

# Theories of Geopolitics

Professor Athanasios G. Platias,

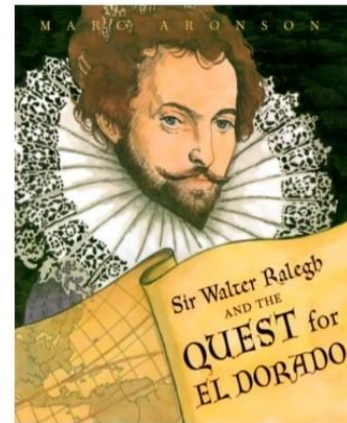
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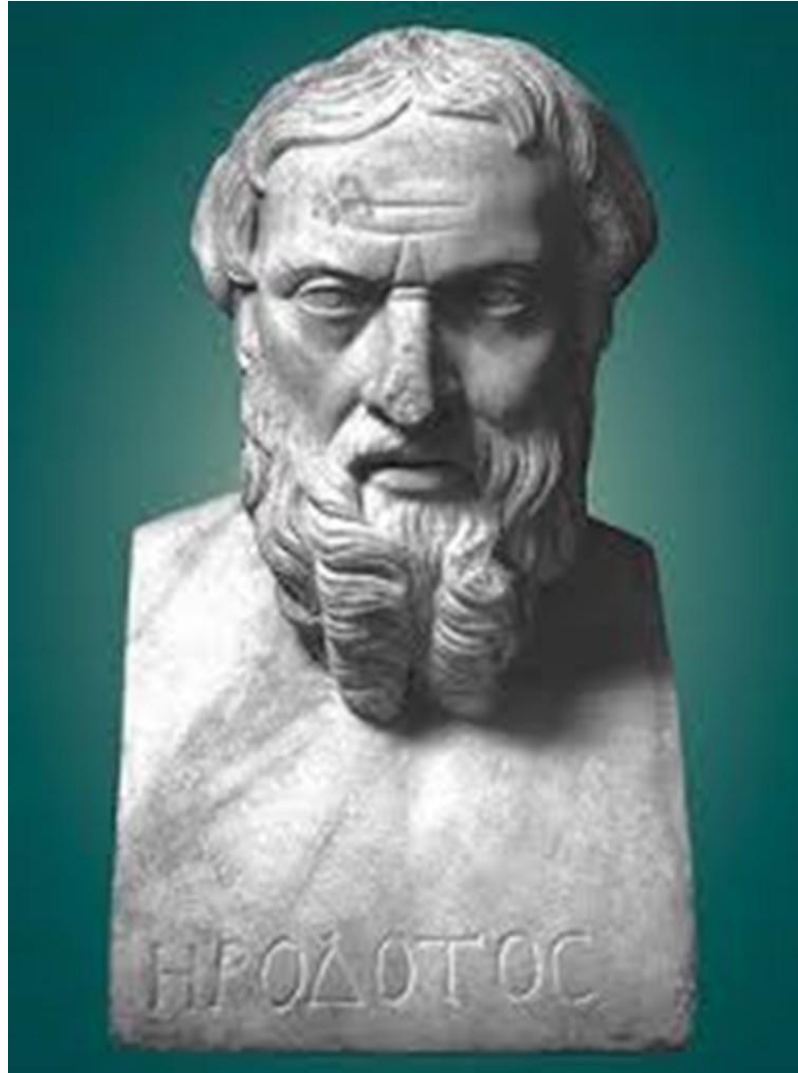
*“Whosoever commands the sea commands the trade; whoever commands trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself.” –Sir Walter Raleigh, 1616.*



# 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 Tillet Allison Jr. (1940-)

Herodotus (c. 484 – c. 425 B.C.)



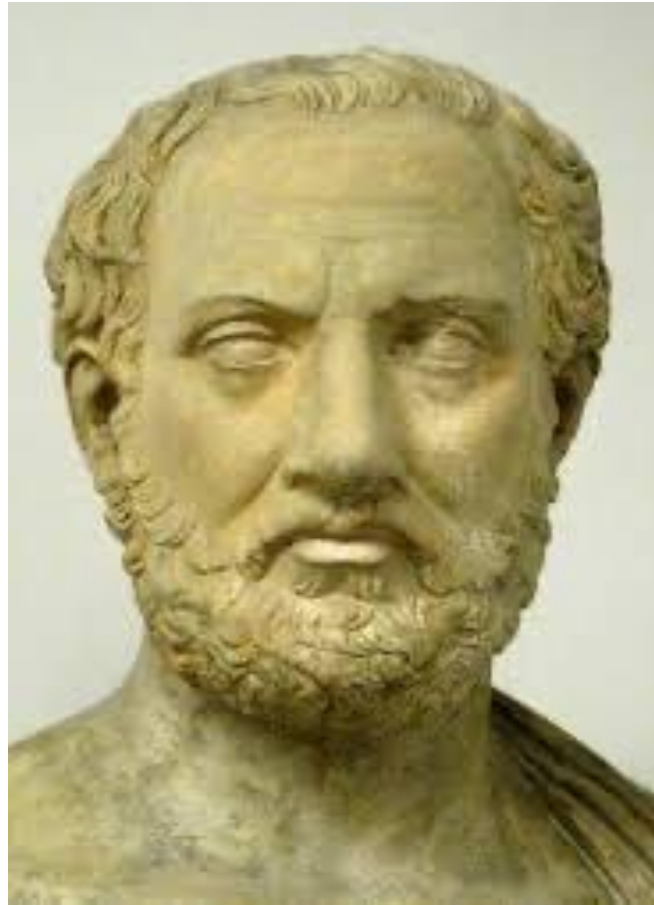


Herodotus (c.484 – c.425 B.C.)



*Herodotus (c.484 – c.425 B.C.)*

Thucydides (c. 460 – c. 400 B.C.)



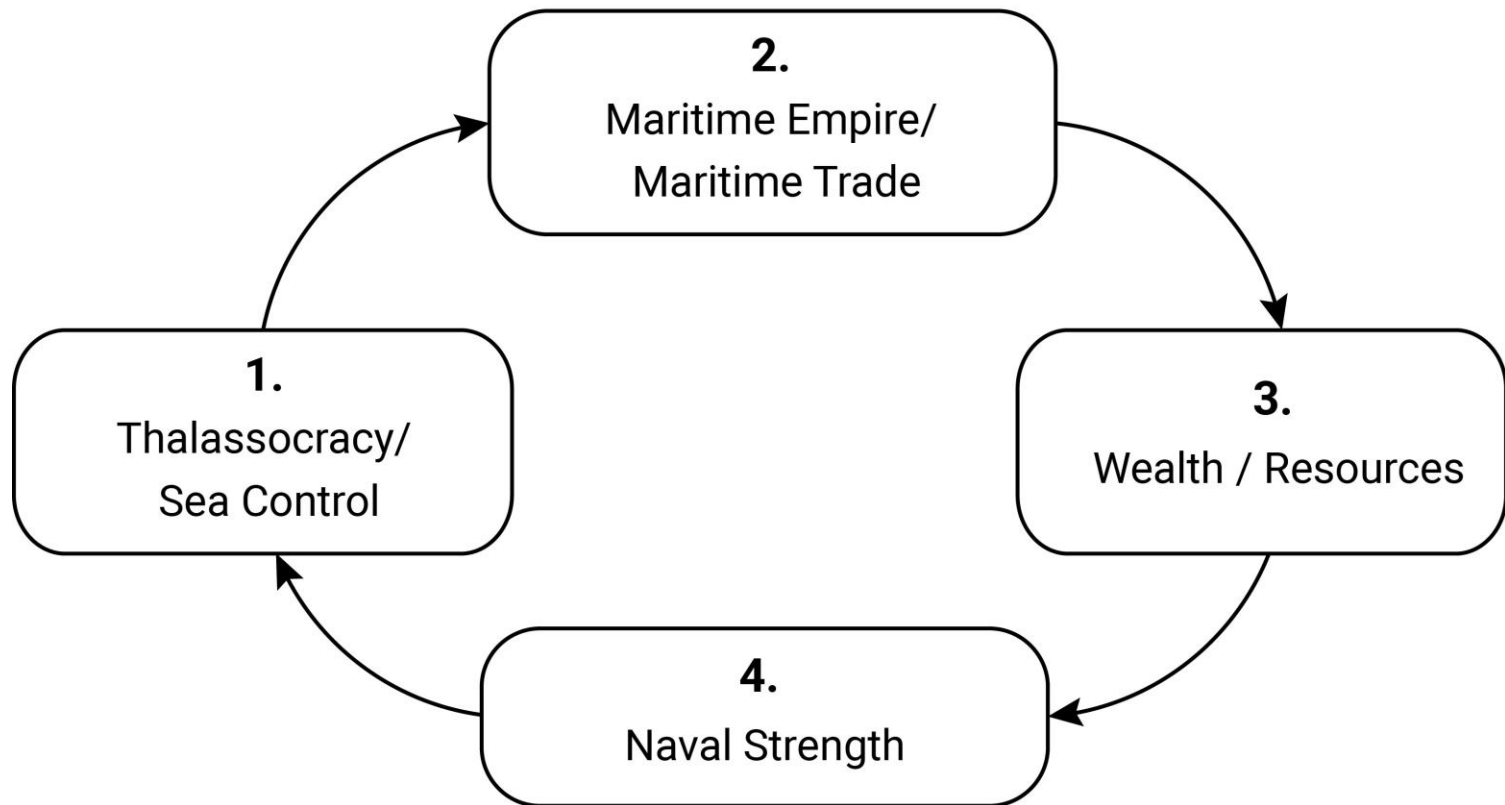
Pericles (c. 495 – c. 429 B.C.)



Themistocles (c. 524 – c. 459 B.C.)



# The Virtuous Maritime Circle invented by Themistocles



# Trireme



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

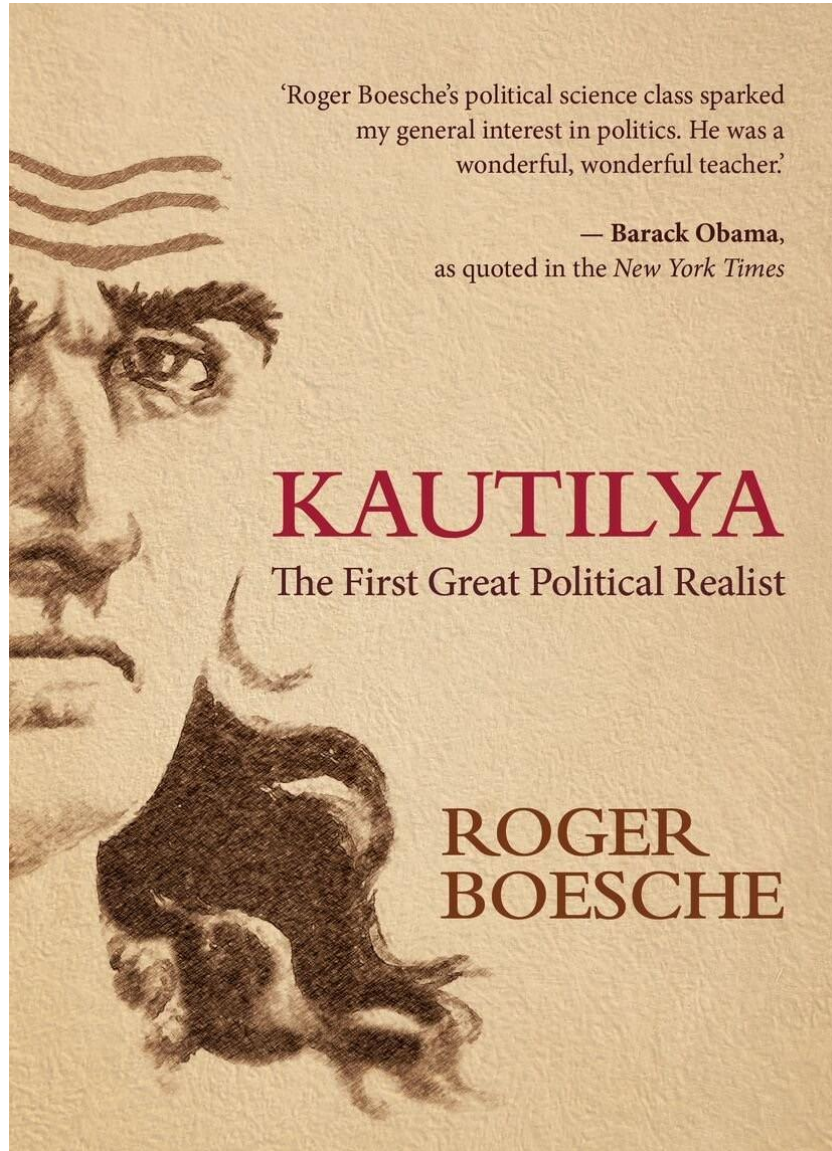
'Roger Boesche's political science class sparked my general interest in politics. He was a wonderful, wonderful teacher.'

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

## KAUTILYA

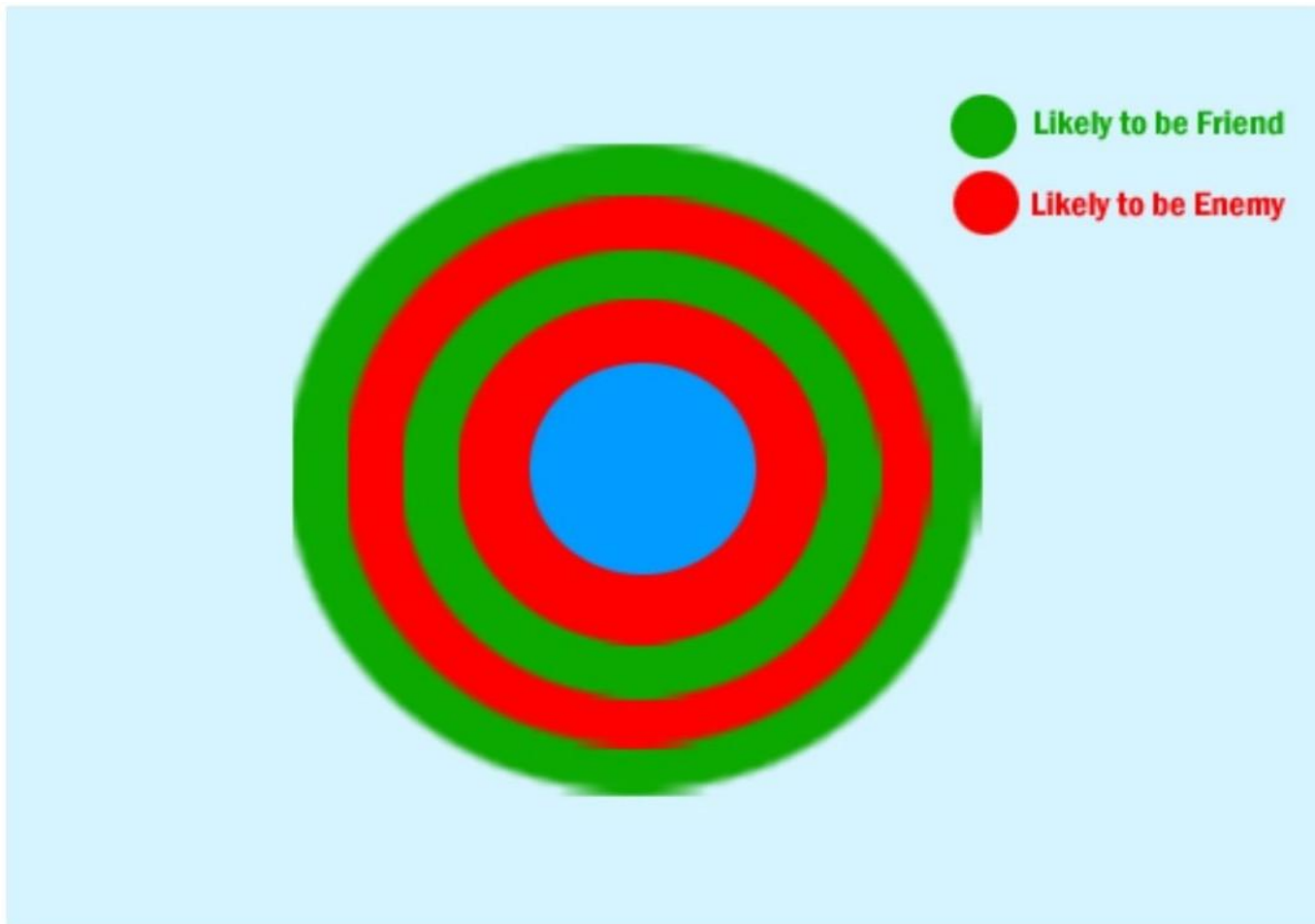
The First Great Political Realist

ROGER  
BOESCHE

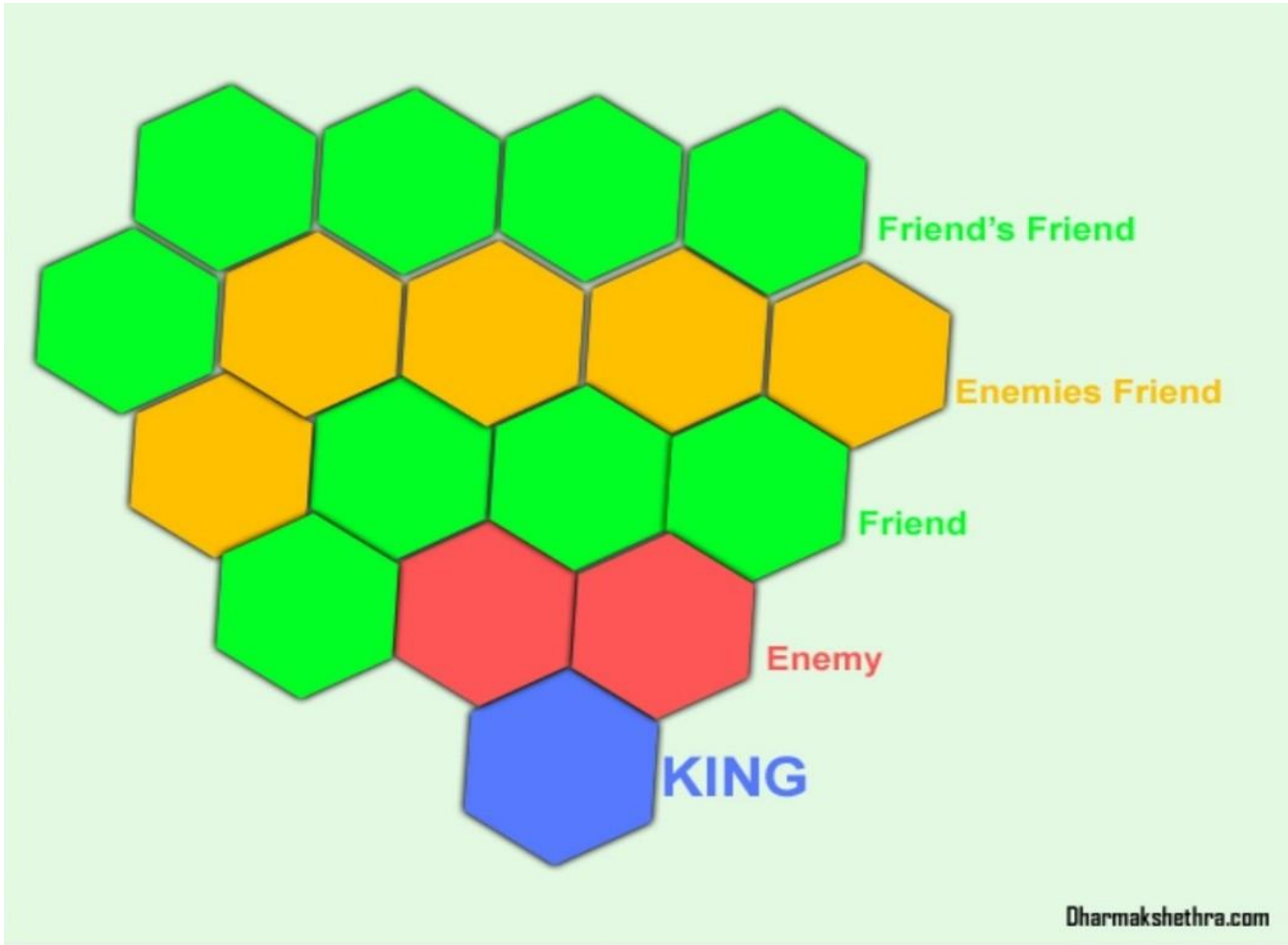


The enemy of the enemy is a friend (Kautilya)





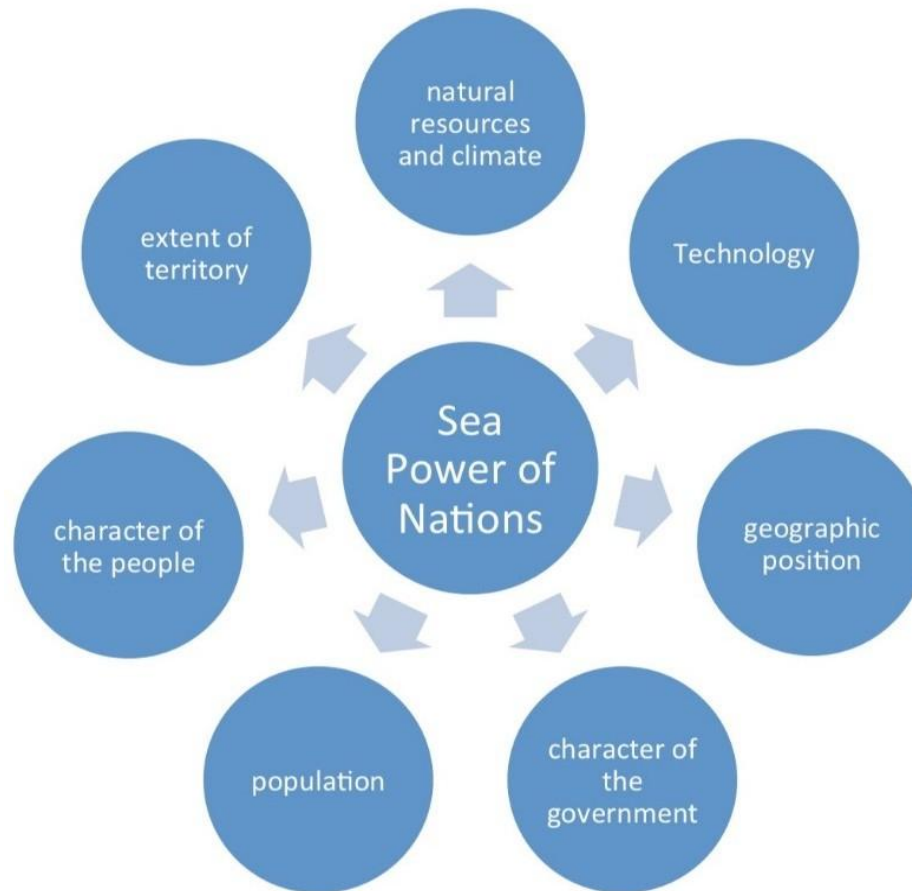
Kautilya proposes that the nations which are his neighbors and are also neighbors of his enemies are neutral and should always be treated with respect. **He believes that this circle is dynamic in nature and the King should work towards expanding his central position and employ means to reduce the power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



## 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 propoganda 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)

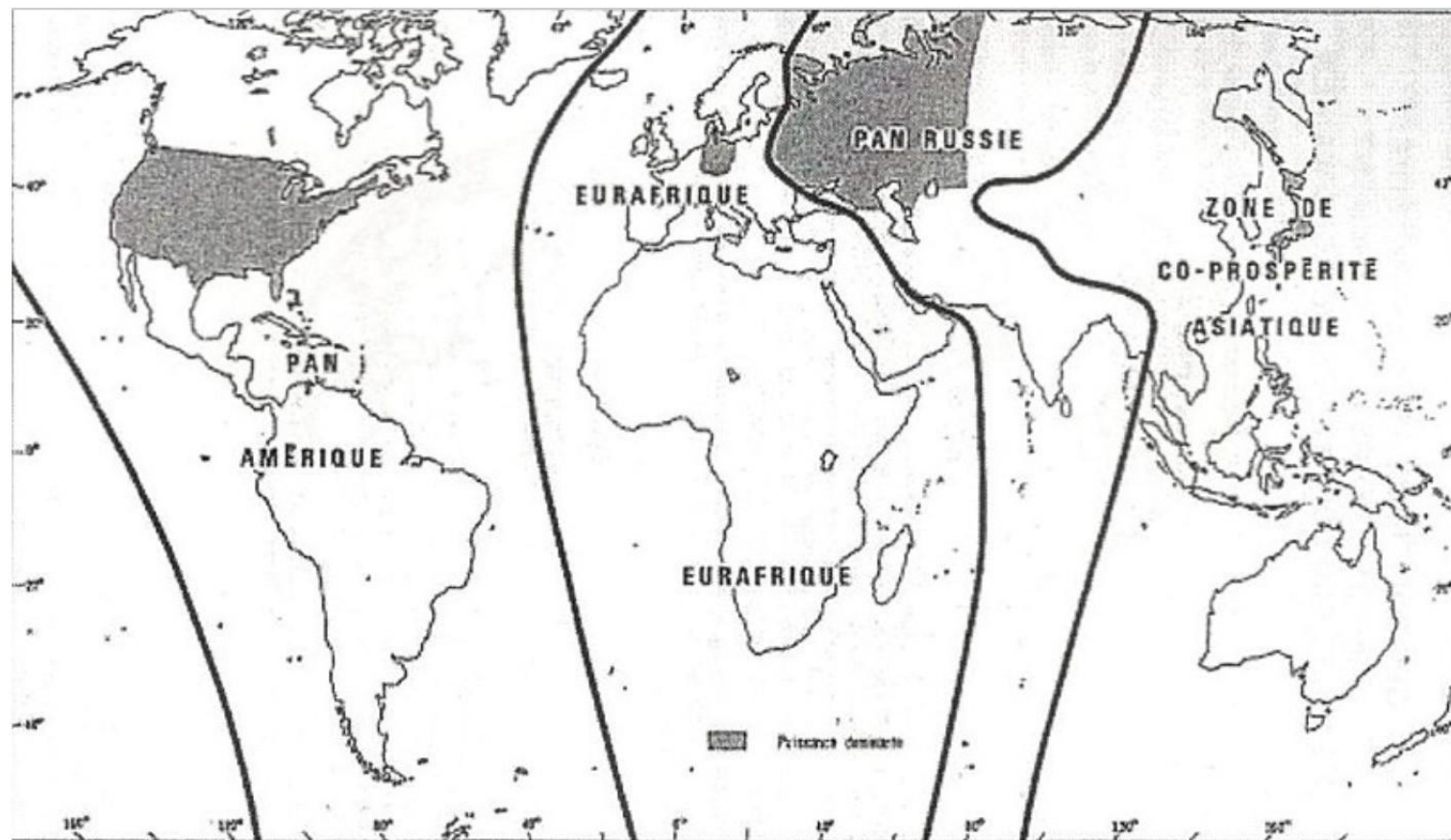


# Mackinder's World, 1904



## Karl Ernst Haushofer (1869-1946)





## Nicholas John Spykman (1893-1943)



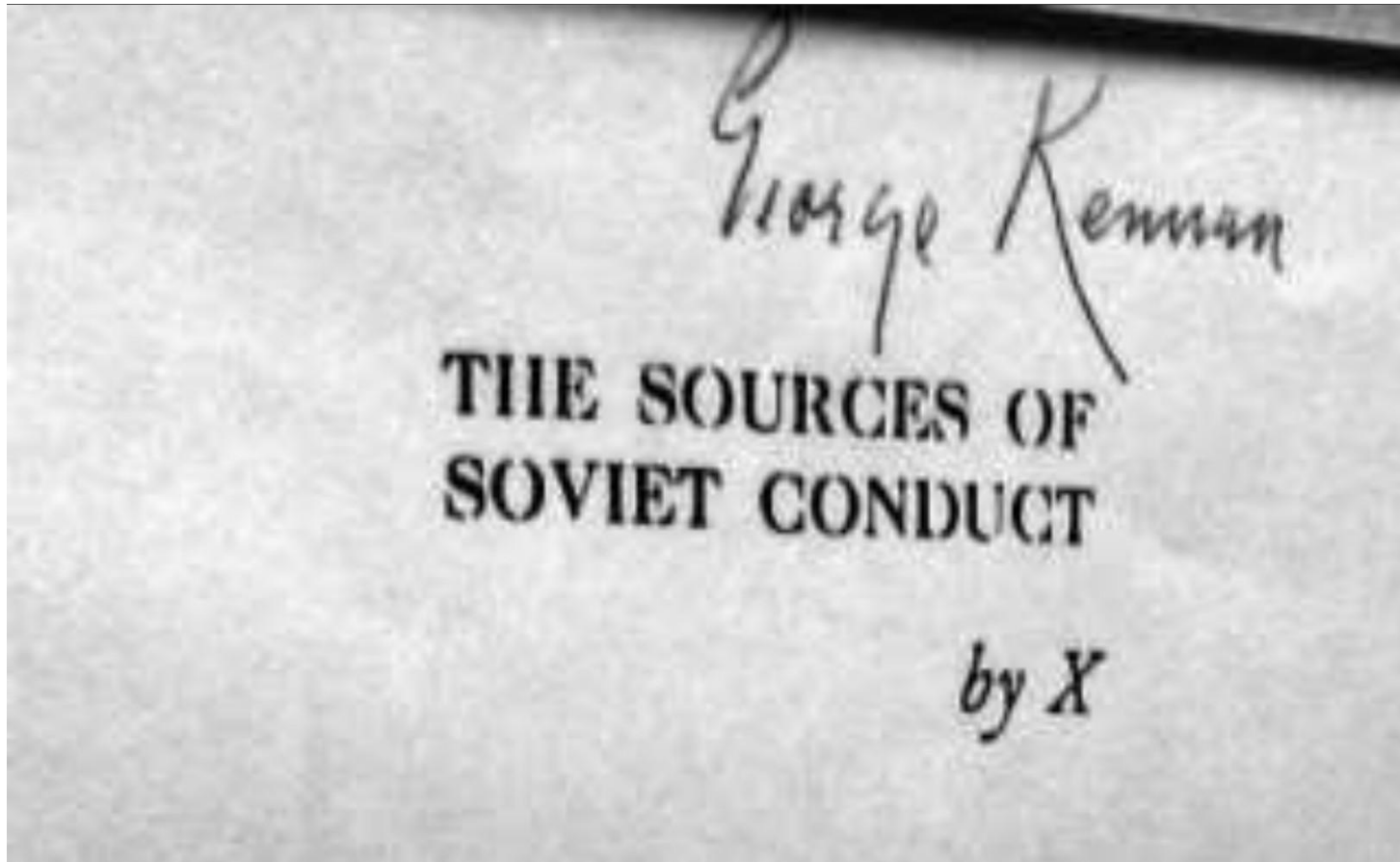
# Spykman's Theory



## George Frost Kennan (1904-2005)



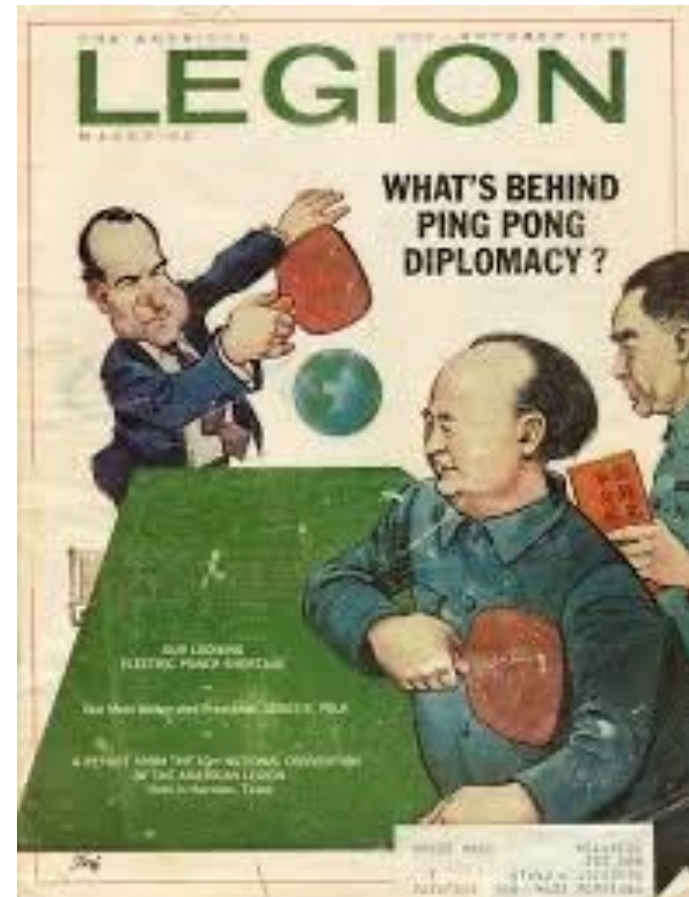
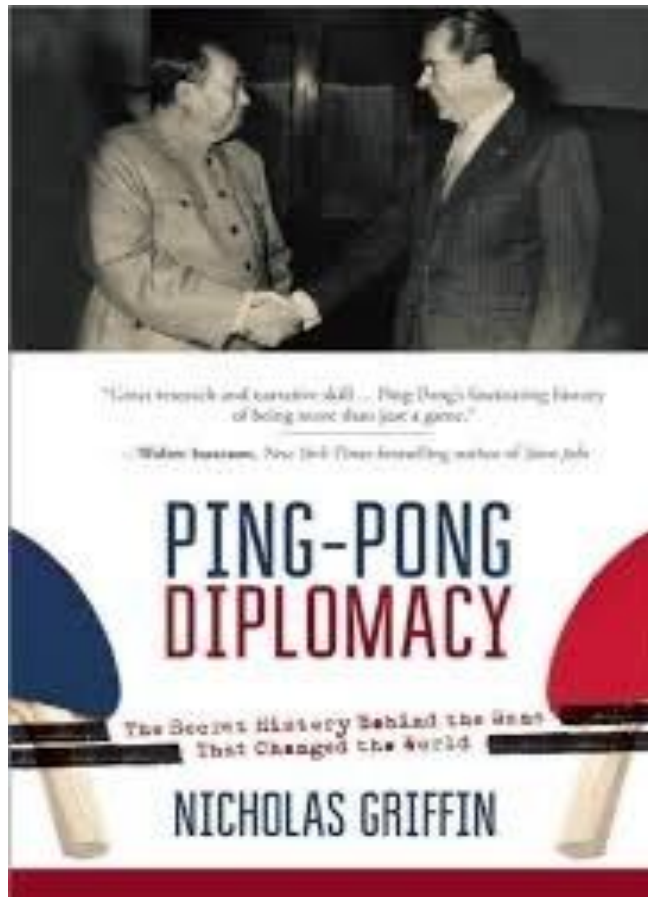
# Containment Strategy



## Henry Alfred Kissinger (1923-)



# Ping-Pong Diplomacy



## Samuel Phillips Huntington (1927-2008)



# SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON

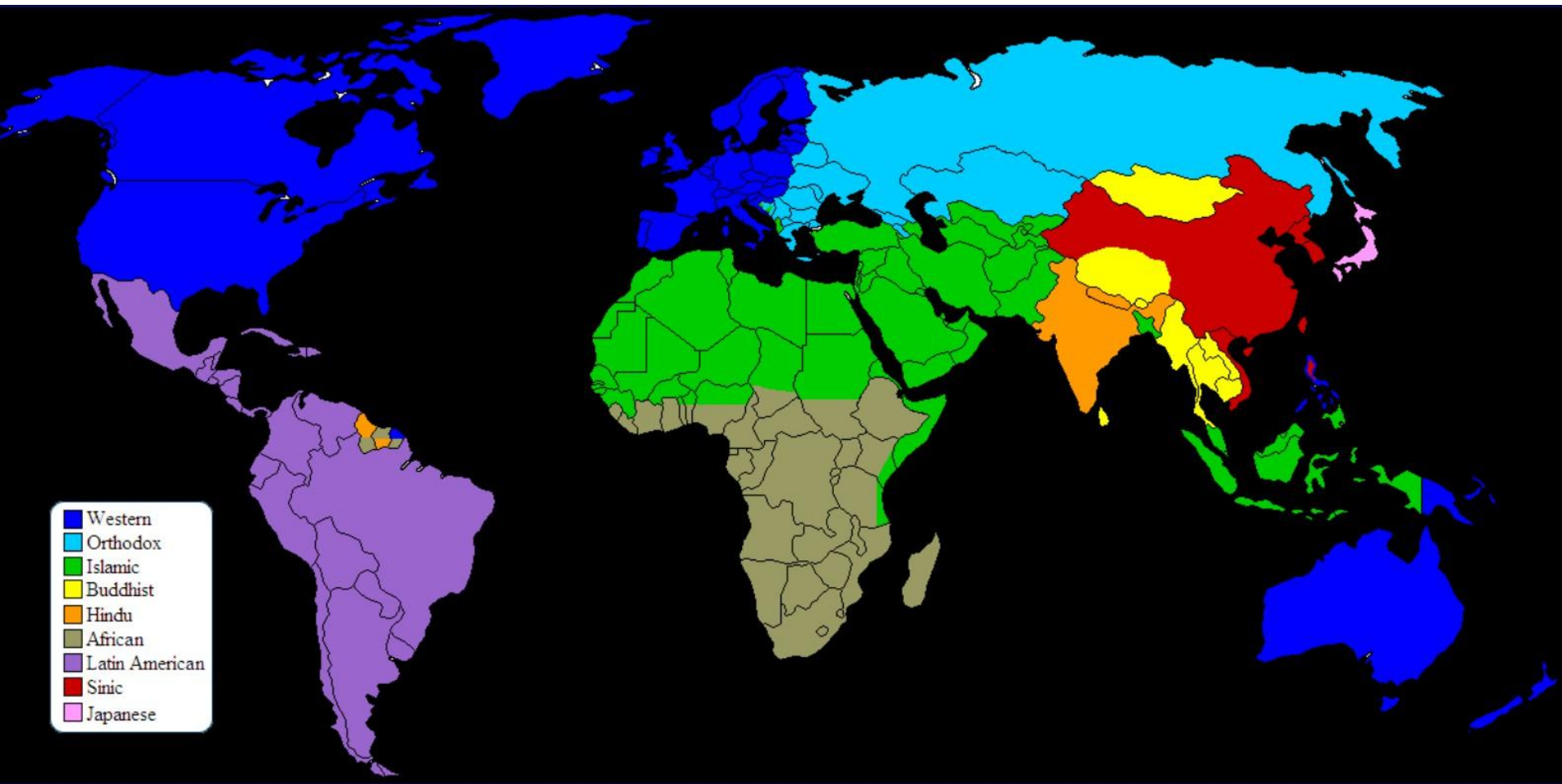
THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

## THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

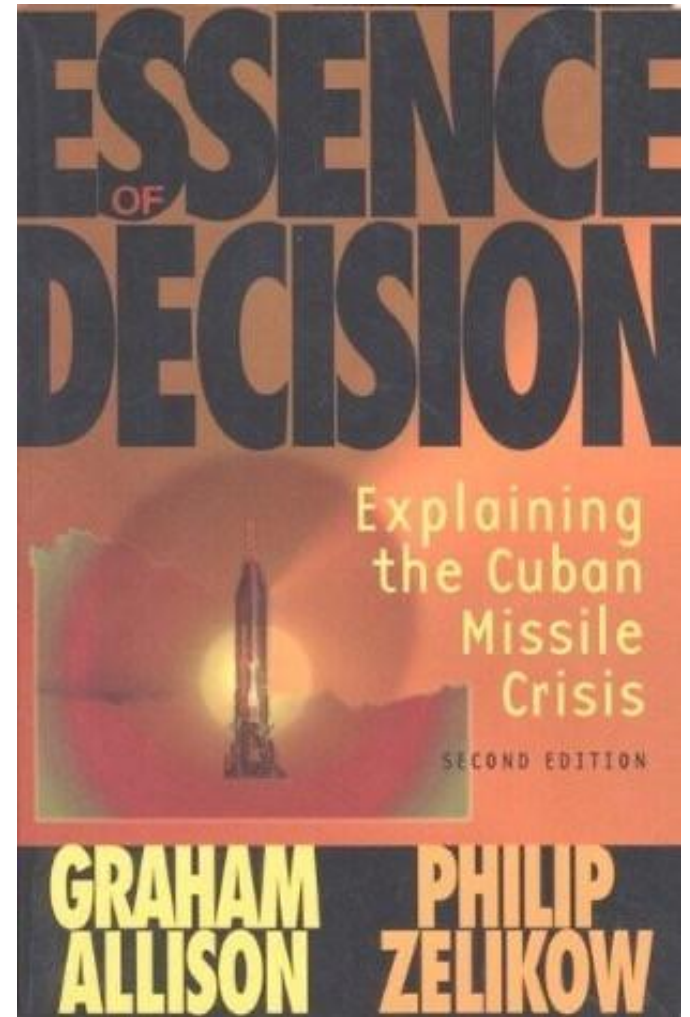
and the Remaking of World Order

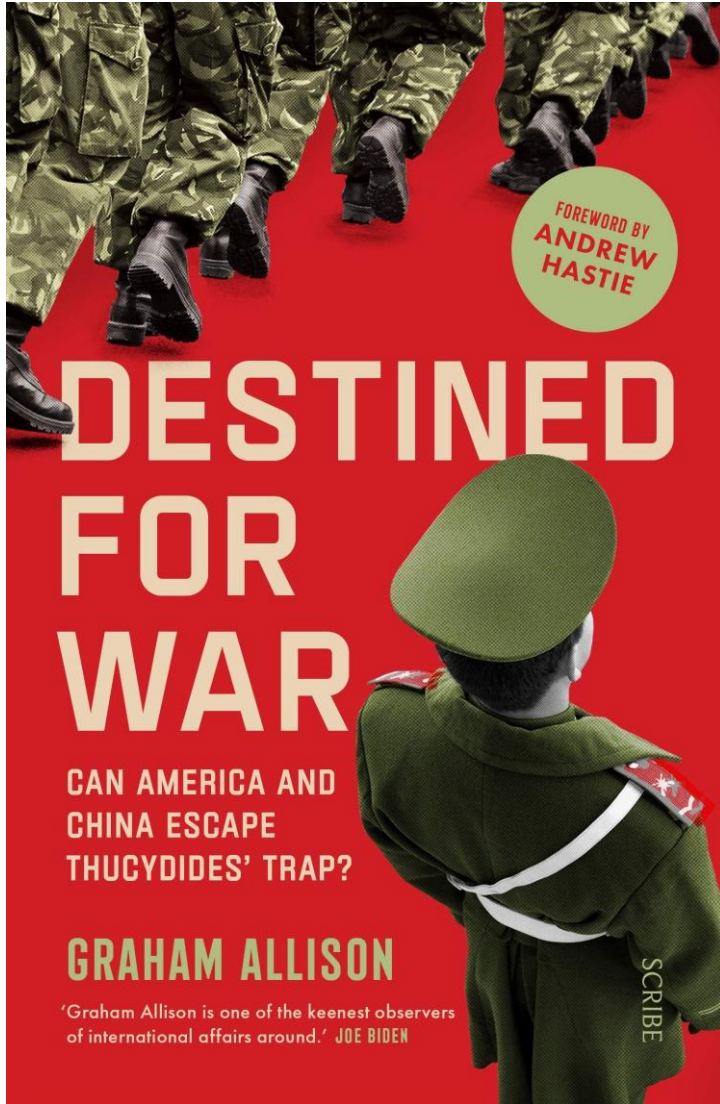
“Dazzling in its scope and grasp of the intricacies of contemporary  
global politics.” —FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, *The Wall Street Journal*

\*\*\*\*\*  
WITH A NEW  
FOREWORD BY  
ZBIGNIEW  
BRZEZINSKI  
\*\*\*\*\*



## Graham Tillet Allison Jr. (1940-)





No	Period	Ruling Power	Rising Power	Domain	Result
1	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> century	Portugal	Spain	Global empire and trade	No war
2	First half of 16 <sup>th</sup> century	France	Habsburgs	Land power in western Europe	War
3	16 <sup>th</sup> and 17 <sup>th</sup> centuries	Habsburgs	Ottoman Empire	Land power in central and eastern Europe, sea power in the Mediterranean	War
4	First half of 17 <sup>th</sup> century	Habsburgs	Sweden	Land and sea power in northern Europe	War
5	Mid-to-late 17 <sup>th</sup> century	Dutch Republic	England	Global empire, sea power, and trade	War
6	Late 17 <sup>th</sup> to mid-18 <sup>th</sup> centuries	France	Great Britain	Global empire and European land power	War
7	Late 18 <sup>th</sup> and early 19 <sup>th</sup> centuries	United Kingdom	France	Land and sea power in Europe	War
8	Mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century	France and United Kingdom	Russia	Global empire, influence in Central Asia and eastern Mediterranean	War
9	Mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century	France	Germany	Land power in Europe	War
10	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries	China and Russia	Japan	Land and sea power in East Asia	War
11	Early-20 <sup>th</sup> century	United Kingdom	United States	Global economic dominance and naval supremacy in the Western Hemisphere	No war
12	Early-20 <sup>th</sup> century	United Kingdom <small>supported by France, Russia</small>	Germany	Land power in Europe and global sea power	War
13	Mid-20 <sup>th</sup> century	Soviet Union, France, UK	Germany	Land and sea power in Europe	War
14	Mid-20 <sup>th</sup> 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*

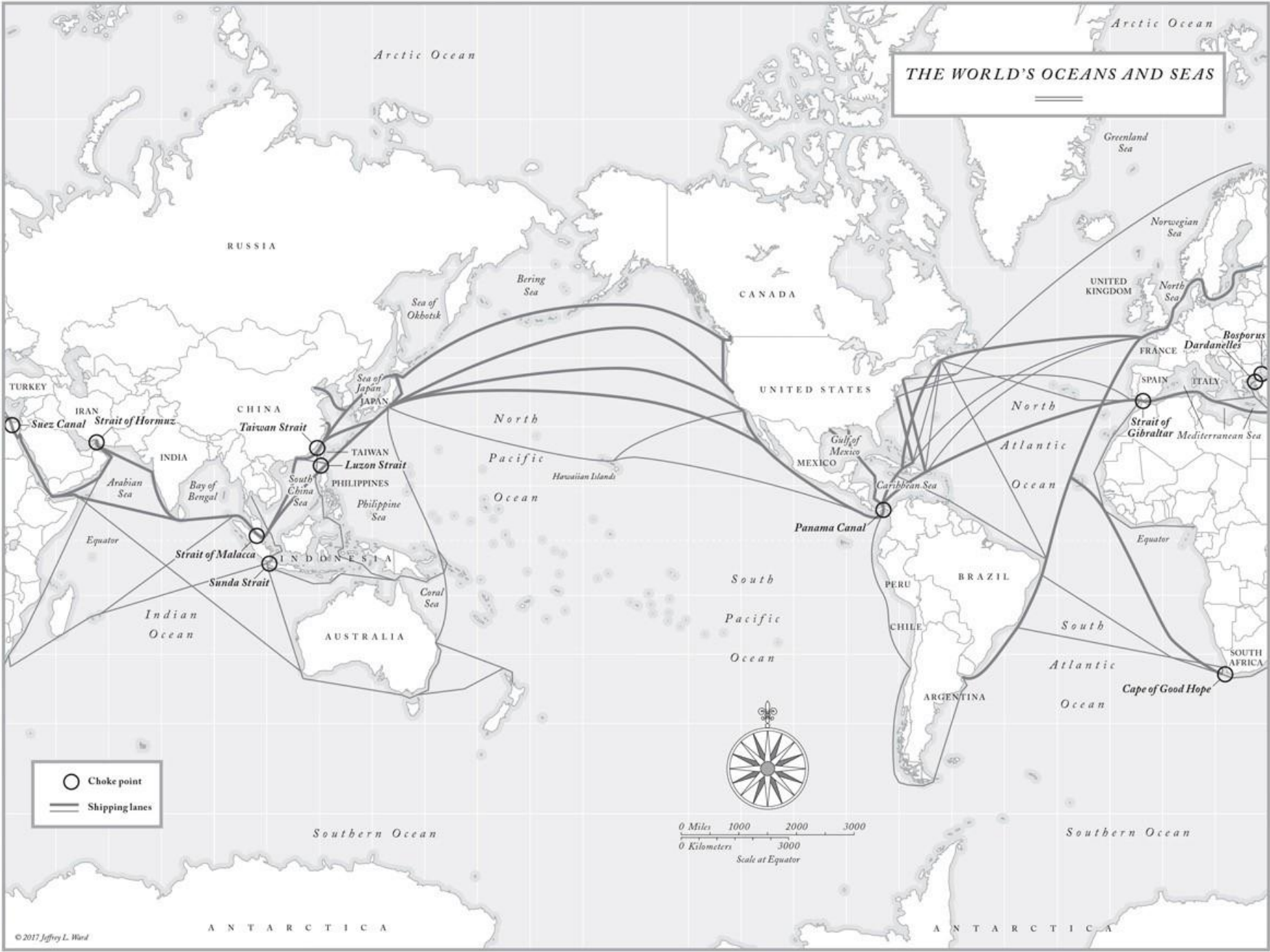
- **Sea Power-Land Power:** Countries exhibiting either a maritime or a continental emphasis in their geopolitical projections. A maritime nation would reflect a coastal position with good harbors and an oceanic projection. Landward nations normally lack a sea orientation being placed internally within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



○ Choke point  
— Shipping lanes



0 Miles 1000 2000 3000  
0 Kilometers 3000  
Scale at Equator



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.

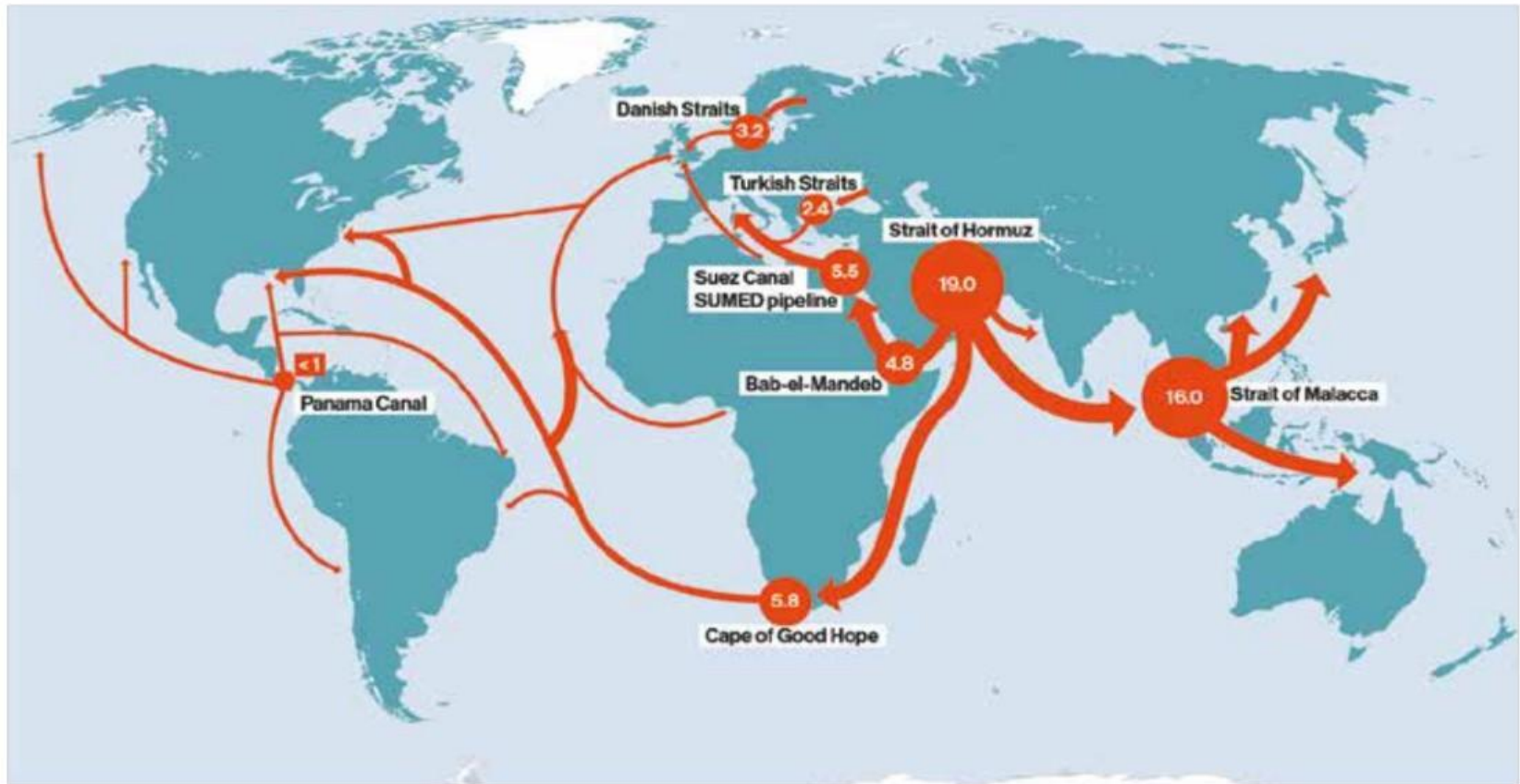


Satellite image from CNES 2021 on Thursday shows Ever Given stuck in Suez Canal. (CNES image)



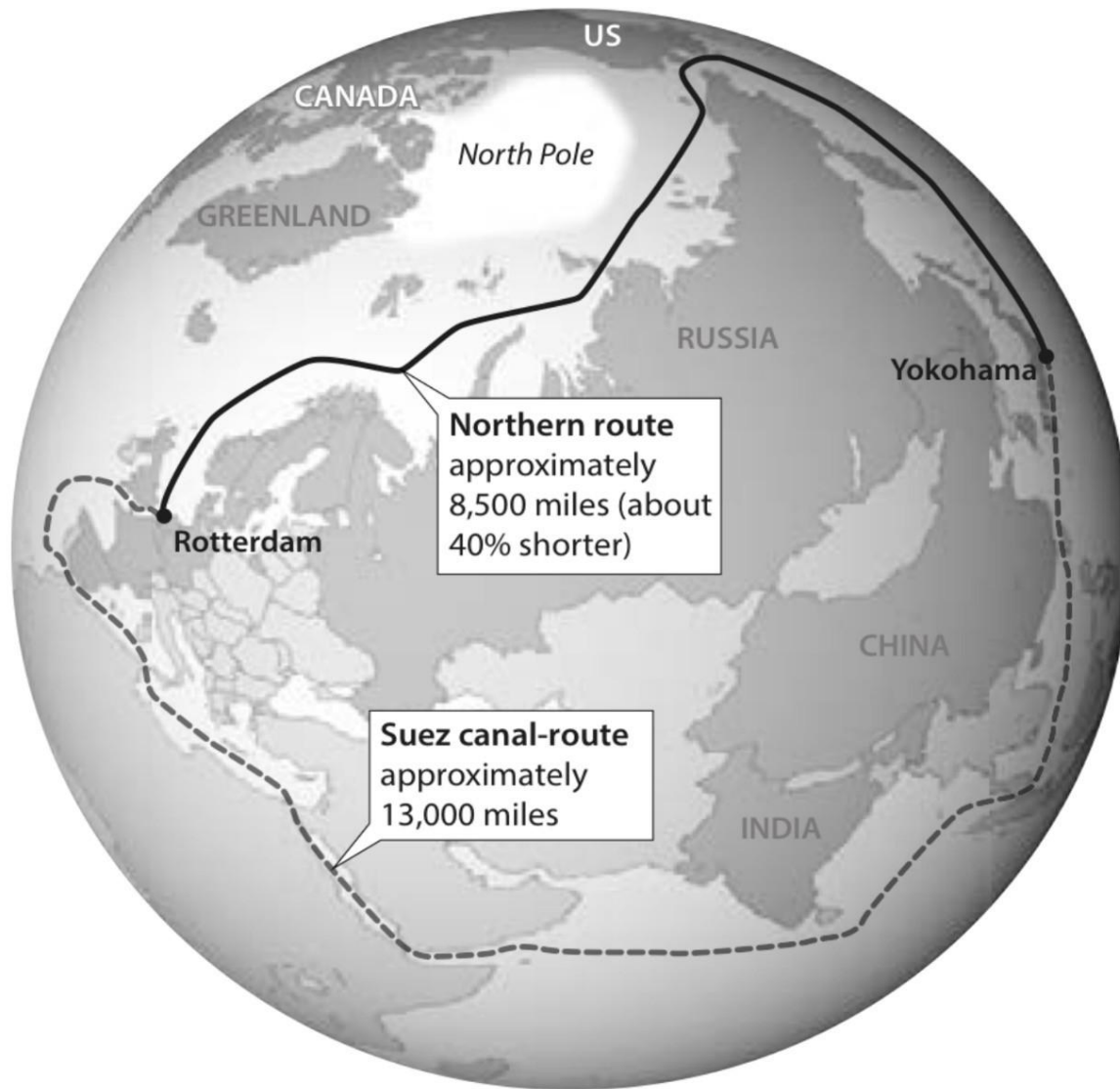
| The Evergreen container ship, stuck and blocking the Suez Canal.

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.



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



Th. Nast.

fine art america



"GERMANY SHALL NEVER BE ENCIRCLED."





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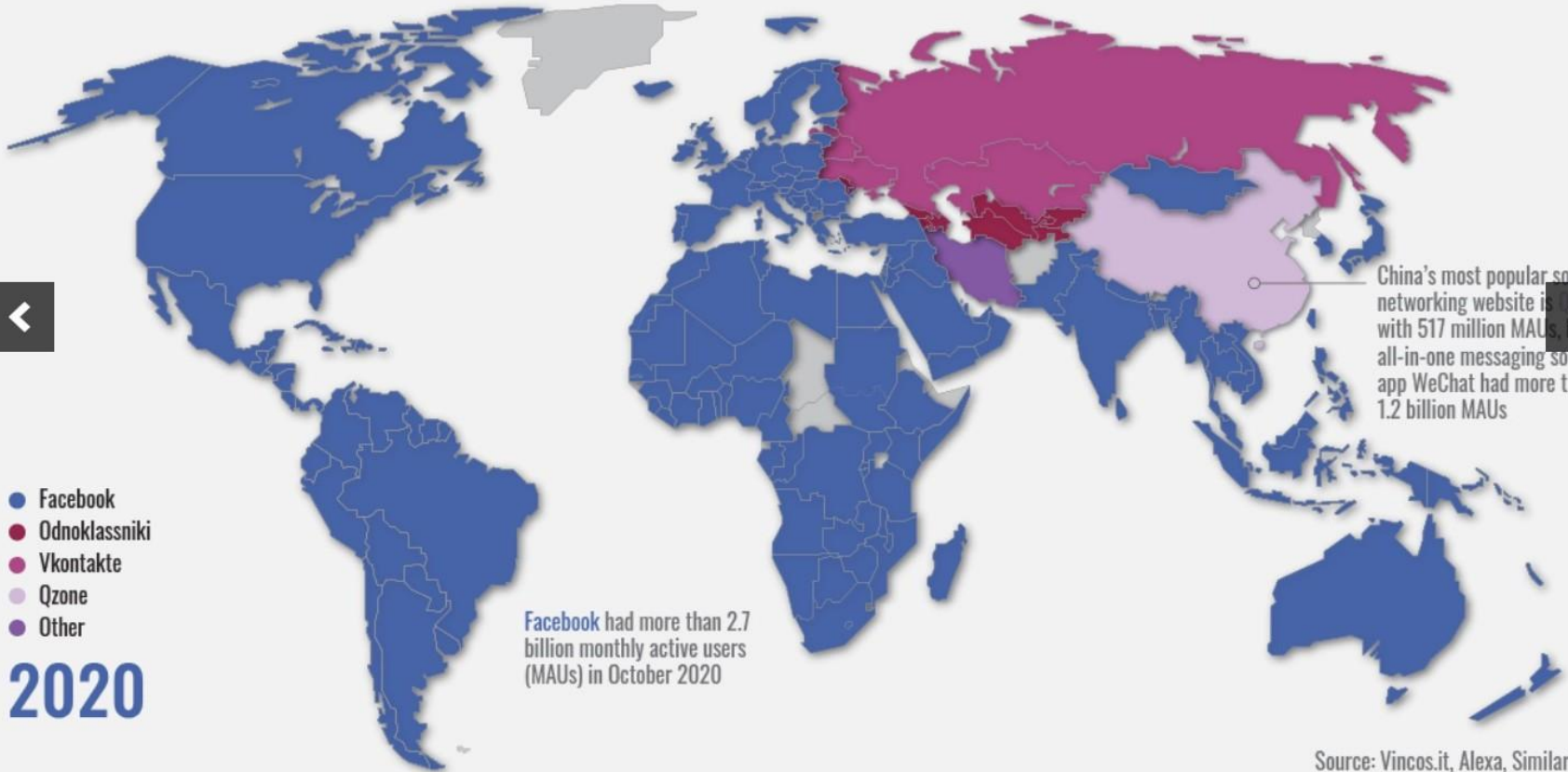


# Facebook's Path to Domination 2020



## Mapping Each Country's Most Popular Social Network

(according to Alexa & SimilarWeb traffic data)



- Facebook
- Odnoklassniki
- Vkontakte
- Qzone
- Other

# 2020

Source: Vincos.it, Alexa, SimilarWeb



COLLABORATORS RESEARCH + WRITING Omri Wallach | DESIGN + ART DIRECTION by Eason



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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

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## THE WORLD IN 2021

