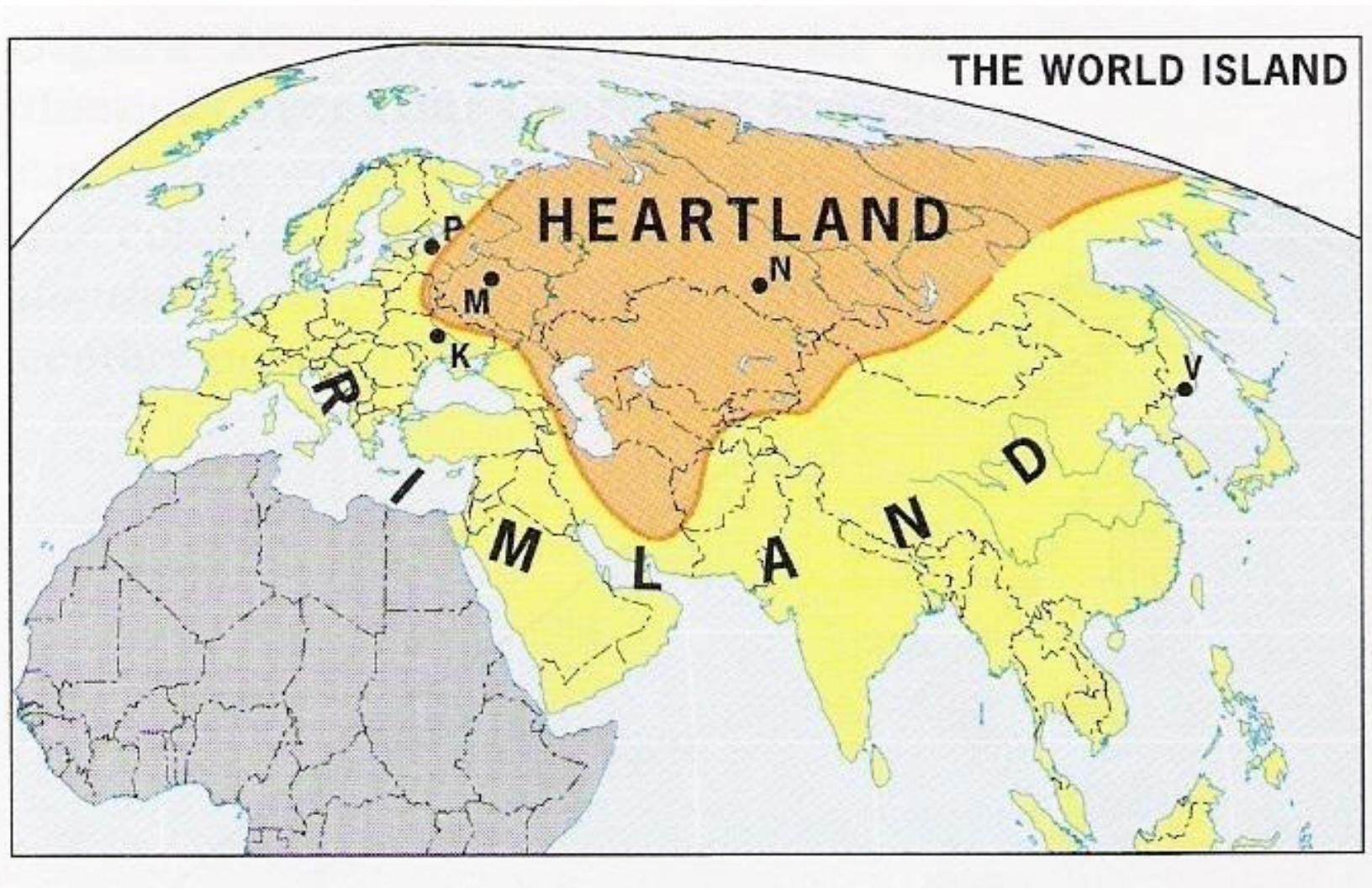
# George Frost Kennan (1904-2005)

# Containment Strategy
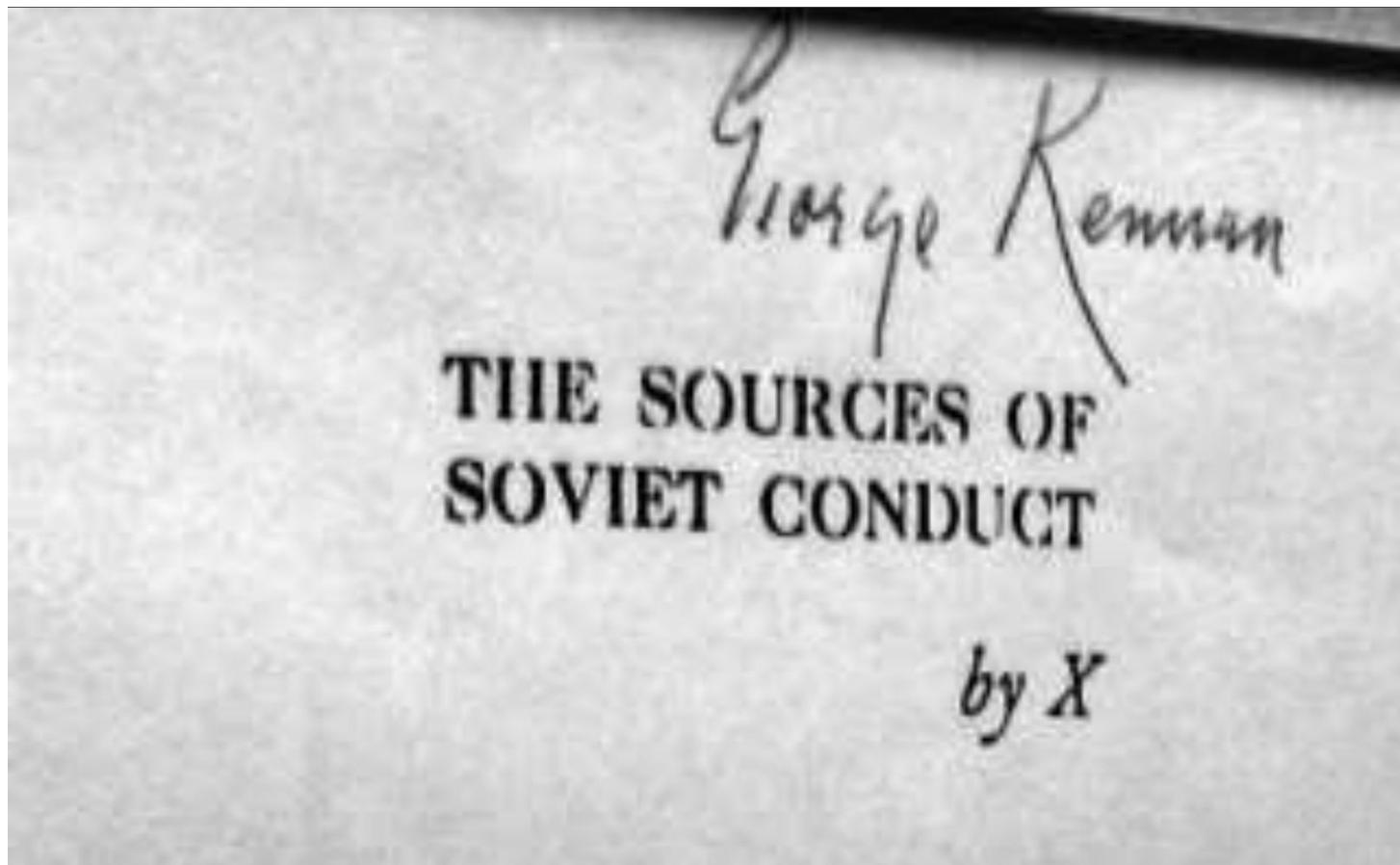
# Henry Alfred Kissinger (1923-)

# Ping-Pong Diplomacy
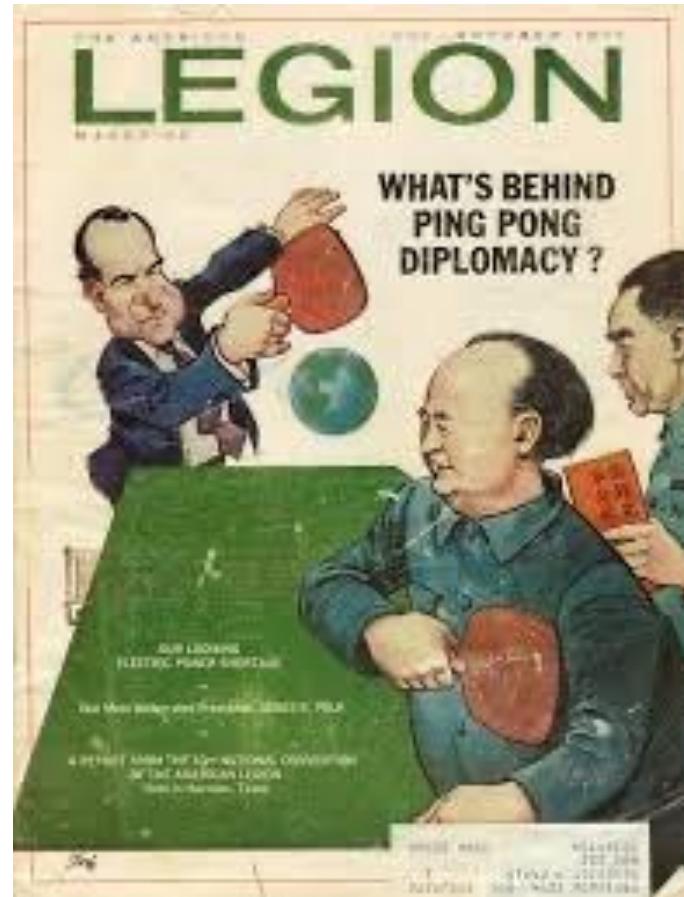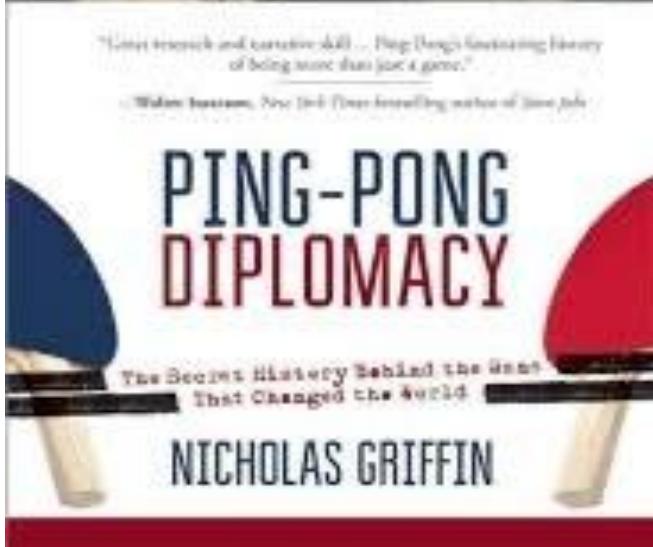
# Samuel Phillips Huntington (1927-2008)

# SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON

# THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

## and the Remaking of World Order

+++++
WITH A NEW
FOREWORD BY
ZBIGNIEW
BRZEZINSKI
+++++

Western
Orthodox
Islamic
Buddhist
Hindu
African
Latin American
Sinic
Japanese

# Graham Tillett Allison Jr. (1940-)

DESTINED FOR WAR

CAN AMERICA AND CHINA ESCAPE THUCYDIDES' TRAP?

FOREWORD BY ANDREW HASTIE

GRAHAM ALLISON

'Graham Allison is one of the keenest observers of international affairs around.' JOE BIDEN
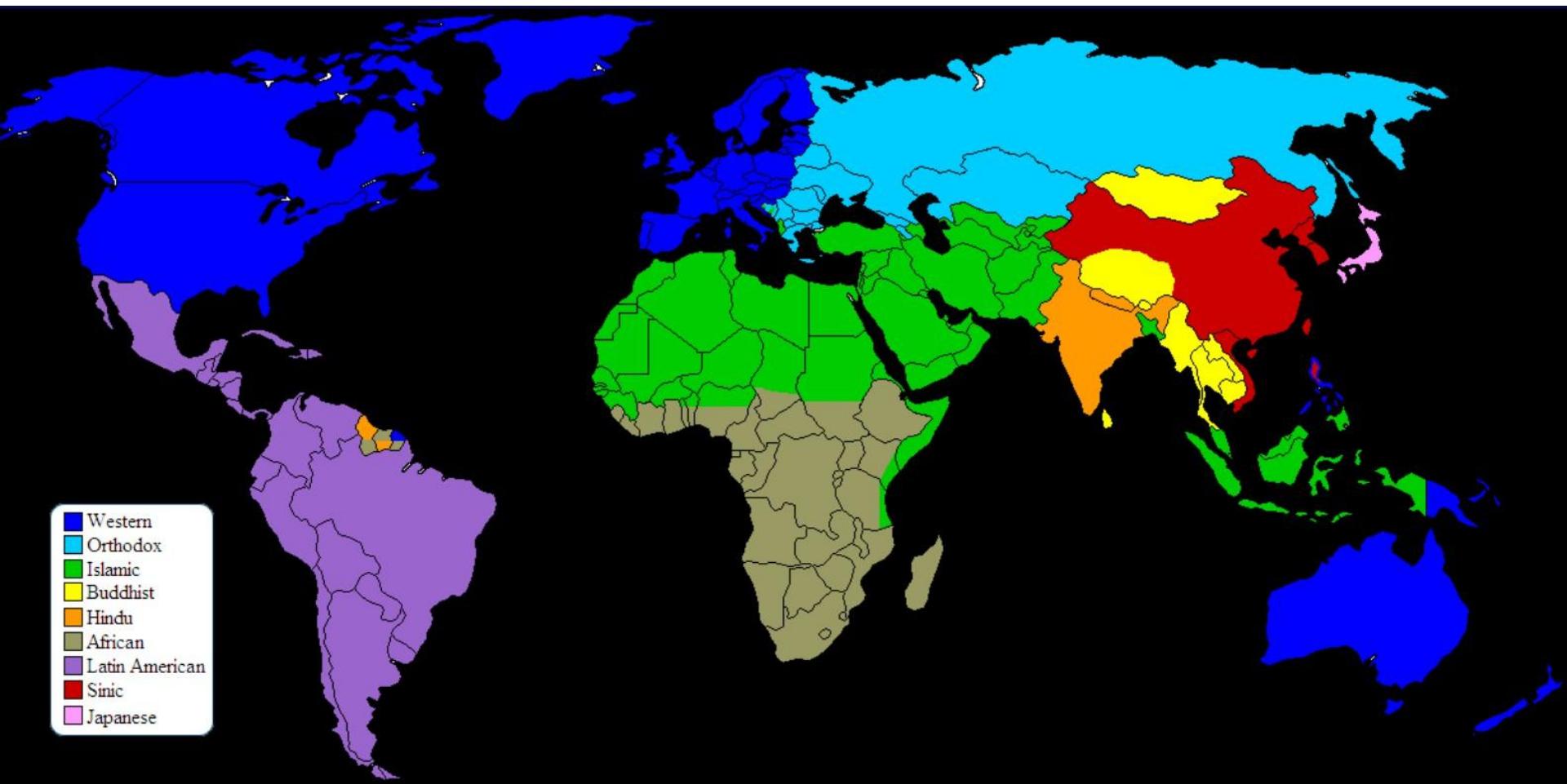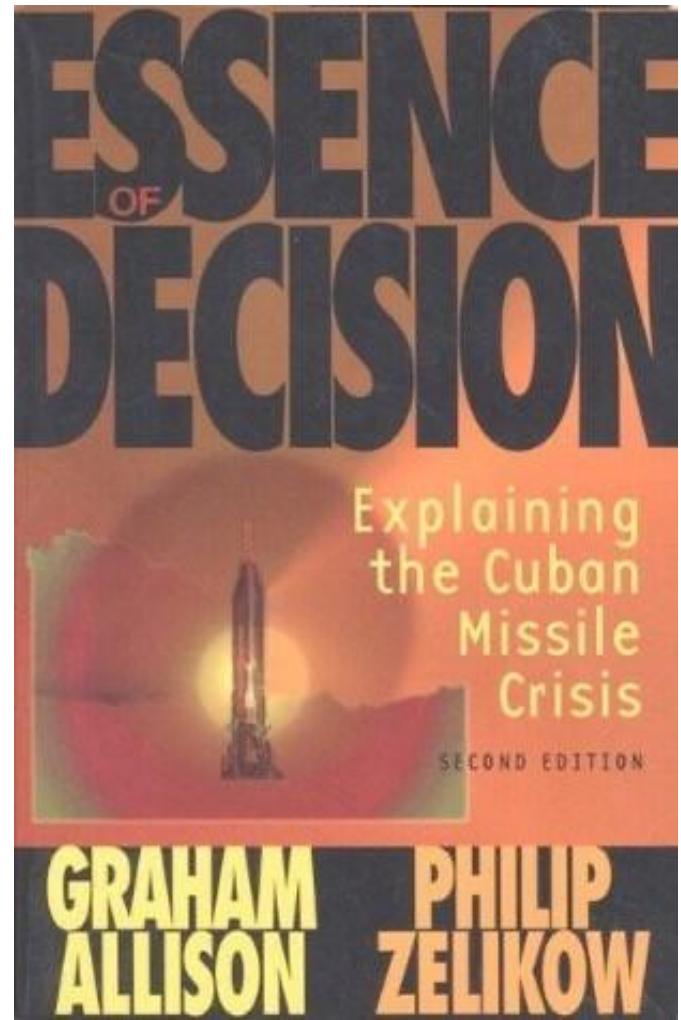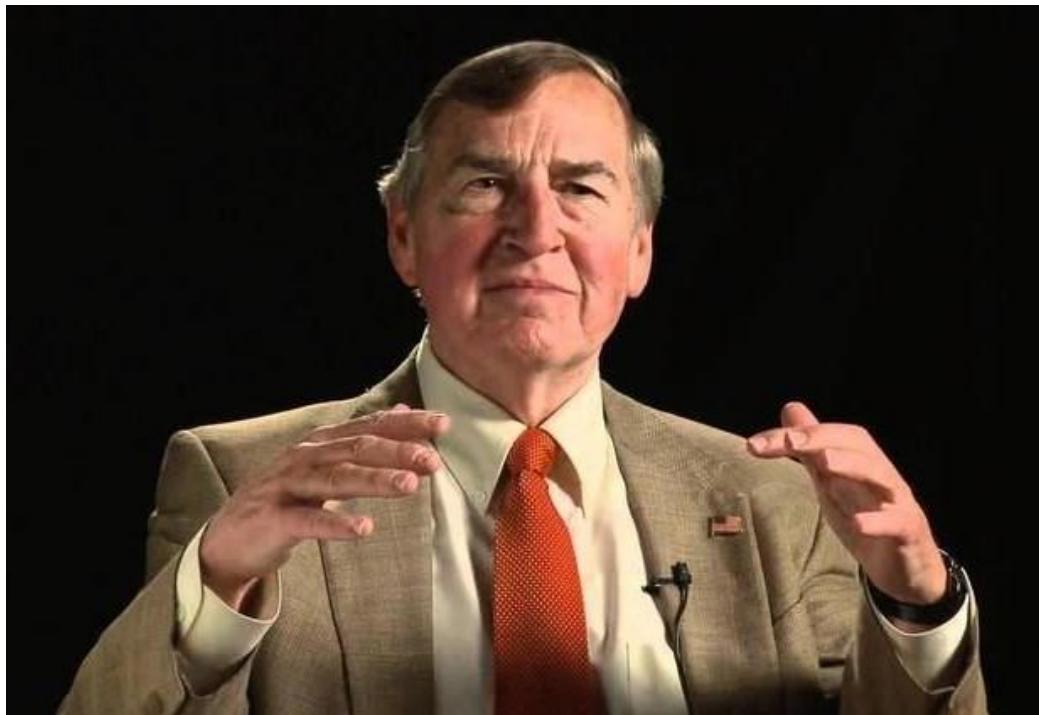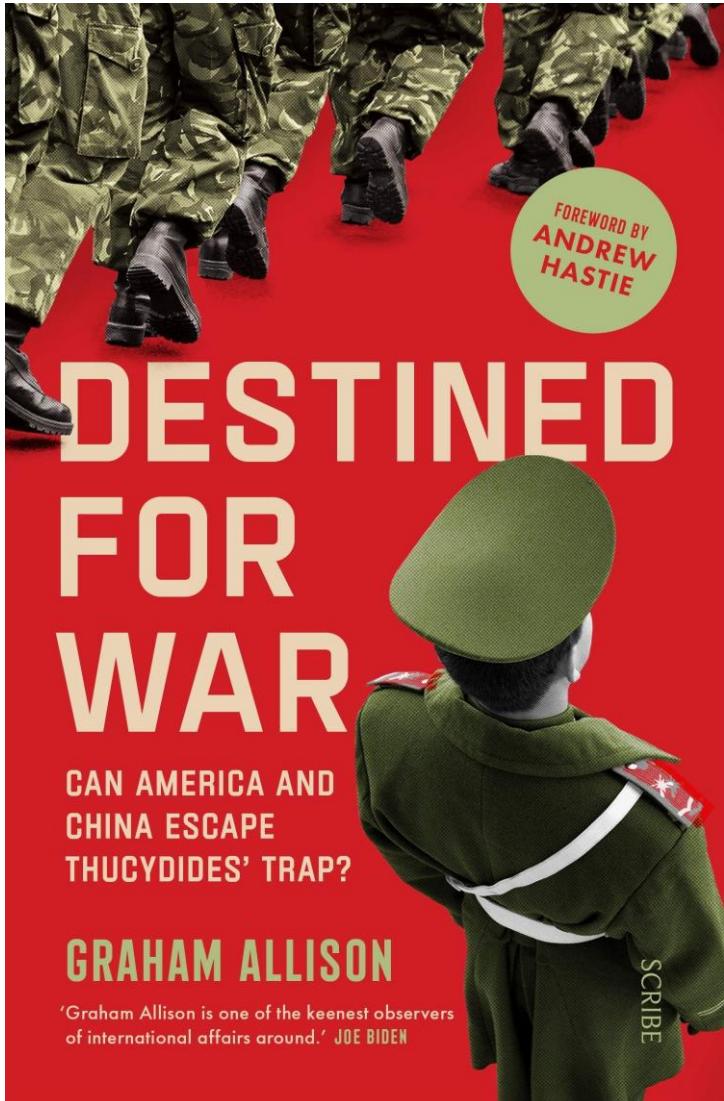
| № | Period | Ruling Power | Rising Power | Domain | Result |
|---|--------|--------------|--------------|--------|--------|
| 1 | Late 15th century | Portugal | Spain | Global empire and trade | No war |
| 2 | First half of 16th century | France | Hapsburgs | Land power in western Europe | War |
| 3 | 16th and 17th centuries | Hapsburgs | Ottoman Empire | Land power in central and eastern Europe, sea power in the Mediterranean | War |
| 4 | First half of 17th century | Hapsburgs | Sweden | Land and sea power in northern Europe | War |
| 5 | Mid-to-late 17th century | Dutch Republic | England | Global empire, sea power, and trade | War |
| 6 | Late 17th to mid-18th centuries | France | Great Britain | Global empire and European land power | War |
| 7 | Late 18th and early 19th centuries | United Kingdom | France | Land and sea power in Europe | War |
| 8 | Mid-19th century | France and United Kingdom | Russia | Global empire, influence in Central Asia and eastern Mediterranean | War |
| 9 | Mid-19th century | France | Germany | Land power in Europe | War |
| 10 | Late 19th and early 20th centuries | China and Russia | Japan | Land and sea power in East Asia | War |
| 11 | Early-20th century | United Kingdom | United States | Global economic dominance and naval supremacy in the Western Hemisphere | No war |
| 12 | Early-20th century | United Kingdom supported by France, Russia | Germany | Land power in Europe and global sea power | War |
| 13 | Mid-20th century | Soviet Union, France, UK | Germany | Land and sea power in Europe | War |
| 14 | Mid-20th century | United States | Japan | Sea power and influence in the Asia-Pacific region | War |
| 15 | 1940s–1980s | United States | Soviet Union | Global power | No war |
| 16 | 1990s–present | United Kingdom and France | Germany | Political influence in Europe | No war |

# Geopolitical Concepts

- **Autarky:** A state's ambition for attaining enough resources, protection, and autonomy to enable self-sufficiency. This is illustrated in pan-regional designs, longitudinal lines separating the earth into three or four distinct autonomous geographic zones, sometimes depicted as Oceania, Eurasia, and East Asia.

    *> Haushofer*

- **Buffer States:** Smaller and weaker countries positioned between/among larger neighbors such that direct contact, and thus possible warfare among the larger adjacent states, are likely avoided.

- **Checkerboards:** A leapfrog configuration of states within a region whereby neighboring states appear as enemies but neighbors of neighbors farther out figure as allies.

    *> Kautilya*

# Geopolitical Concepts

- **Choke Points:** Pivotal land and sea corridors show as choke points, these being straits, passages, canals, channels, and river estuaries whose positions exert impact over an extended distance beyond their immediate locations.

    *> Mahan*

- **Containment Policy:** The source for this strategy originated in George Kennan's warning of likely Soviet expansion over Eurasia and onto its rimlands, this threat adhering to Mackinder's heartland thesis.

    *> Kennan*

# Geopolitical Concepts

- **Distance-Weakens Argument:** The claim that closer lines of communication will lend certain advantages of nearness – lower costs of transport and travel, cooperative security interests, assembling of influence spheres and key nations, and accomplishment of regional integration.

- **Falling-Dominoes Thesis:** The more popular and notorious depiction of this thesis attaches to the spread of communism, one state succumbing to socialism and this "disease" or "flood" then advancing onto neighboring states being tainted similarly, such countries "falling [like] dominoes".

# Geopolitical Concepts

- **Rimlands:** Periphery lands of the Eurasian margin astride Mackinder's heartland that would include Western and Southern Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast and East Asia.

  > *Spykman*

- **Sea Lanes of Communication:** Transport paths vital to countries dependent upon international trade and upon resources they require but must import.

  > *Mahan*

- **Sea Power-Land Power:** Countries exhibiting either a maritime or a continental emphasis in their geopolitical projections. A maritime nation would reflect a coastal position with good harbors and an oceanic projection. Landward nations normally lack a sea orientation being placed internally within continental cores.

  > *Mackinder*

# Geopolitical Concepts

- **Shatterbelt:** A region showing two levels of conflict: (1) a strategic rivalry between outside Great Nations; and (2) a local conflict among countries of that region. A shatterbelt arises when strategic competitors and the regional competitors form opposing alliances within the area. A threat of conflict escalation is common to these configurations.

- **Spheres of Influence:** Regions under domination by an outside adjacent or nearby Great Power, examples being Middle America by the United States and Eastern Europe by Russia during the Cold War. A shatterbelt structure would replace these influence spheres in that a rival outside competitor would intrude into the area.

THE WORLD'S OCEANS AND SEAS

*Arctic Ocean*

*Arctic Ocean*

*Greenland Sea*

RUSSIA

*Bering Sea*

*Sea of Okhotsk*

CANADA

*Norwegian Sea*

UNITED KINGDOM

*North Sea*

*Bosporus*
*Dardanelles*

FRANCE

*Sea of Japan*
JAPAN

CHINA

*North Pacific Ocean*

UNITED STATES

*North Atlantic Ocean*

SPAIN
ITALY

**Strait of Gibraltar**
*Mediterranean Sea*

TURKEY
IRAN
**Suez Canal**  **Strait of Hormuz**

**Taiwan Strait**

TAIWAN

*Gulf of Mexico*
MEXICO

INDIA

*Arabian Sea*

*Bay of Bengal*

**Luzon Strait**

PHILIPPINES

*South China Sea*

*Philippine Sea*

*Hawaiian Islands*

*Caribbean Sea*

**Panama Canal**

*Equator*

*Equator*

**Strait of Malacca**

I N D O N E S I A

**Sunda Strait**

*Coral Sea*

*Indian Ocean*

AUSTRALIA

*South Pacific Ocean*

PERU

BRAZIL

CHILE

*South Atlantic Ocean*

SOUTH AFRICA

**Cape of Good Hope**

ARGENTINA

○ Choke point

━━ Shipping lanes

| 0 Miles | 1000 | 2000 | 3000 |
|---|---|---|---|

0 Kilometers    3000

Scale at Equator

*Southern Ocean*

*Southern Ocean*

A N T A R C T I C A

A N T A R C T I C A

© 2017 Jeffrey L. Ward

MAP 2 Major chokepoints

Chokepoints are, by definition, the easiest places to disrupt maritime traffic. When such chokepoints are blocked, vessels must take time-consuming alternate routes -- assuming an alternate route is even available.

Satellite image from CNES 2021 on Thursday shows Ever Given stuck in Suez Canal. (CNES image)



| The Evergreen container ship, stuck and blocking the Suez Canal.

# Figure 11. Daily transit volumes through world maritime oil chokepoints
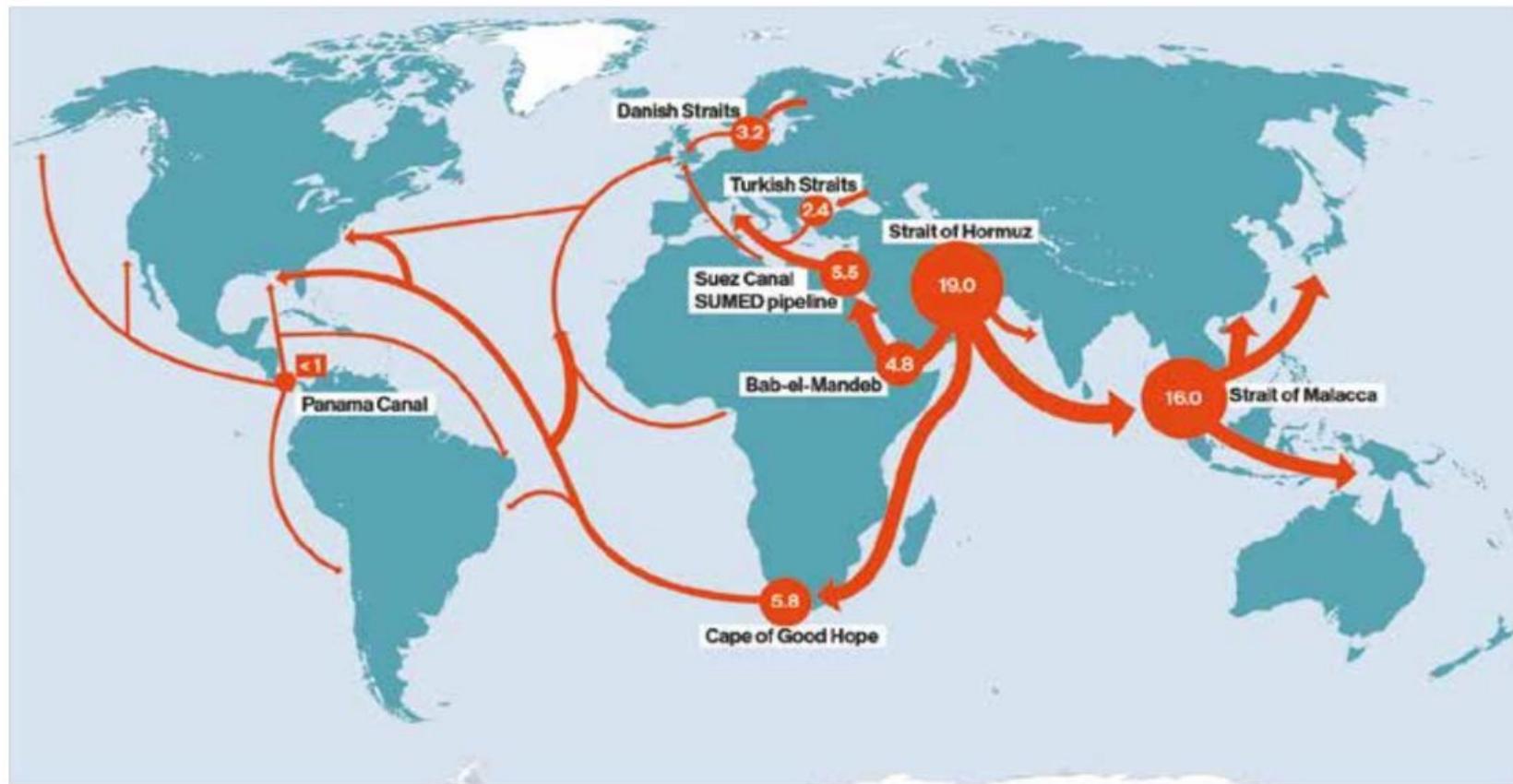


Note: All estimates in million barrels per day. Includes crude oil and petroleum liquids.
Based on 2016 data.

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration.

US

CANADA

*North Pole*

GREENLAND

RUSSIA

Yokohama

**Northern route**
approximately
8,500 miles (about
40% shorter)

Rotterdam

**Suez canal-route**
approximately
13,000 miles

CHINA

INDIA

11. The consequences of melting Arctic ice for shipping.

*Cartoon 1* Hands off!
This British postcard dates from the beginning of the century and features the British lion rebuking the threatening advance of the German eagle towards the globe.
Source: Courtesy of Dr Peter Taylor's private collection

"GERMANY SHALL NEVER BE ENCIRCLED."

# Facebook's Path to Domination 2020

## Mapping Each Country's Most Popular Social Network

(according to Alexa & SimilarWeb traffic data)

China's most popular social networking website is Qzone with 517 million MAUs, but all-in-one messaging social app WeChat had more than 1.2 billion MAUs

- Facebook
- Odnoklassniki
- Vkontakte
- Qzone
- Other

**2020**

Facebook had more than 2.7 billion monthly active users (MAUs) in October 2020

Source: Vincos.it, Alexa, SimilarWeb

Two boys pass members of a Taliban Red Unit, an elite force, in the Alingar district in March.  Jim Huylebroek for The New York Times

# FRAGILE STATES INDEX FFP

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**THE FUND FOR PEACE**

# THE WORLD IN 2021

| | |
|---|---|
| SUSTAINABLE | 10 |
| | 20 |
| | 30 |
| STABLE | 40 |
| | 50 |
| | 60 |
| WARNING | 70 |
| | 80 |
| | 90 |
| ALERT | 100 |
| | 110 |
| | 120 |



## COUNTRY ABBREVIATIONS

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AE | U.A.E. | DJ | Djibouti | LV | Latvia | |
| AL | Albania | DK | Denmark | LX | Luxembourg | |
| AM | Armenia | EE | Estonia | MD | Moldova | |
| AT | Austria | ER | Eritrea | ME | Montenegro | |
| AZ | Azerbaijan | GE | Georgia | MK | North Macedonia | |
| BA | Bosnia & Herz. | GQ | Eq. Guinea | MW | Malawi | |
| BD | Bangladesh | GR | Greece | NL | Netherlands | |
| BE | Belgium | HU | Hungary | PS | Palestine | |
| BF | Burkina Faso | HV | Croatia | QA | Qatar | |
| BG | Bulgaria | IL | Israel | RS | Serbia | |
| BH | Bahrain | JO | Jordan | RW | Rwanda | |
| BI | Burundi | KG | Kyrgyz Republic | SG | Singapore | |
| BT | Bhutan | KH | Cambodia | SI | Slovenia | |
| CG | Congo (Rep.) | KW | Kuwait | SK | Slovakia | |
| CH | Switzerland | LA | Laos | TJ | Tajikistan | |
| CY | Cyprus | LB | Lebanon | TN | Tunisia | |
| CZ | Czechia | LI | Lithuania | UG | Uganda | |