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GEOGRAPHY AND FOREIGN POLICY, II

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In the first part of this article, we analyzed the effect of size and world location on the international relations of states and the problems of foreign policy. But more immediate in its conditioning effect is regional location—location viewed with reference to the immediate vicinity.

Like world location, regional location is a question of facts plus the significance of those facts at any given historical period. Just as it was found necessary to consider world location in relation to two systems of reference, the geographic and the historical, so the full meaning of regional location becomes apparent only after considering both the geography and the historical and political significance of a state's immediate surroundings.

Regional location determines whether neighbors will be many or few, strong or weak, and the topography of the region conditions the direction and nature of contact with those neighbors. The man who once formulated the foreign policy of Manchuria had to do so with one eye on Japan and the other on Russia; every international gesture of Belgium is conditioned by the fact that she lies between France and Germany and across the Channel from Great Britain; and the states of Central America can never for a moment forget that the territory north of them is occupied by one large power and not by several whom they might play off one against the other as their European counterparts, the Balkan states, have been able to do from time to time with their northern neighbors. Two of the traditional and unchanging cornerstones of United States foreign policy have been isolation from all European affairs and that oft-quoted and oftener misquoted principle known as the Monroe Doctrine. Each of these policies is tenable only in view of the fact

that the European neighbors of the United States are three thousand miles away. If the United States had been as near to the European continent as is Great Britain, it could never have conceived a policy of isolation, to say nothing of maintaining it; and if most of South America had been as near to Europe as is Africa, the United States could not have prevented the European powers from colonizing South America as they have colonized Africa.

A consideration of geographic environment alone suggests three main types of regional location—landlocked states, all of whose frontiers are land frontiers, island states, all of whose frontiers are seacoast, and a third group, much larger than the two preceding, states which have both land and sea frontiers. The significance of such location, however, will vary according to the political constellation of the moment and according to whether a state is situated between states of equal, greater, or less power than its own.

There have always been comparatively few landlocked states. Today there are three in Europe, two in Asia, and two in South America, and others like Ethiopia and Serbia have only recently disappeared from the map. The outstanding characteristic of the foreign policy of all such states is that their security problem is defined exclusively in terms of land defense, and therefore in terms of immediate neighbors. States with sea access are under pressure from any strong naval power, even one far away. It is true that distance increases the difficulty of effective invasion, but it does not greatly hamper the possibilities of bombardment. Whether this advantage of landlocked states will remain under the new conditions of aërial warfare will depend on whether neighbor states will be able to perform their neutral duty and prevent the crossing of enemy bombers. The lesson of the Spanish civil war does not inspire a great deal of confidence in regard to the future.

In most landlocked states, nature has contributed to defense. Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in their present form, are of too recent origin to serve as evidence; it certainly seems safe to presume that their boundaries are not wholly fixed; but almost every landlocked state that has long endured as such has been separated from the rest of the world by natural barriers like the mountains of Switzerland and Ethiopia, the mountains and jungles of Bolivia and Paraguay, or the plateau of Thibet. These states have enjoyed greater isolation than even the island states; because of their difficult topography, communication and transportation routes

have passed them by; and they have been developed and preserved as separate entities.

Because of the obvious disadvantages of a landlocked location, it seems permissible to conclude that such a position is not a normal one unless nature has created virtually insurmountable frontiers. Otherwise, if the state is strong enough, it will eventually force its way to the sea as did Serbia, and as Bolivia and Paraguay are still trying to do; or, if it is weak, it will be absorbed or partitioned by its neighbors as were Arcadia, Armenia, Transylvania, and Ethiopia. Czechoslovakia and Hungary may well verify this hypothesis within the next few decades.

There are as few island states as landlocked states—only two great powers, Great Britain and Japan, the Dominions of Australia and New Zealand, the newly created Philippine Republic, and the infant American states of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, and Haiti, the latter two being not quite island states because they share one island together. History adds to the list one important state, Crete, and the two minor nations of Hawaii and Samoa.

Until the development of the aëroplane, the defense problem of island states was exclusively a question of the maintenance of a navy. They were strategically secure as long as navigation remained in an undeveloped stage, and, later, as long as they maintained naval supremacy. In comparison with their Continental neighbors, Great Britain and Japan have very rarely been invaded. Island states situated near the mainland have nevertheless a defense problem totally different from that of states whose ocean barrier is wide. Invasion from the opposite coast is a constant menace, and they must therefore maintain a naval force adequate to repel any attack, or themselves establish control over the opposite coast.

There are certain striking similarities in the regional location of Great Britain and Japan on the opposite ends of the Eurasian mainland, and therefore certain striking similarities in their basic strategic problems. Both are island groups a short distance from a mainland and in a position by means of naval supremacy to control the access to the ocean of that opposite coast. But they are also under constant threat from that same opposite coast should it become the seat of powerful military units. Great Britain long found security in actual occupation of considerable mainland territory; later she was satisfied with bridgeheads; and she finally

solved her problem by the creation and maintenance of the small buffer states, Holland and Belgium, and the policy of preserving a balance between the large Continental powers.

Japan's preoccupation with the mainland came much later, partly because her topography turned her away from the mainland during the period of primitive sailing technique, and partly because for a long time there was no political unit on the coast to present a positive threat. When during the last decade of the nineteenth century Russia began to push southward in search of ice-free ports and threatened to obtain control over Manchuria and Korea, and when during that same period China began its first attempt at westernization and therefore at the process which had made Japan strong, there was foreshadowed a situation which would have morphological similarities with the position of Great Britain in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The Japanese military mind, which does its international thinking primarily in strategic terms, seems determined to try to solve its problem by creating artificially the British type of location of the nineteenth century. North China is to serve as Belgium, and Manchukuo as Holland, and the latter, in order to fulfill its function effectively, should eventually be enlarged by the Maritime Provinces of the U.S.S.R.

The interesting question which arises in connection with this attempt, inspired by the basic pattern of British foreign policy, is whether the problem has been viewed correctly in terms of relative historical time. The European units which serve as buffer states were created before the growth of modern nationalism; the Far Eastern ones are being created after the consciousness of national unity with China is fully operative. Will they develop a consciousness of national difference and a nationality of their own? If not, they must remain under permanent military control at great economic expense. This is perhaps necessary anyway in order that Japan may realize other than purely strategic objectives, but, whatever modification these other factors may introduce, it would not be surprising if the Far East had entered upon a struggle comparable to the Hundred Years' War.

Therefore, unless island states are widely separated from the mainland—and there are today no states so located—their insularity no longer provides them the almost perfect defense it once offered. They share with landlocked states the advantage of

having to maintain but one type of defense, and they share the partial protection offered by natural barriers, without sharing the isolation and resulting economic and social disadvantages caused by land barriers. If they are weak, they tend to be conquered, or at least to be controlled, by some great power, as has befallen most of the islands of the world. If, however, they are sufficiently strong to establish and maintain their independence for a time, then their location tends to give them commercial advantages and a naval strength that eventually raises them to the rank of first-class powers.

The great majority of the states of the world have both sea and land frontiers. Unless the frontier consists of a wholly insurmountable natural barrier, or the coast is always frozen and hence inaccessible to enemy approach, these states must maintain both land and sea forces. Whether a state's primary defense problem will be military or naval, and whether its contacts will be chiefly from overseas or across its land frontiers, will depend on various factors such as the length of its frontiers, its world and regional location, and its topography and climate.

The existence of good harbors will naturally favor the development of shipping and naval activity, whereas a coast that offers no such facilities will encourage contacts by land rather than by sea. The best coast-line for commercial development is an irregular, indented one with many offshore islands; whether it is mountainous or flat is of little importance provided it has good harbors. The Phoenician cities, jeopardized by Babylonian, Hittite, and Assyrian attacks from the hinterland, found relative security along the Lebanon littoral near enough to the piedmont road to participate in trade and remote enough to be secure. The Phoenician shore had good harbors, and the Lebanons produced cedars for the Phoenician fleet but little else to encourage an agricultural life. Phoenicia became, therefore, the leading sea-power of the period, in sharp contrast to its neighbors, the Jews, whose broad strip of fertile country and harborless coast early made them an agricultural inland people. The Aegean, with its countless harbors, inlets, and islands, is ideally suited to promote maritime enterprise, and produced a succession of early sea powers; and the irregular mountain coasts of Norway, Dalmatia, South China, and the Rhio peninsula are responsible for the sea prowess of their inhabitants. The north shore of the English Channel, which with its

many magnificent harbors virtually compels its own people to seek their fortune on the sea and the rest of the world to use its ports, contrasts sharply with the southern shore, where, with the exception of Havre, France has had to spend much time and money in an only moderately successful effort to create harbors where nature failed to create them. In the same way, the eastern shore of the Adriatic abounds in good harbors while the eastern Italian coast is almost entirely harborless.

Seamanship and interest in the sea, however, do not develop merely when a country has good harbors and a good coast-line; there must also be a desirable and not too distant opposite coast, or, better yet, desirable offshore islands. Lands without such an opposite coast have remained consistently backward in seamanship regardless of the existence of favorable coast-lines. Africa, Australia, South America, and even North America with the exception of the Gulf of Mexico, are cases in point. On the other hand, Norway, Holland, Greece, South China, and the South Seas, with islands and opposite coasts to lure their inhabitants seaward, have produced the greatest seamen in history.

It appears, then, that, important as topography and climate may be in the development of seamanship, it is probably regional location that is the final determinant of sea interest. Greece was a transit land between two seas. Phoenicia, and later Genoa and Venice, were entrepôts for the reception and reshipment of goods to and from the East. Venice, situated on sheltered lagoons, and draining the fertile plains just behind her and the valleys of the Brenta, the Po, and the Adige, including the Tyrol, was the point of transfer for goods going south across the Apennines to Rome and down the Adriatic to the eastern Mediterranean. She had the added good fortune to escape the Arab raids which harassed Genoa, although she was constantly annoyed by pirates on the Dalmatian coast. That she should later yield her place to Marseilles as the first of the Mediterranean ports was inevitable as civilization moved northwestward, for the route from Marseilles runs up the Rhone valley into the watershed of the Channel and the North Sea, and thus into the heart of modern industrial Europe.

Not only the configuration of its sea frontier but also that of its land frontier will predetermine the relative importance of a state's land and sea activities. If, like those of Norway, Chile, and Spain, for example, its land frontier is a practically impassable mountain

range, the state will naturally establish its contacts by sea. If, like France and Germany, it can move as easily across its land as across its sea frontiers, it will have the commercial advantage of added trade and communication routes but an added problem of defense. If, like that of Russia, its sea-coast offers no easy access to the open ocean, it will tend to take its place among the land powers of the world in spite of many miles of coast-line.

The early history of political organization exhibits a great number of narrow coastal states of different geographic types, states located in small coastal valleys like Athens, river delta states like Egypt, and coastal border states like Phoenicia.[1]

These examples of narrow coastal states—and they by no means exhaust the list—have almost all been drawn from ancient and medieval, or, at the latest, early modern history. They represent an archaic type because such states either expand into the hinterland and obtain depth, or are swallowed up by inland states seeking access to the sea. Where similar types exist today, they are on a larger scale and have been preserved either by topography or because of their function as buffer states. Peru and Chile are guarded by their mountain frontiers, and Holland and Belgium exist under the protection of Great Britain. Ecuador is an independent entity because there is no state in her hinterland reaching toward the sea, and Uruguay earns her right to existence by functioning as a buffer between Brazil and Argentina. The tiny African state of Liberia survives as a sort of protectorate of the Great Powers, and Portugal has for a long time subordinated her foreign policy to that of her ally, Great Britain. The fate of newly-created coastal states like Albania, and the three Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, is still to be determined, but to the geographer they appear as distinct anachronisms in the evolution of geographic state types, and it is hard for any student of history to study a map of Europe without a strong conviction that Russia

[1] Coastal Valley Type: Argos, Colchis, Valencia, Naples, etc.
River Delta Type: Pegu, Cochinchina, Siam, Tonkin, Florence, etc.
Coastal Border Type: Cilicia, Etruria, Latium, Mauretania and Numidia; later, the territories of the Suevi and Cantabrians on the Iberian peninsula and the Vandals in northern Africa; at the time of the Crusades, Lesser Armenia, the principality of Antioch, the county of Tripoli, the kingdom of Jerusalem, and Trebizond in the Near East, and Normandy, Brittany and Frisia in Europe; still later, Dalmatia, Granada, Aragon, Portugal, and Genoa on the Mediterranean. Cf. Otto Maull, *Politische Geographie* (Berlin, 1925), pp. 213–214, and Josef März, *Die Ozeane* (Breslau, 1931), pp. 15–16.

will some day force her way to the Baltic and swallow them a second time.

The states mentioned share with a few larger states like Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Rumania, and Persia the condition of having access to but one sea. Such a situation simplifies the problem of naval defense in that it permits a concentration of naval effectives denied to countries with more than one ocean front. But in the case of Rumania and Bulgaria it is a distinct disadvantage, since their one sea provides them no outlet to the open ocean and they are at the mercy of the power or powers controlling the Straits.

States like France and Spain which have more than one seacoast, and especially like the United States, Canada, and Russia, whose coasts are widely separated, have theoretically the most difficult of defense problems, since they must maintain not only land forces but two or more fleets. This double sea access in addition to the possession of a land frontier may also create important shifts in the main direction of expansion. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and even into the beginning of the nineteenth, when France had extensive colonies on the North American continent, she attempted to establish herself as an Atlantic sea power, but with the loss of her important American colonies she transferred her naval activity chiefly to the Mediterranean, where it is absolutely essential that she retain control of the routes between the mainland and her North African colonies. However, her approach to West Africa has been continental rather than maritime; and as long as there is a first-class power east of the Rhine, and as long as her eastern land frontier remains her most vulnerable point, France will be primarily a land power, thinking in terms of land attack and land defense.

Germany has always been in a difficult strategic position. She is open to attack by land on her eastern and western frontiers, and Great Britain can bar her access to the open ocean by closing the Channel and the North Sea. During the first fifteen years of her existence after 1871, Germany made no attempt to develop sea power and concentrated all her energies on her land forces. During the next thirty years, she hesitated between a continental and a maritime orientation, attempting to establish herself as a sea power without sacrificing her dominating position on the Continent. Unable during the World War to withstand simultaneous

attacks from land, sea, and sky, she lost her supremacy on all fronts, and was completely deprived of her army, navy, and air forces. She is now re-creating all three branches of her defense, but has limited her navy by treaty to thirty-five per cent of the tonnage of the British navy, which indicates that for the present the continental orientation advocated in *Mein Kampf*[2] is the watchword of her foreign policy. It is interesting to realize that during the last seven centuries the coast-line of Germany has grown constantly shorter, as the following table rather strikingly reveals:

Year	*Length of coast-line*
1240	5100 kilometers of coast-line
1370	3700
1850	2400
1900	1355 (without colonies)
1925	1120[3]

At first glance, Italy seems definitely destined for a sea power, as indeed she is if she is to have access to the open seas and thus to foreign sources of supplies which she very much needs. Her land frontier is not as well protected by nature, however, as it might at first appear, and she is not free to think entirely in terms of naval defense. During the period of the Triple Alliance, she solved the problem by allying herself with her most dangerous land neighbor, and after 1920 sought a solution in the preservation of a weak state on the other side of her most vulnerable land frontier so as to be at liberty to concentrate her energies on establishing her naval supremacy in the Mediterranean—an attainment which she rightly considers indispensable to her future development as a first-class power. With the disappearance of Austria, a policy focussed on expansion of sea-power will again demand friendship with the strongest land neighbor, this time Germany.

Russia, with many miles of coast-line, has persistently remained in the list of land powers. In spite of her constant and repeated military and diplomatic efforts to reach the sea, Russia's ice-free—or even partially ice-free—ports are very few. From this paradoxical situation of possessing many miles of coast but no water, she derives the negative advantage of being open to attack by sea at only a few points, none of which is dangerously near to her

[2] Cf. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (München, 1933), Vol. I, pp. 152–153, and Vol. II, pp. 689 ff.

[3] Richard Hennig, *Geopolitik* (Leipzig, 1931), p. 97.

vital centers of industry. On the other hand, she is very vulnerable by land. So, although she lost the Russo-Japanese war primarily on the sea, she plans, and will probably continue to plan, her defense chiefly in terms of land attacks.

A curious anomaly is China. It has an enormous coast-line and was at one time a sea power of considerable importance, able to carry on naval warfare and to send large expeditionary forces to the distant islands of Sumatra and Java. It is today no longer a sea power, although in South China there continues to be a considerable amount of maritime activity. The primary reason for this land orientation lies, of course, in the fact that the danger of invasion has until quite recently been almost exclusively from the land. Contributing factors are world location, the relatively late development of maritime trade across the Pacific, and technological backwardness. China's first modern navy was destroyed in the Sino-Japanese war, and governments since the Revolution have been entirely occupied with counteracting the tendency toward internal disintegration. The result is that China today, with one of the major sea powers of the world five hundred miles from her shores, is entirely without a navy.

In the New World, the United States, with more than four thousand miles of land frontiers, is nevertheless definitely a sea power. Her area comprises a large proportion, and her population an even larger proportion, of those of the entire Continent, and of the two billion foreigners in the world only eighteen million are accessible by rail from the United States. Communication, even with South America, which is actually continuous with North America, is maintained chiefly by sea. The land frontiers are safe, and the situation of the United States with reference to foreign contacts approximates that of an island, and makes the navy rather than the army the foundation of United States defense.

In spite of the element of possible strategic weakness inherent in double sea access, states have always striven for access to more than one sea because of the partially countervailing military advantage of more than one route for incoming supplies and because of the resultant commercial and economic advantages. When the kingdom of Charlemagne was divided under the Treaty of Verdun, the Germans, the Franks, and Lothringen each had an outlet on three seas; in the Middle Ages, Bulgaria had access to the Black, the Aegean, and the Ionian Seas; and Serbia under Stephen Duschan reached to both the Adriatic and the Aegean. For a long time the

Hapsburg Empire stretched from the northern to the southern shores of Europe; and down to the present time the Great Powers of the world have almost without exception had access to more than one sea.

There are other types of double sea access, each of which imparts certain characteristics to the policy and development of a state. A peninsular position is conducive to the development of sea power, particularly if the land frontier of the state is protected by a natural barrier like the Himalayas, the Pyrenees, or the Alps. When the land frontier is unprotected, as in the case of Denmark, peninsular states have the peace-time advantage of being able to utilize their relations to both land and sea and play off one against the other. In time of war they are strategically in a weak position, because they are open to attack from both land and sea.

The states the policy of which is most dominated by the fact of their access to more than one sea are the isthmus states like Mexico, the Central American states with the exception of Salvador, Colombia before 1903, and, from one point of view, Egypt. Such states are by virtue of their geographical location and formation primarily passage states. If they continue as independent entities, it is not through their own strength but because, for obvious strategic and commercial reasons, no one of the Great Powers can afford to have them fall into the complete possession of any other power. They are, nevertheless, almost inevitably dominated by one strong state to which proximity or priority of interest or arrival has given an advantage over the other powers. That this state will be a sea power is a foregone conclusion, since an isthmus, paradoxical as it may seem, is important chiefly as a passage state between oceans rather than between continents.

It is the combination of the factors enumerated—world location, regional location, topography, and climate—that will influence the development of a state toward sea power or land power. We have noted that the pure types, island states and landlocked states, are few in number and that for most states it is a question of more or less. They will be predominantly sea powers if they think primarily in terms of sea routes and conceive plans for defense and attack mainly in terms of a navy. The interest of a state in the sea can be expressed mathematically by dividing its area by the length of its sea frontier. This figure will perhaps represent primarily the strategic interest of a state in the sea. An indication of the more purely commercial significance of the sea in the life of a country

can be secured by dividing the total inhabitants of all ports of any considerable size by the total population, thus determining roughly the percentage of the total population that presumably gains its livelihood directly or indirectly from the sea. States will be predominantly land powers if their foreign policy is mainly in terms of relations across land frontiers and security primarily a problem of land defense. The ancient empires, with the exception of Rome, were all based on land power, and their strength rested on mobility on land, which means possession of plains and control of land routes. The empires of modern history were all sea powers, and their strength rested on mobility on the sea and control of sea routes.

Their differing conceptions of space and of the conquest of space indicate one of the outstanding differences between land and sea powers. A sea power conquers a large space by leaping lightly from point to point, adjusting itself to existing political relationships wherever possible, and often not establishing its legal control until its factual domination has long been tacitly recognized. An expanding land power moves slowly and methodically forward, forced by the nature of its terrain to establish its control step by step and so preserve the mobility of its forces.[4] Thus a land power thinks in terms of continuous surfaces surrounding a central point of control, while a sea power thinks in terms of points and connecting lines dominating an immense territory.

Considerable so-called thought and considerable space have been devoted to the problem of conflicts between sea powers and land powers. Hennig, the German geographer, asserts that such conflicts are fairly infrequent, but that when they do occur the victory goes almost without exception to the sea power. In support of his thesis, he marshals the great sea victories of Salamis, Lepanto, Trafalgar, Navarino, and Tsushima, admitting that the land power of Rome conquered the seafaring Carthaginians in the first Punic War.[4a]

In direct contradiction to Hennig, Mackinder asserts the ultimate superiority of land power:

> There were fleets of war canoes on the Nile, and the Nile was closed to their contention by a single land-power controlling their fertile bases through all the length of Egypt. A Cretan insular base was conquered from a larger Greek peninsular base. Macedonian land-power closed the

[4] Cf. Josef März, *Landmächte und Seemächte* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 8–9.

[4a] Hennig, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

Eastern Mediterranean to the warships both of Greeks and Phoenicians by depriving them impartially of their bases. Hannibal struck overland at the peninsular base of Roman sea-power, and that base was saved by victory on land. Caesar won the mastery of the Mediterranean by victory on the water, and Rome then retained control of it by the defense of land frontiers. In the Middle Ages, Latin Christendom defended itself on the sea from its peninsular base, but in modern times, because competing States grew up within that peninsula, and there were several bases of sea-power upon it, all open to attack from the land, the mastery of the seas passed to a power which was less broadly based, but on an island—fortunately a fertile and coal-bearing island.[4b]

No one will question the accuracy of the historical facts presented by Mr. Hennig and Mr. Mackinder. Mr. Hennig suffers an intellectual regret that the greatest land power, Russia, has never encountered the greatest sea power, Great Britain, in a major war, so that he might be provided with a perfect laboratory experiment. We strongly suspect that, should such a tragedy occur, Great Britain would find herself incapable of taking effective control of the vast territory of Russia, as Russia would find herself incapable of winning a major sea battle against the British navy. In other words, both Mr. Hennig and Mr. Mackinder seem to be industriously amassing evidence in support of the theory that when sea powers encounter land powers on the sea, sea powers are victorious, and that when sea powers encounter land powers on the land, land powers are victorious. This conclusion, while not particularly helpful, is not wholly unexpected. It leads to the further truism that whichever power is stronger at the moment of conflict, and on the terrain where the conflict is taking place, will be the victor.

The preceding pages have offered an analysis of regional location primarily with reference to sea or land orientation. Another important aspect of regional location derives from the fact of relative strength. If one observes regional location with regard to relative strength, there are obviously three types—the strong state between two weak neighbors, the relation of approximate equality, and the weak state between two strong states. States with more than two neighbors have a location which can be indicated only by describing the specific combination of basic types. If such a state has broad sea access, there arises the additional complication of vulnerability to states which are not immediate neighbors.

Expressed in the simplest form, in terms of land power relationships, the position of the strong state between two weak states is

[4b] H. J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York, 1919), pp. 74–75.

most advantageous. This type of situation can be observed a great many times in early history, and is best illustrated by the great land powers, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Rome, the empires of Alexander, Charlemagne, and Charles V, the Arab, Mongol, and Turkish Empires, and the China and Russia of the eighteenth century. In most of these cases, the relationship was not a stable one, and this specific type of location can be observed, therefore, only over periods of limited duration. Unless the small neighboring states were buffer states, they were swallowed up by the outward expansion of the center state, and the empires themselves disintegrated sooner or later. Some were divided by inheritance, such as the empires of Alexander and Charlemagne, but most of them broke up because of an unfavorable relationship between size, topography, and systems of communication. As was mentioned in the discussion of size, only effective integration of territory permits successful resistance to centrifugal tendencies at the periphery and pressures on far-flung frontiers. That this simple basic location form of a strong state between two weak states has not reappeared in modern Europe is, of course, explained by the fact that under the title of "balance of power policy" it has been a primary objective in the policy of all states to prevent its occurrence.

The only perfect illustration of this basic type today is the position of the United States between Canada and Mexico. In this case, the relationship is likely to continue, because world location, topography, and climate are all favorable. The shape of the North American continent prevents Mexico from adding significantly to its size by southern expansion, and topography and climate will make it forever impossible to build on its area a powerful economy. Canada, although larger in area than the United States, is by location and climate permitted to develop only a very small part of her territory as a base for economic and political life. The result is that the United States has been able to conduct its foreign policy for the last seventy-five years without giving any consideration to the problem of territorial security, and that its people are unable to understand the preoccupation of Europeans with security and power politics.

A location between states of power equal to its own is a difficult position for a state, since it is in constant danger from a joint attack should its neighbors form an alliance. The obvious answer is, of course, to form alliances with the neighbors of its neighbors, and so create the checkerboard of political alignments that we find

in Europe and Asia today, with France allied to Russia and Germany to Japan, and so on around the globe. The same pattern can be traced through history. Even where there is no danger of an actual alliance between neighbors, a state is never free to concentrate its attention in any one direction as long as it has strong powers on both sides. Before the destruction of the Austrian navy, Italy could never offer the threat to French security in the Mediterranean that she can today when Yugoslavia has replaced Austria as her eastern neighbor.

A relatively weak state located between two strong states is in the geographic position of a buffer state; whether it will become so in the political sense of the term will depend on various factors. In any case, such a state will be forced to adopt a very special foreign policy. Its own security depends on the security which its neighbors derive from its continued existence. This means that such a state is forced to pursue a precarious policy of neutrality. Any variation which leaves the impression that the bond with one neighbor is becoming stronger may tempt the other neighbor to replace the security obtained from the existence of an independent buffer with a security obtained from actual occupation of the buffer territory.

If location and topography make the buffer state a barrier state like Afghanistan and Thibet and to a certain extent Persia, its chances of survival are high because of inherent geographic characteristics; if location makes it a passage state, but topography a barrier state, like Switzerland and Austria, its problem becomes more difficult; and if both location and topography make it a passage state like Holland, Belgium, and Poland, it will receive no gifts from nature and must depend exclusively on policy. In other words, in such a case, it must make its independence indispensable to the security of its neighbors. As long as the buffer state can retain this importance, and as long as its neighbors remain more or less equal in strength, the buffer state can survive. So we find Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, and the new Poland on the European map, and Persia, Afghanistan, Thibet, and Siam in Asia.

As soon, however, as such a state ceases to be a political necessity for the surrounding powers, or as soon as one of them becomes so overwhelmingly strong that it can disregard the attitude of the others, the buffer state will be absorbed. President Kruger remarked in 1895:

Unsere kleine Republik kriecht nur noch unter den Grossmächten

herum, aber wir fühlen wohl, dass, wenn der eine uns einen Tritt versetzen will, der andere dies zu verhindern sucht.[5]

But when British power in South Africa grew adequate, the Boer republic became part of a British dominion. So Armenia, which once stood between the Roman and Persian Empires and later between the Byzantine Empire and Islam, has disappeared, and Poland has been partitioned three times; Korea is part of the Empire of Japan; Manchukuo and Mongolia can hardly be called independent, and Austria has been absorbed. In the dynamic world of international relations in which the struggle for power among the great is the basic reality, the ultimate fate of the small buffer state is precarious at best.

Buffer states are an illustration of the strategic significance of a specific area for a particular state. Another illustration, already mentioned incidentally, is the area beyond the neighbor of equal strength—the obvious location for a potential ally. We have mentioned in connection with world location that certain areas will be of different significance to states operating with different systems of reference, and the same will obviously hold true in a minor way within the regional frame of reference.

It is this fact that complicates the problem of the creation of systems of collective security and suggests the likelihood that such systems will not be effective unless they have a sound regional basis. A system of collective security based, not on an international police force, but on the common action of all states members of the group, obviously means that the willingness of a state to act as guarantor is in direct proportion to the significance of the region to be protected. The prerequisites of an effective system are therefore the following: a region extensive enough to hold at least three large powers of approximately equal strength, so that two can provide overwhelming superiority over the third, and in that region small states whose independence is of approximately equal strategic significance to at least two of the three powers.

How few regions there are in the world that fulfill these requirements can be seen from a study of the map; and how effectively the legal system operates if it is not in harmony with basic geographic and political realities may be learned from the history of the last fifteen years. The first prerequisite can be found only in Europe, but may sometime in the future appear in Asia. The second is even

[5] Cited in Maull, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

more difficult to attain. Belgium and the Western Mediterranean are of approximately equal significance to France and Great Britain, but central Europe has little interest for London and is the area of potential allies for France. An Italian Ethiopia may mean a threat to a British life-line, the Red Sea, and an exposed flank in the Sudan; to France, it means only a rather unwelcome neighbor near a relatively insignificant colony. Great Britain and the United States have, when able, been quite willing to be protectors of regions of specific strategic significance such as the Lowlands and Egypt in the case of Great Britain, and Central America in the case of the United States. When the region is of no immediate strategic significance, as in the case of China, they have merely composed moving diplomatic notes on the beauty of territorial integrity.

So far, regional location has been described primarily in terms of simple space relations; but it is obvious from the discussion of buffer states that the full meaning of these relations can be seen only in terms of topography, for topographical and climatic features will determine the main lines of contact between states.

Topography will determine the direction of mountains and rivers and thereby which will be the natural outflow border; climate will determine which rivers and ports are ice-free and which will remain closed all or part of the year. Climate and topography together will determine the nature of the border territory between states, and therefore whether contacts will take place in a zone of exposure or a zone of protection. The significance of the regional location of a state is obviously affected by the existence of an impassable mountain range or an open plain or river valley as its frontier.

Just as mountains and rivers determine the points of contact within a country, they determine the points of contact between countries. Mountains will direct the flow of rivers, and the nature of the river system, especially where the mouth of a river lies within the borders of a state, will define the sections within easy access of the sea. Even where the mouth of a river lies outside the state, the river sytem will indicate the spheres of interest of various parts of the country. The Rhine valley, as well as that of the Elbe and of the Weser, looks northwest to the sea; the valleys of the Oder and the Vistula find their most frequent and easy contact with the outside world through the Baltic ports; and the commodities and activities of the Danube valley are oriented southeastward toward Central Europe.

In rare cases such as Norway, the entire area of which faces west and south, Sweden, which looks to the south and east, and Chile, whose mountains seem on the verge of pushing her into the Pacific, a country is united by a similar orientation of all sections. But in most instances mountains cut across national borders, causing various parts of a country to look for contacts in different directions. In the United States, the direction and distance of the Rockies and Alleghenies from the coast and the southward flow of the rivers in the central part of the country determine the percentage of territory that faces the Pacific, the Atlantic, and the Gulf respectively. In Brazil, the influence of climate runs counter to that of topography, for the largest drainage area of the country, which slopes north to the Atlantic, is useless, and the only climatically effective area lies in the south, orienting the country toward the southeast notwithstanding that the greater river system flows north. Colombia, within its present boundaries, is prevented by the mountain range that runs between its Caribbean and Pacific coasts from being the passage state that, with its double ocean access, it might otherwise become.

On the European continent, the Alps and the Pyrenees do not encourage contacts on the Franco-Spanish, Franco-Swiss, or Franco-Italian frontiers, but, in sharp contrast to these relatively closed borders, the Franco-German and the Franco-Belgian frontiers lie open, and men and goods and ideas flow across them in incessant streams. Topographically speaking, Italy faces both east and west, for the Apennines run the length of the peninsula and rivers flow from them to either coast, but the most fertile part of Italy faces west, where volcanoes have created highly fertile plains cut by rivers flowing to the Tyrrhenian Sea. Topography and geography coöperated in the formation of Great Britain, where the river system flows east to the eastern ports, which are nearest the Continent and in constant contact with Continental ports. In Russia, on the other hand, topography and climate have done their worst. A large part of the country drains north to the Arctic by way of rivers the mouths of which are choked with ice twelve months of the year. Southwest of Russia, the Illyrian Alps force Balkan trade and communication into the Aegean and the Black Sea rather than the Mediterranean. Japan, the geographic counterpart of Great Britain, is less fortunate in her topography, as was mentioned earlier. The mountain range that runs the length of the island of Honshu has been an almost impassable barrier; all im-

portant ports are on the east coast; and the contacts of Japan with the mainland have for that reason occurred very late in Japanese history.

Examples of topography and climate as determining the direction of communication and the points of most frequent contact between countries can be multiplied indefinitely. Whether topography shuts all the doors of a state in the face of the rest of the world, or whether it opens them wide in every direction, the significance of the regional location of that state can be read only in the light of the directions in which it must seek its contacts, political, material, and cultural. If one's doors and windows can be only on the front of one's house, it is small consolation to realize that the teeming traffic of the world's main street is directly behind the house; and if nature has decreed that the house must be entered and left only by the back door, it is equally tragic to find that that door leads only to a quiet, grassy lane.

Topography and climate, however, not only determine the orientation of a state toward the outer world. They also determine, by determining the nature of the border territory, whether the contacts of that state shall take place through a zone of exposure or a zone of protection. From this point of view, it is possible to make certain observations regarding the different effects of different types of border territories and frontiers on the foreign policy of states.

It has been customary in the literature of the field to distinguish the following types of border territory, or so-called natural frontiers: river, sea-coast, forest, marsh, desert, and mountain ranges.[6] In general, it may be said that advanced technical development in systems of communication and methods of warfare has greatly reduced the natural protective value of such frontiers. The only geographical type that still seems to retain a certain protective value is a particular type of high mountain range. All states have

[6] Brunhes and Vallaux dismiss the question of natural frontiers with the following statement: "En définitive, les fleuves et les montagnes ne sont point des frontières naturelles. Les vraies frontières de ce genre sont, avec les côtes, les déserts d'altitude, les déserts proprement dits, les forêts primitives et les marais. Les déserts d'altitude n'existent que du Kouen-Lun à l'Himalaya; les déserts proprement dits et les forêts primitives sont en dehors des châines de grands États; les marais n'ont qu'une faible étendue, et ils diminuent sans cesse. Pratiquement, en dehors de l'Océan, il n'existe dans les régions actives aucune frontière naturelle entre les États. Partout les pressions de contiguïté s'exercent librement; ni les fleuves, ni les montagnes ne les arrêtent." Jean Brunhes and Camille Vallaux, *La Géographie de l'Histoire* (Paris, 1921), p. 361.

therefore supplemented whatever natural protection topography and climate have offered by artificial military organization in terms of strategic frontiers and fixed fortifications. Taking into consideration this possibility of modifying the natural protective features of geographical delineation, however, one may still claim that the different types of border territory enumerated have certain characteristics, the effect of which can be perceived in foreign policy.

In earlier periods of history, and in relatively new and undeveloped lands, rivers have often served as frontiers. The Rio Grande and the St. Lawrence still mark two of the borders of the United States. At first glance, a river appears to be an ideal and natural frontier, easily recognized and requiring no marking, but as time goes on and states develop on either side of the river, its disadvantages become more apparent than its advantages. Quite aside from the technical difficulties of determining where a river is and is not, and has and has not been, after the processes of erosion and avulsion have been going on for decades, if any economic or social development takes place, the river valley will inevitably tend to become a unit in itself, and the river will cease to function as a frontier. In spite of the assertions of General Foch, the Rhine is not an ideal frontier, for its valley is definitely an economic, industrial, and cultural unit and will continue to be so regardless of where the actual legal frontier may be drawn. The Vistula valley is equally a unit, whether it be contained wholly within Polish borders or Poland be partitioned among her three neighbors.

The effect of such a frontier on foreign policy is obvious. As the valley becomes a unit there will be an inevitable tendency for each riparian state to desire to include the entire valley within its territory. The function of the river as a barrier will completely disappear, and instead of a clearly defined frontier there will exist between the states a zone of territory belonging wholly to neither and desired by both. If one state is overwhelmingly stronger than the other, that state will probably acquire the river valley in time by fair means or foul. If the states are of approximately equal strength, the possession of the valley will remain an unattained objective and a source of friction which will inevitably be reflected in their policies toward each other.

The sea coast as a frontier may exercise a dividing or a uniting influence, depending on the size of the sea, the degree of technical

development of navigation, and the development of sea power in general and in the state in particular. It is not a natural frontier in that it keeps people out, unless, as in the case of the northern coast of Russia, climatic conditions close its ports to all traffic in either direction. On the contrary, it is a highway of approach, and becomes a defensive barrier only if the country can command it by an effective fleet, when the fleet rather than the sea acts as a barrier. As was mentioned in connection with the discussion of the regional location of Japan and Great Britain, this protective function has decreased since the development of aërial warfare. Nevertheless, the Atlantic and the Pacific remain the chief elements in the defense of the United States, and will be so as long as the United States maintains a navy able to protect its shores and the cruising radius of bombing squadrons is less than four thousand miles.

A coast is the natural line for the frontier, however, and as such all states have sought it and continue to seek it. The possession of a strip of coast-line offers the incomparable advantage of freedom of movement and possibility of initiation of movement beyond the frontier, and is often the key to successful offensive or defensive warfare whether on land or sea, for it makes possible a degree of mobility and a power of concentration of effectives that the most elaborate scheme of mobilization by means of the most strategically planned railroad or road system could never equal.

The forest frontier has probably lost its protective value more completely than any other natural barrier, but in earlier periods, before technical development allowed man to penetrate or annihilate vast wooded areas, they served as genuine barriers against communication or invasion. The northeastern boundary of the Roman Empire was the solid forest zone of Germany, and in the Middle Ages the forests around Moscow sheltered the infant Russian nation from Asiatic hordes sweeping in from the eastern plains. Even today, the conquest of certain tropical forest regions in South America is not complete. It is questionable, however, whether there still exist any forest border zones large enough or sufficiently difficult to penetrate to influence significantly either foreign policy in general or national defense in particular, although the Panama Canal is still considered impregnable against land attack because of the dense tropical forests on either side.

Swamps, on the other hand, retain a definite defense value, even

against the most advanced military instruments of the twentieth century, as the English army learned in Flanders. The Babylonians were unwise enough to reduce by their own efforts the marsh areas that protected them, and race after race of invaders swept across their frontiers, but the Terai swamp between Bengal and Nepal has effectively guarded the independence of Nepal, and the Pripet marshes have more than once provided a barrier against Russian invasion of central Poland. Indeed, so effective have swamps proved as instruments of defense that nations have even created them artificially.

> Swamps are probably even more difficult to cross than a moderate range of mountains. . . . The artificial swamp, created by the Allies in western Belgium, made movement and attack on that part of the front impossible. The intense bombardment in the Ypres salient and the resulting quagmire made attack difficult for either side, and rendered the use of tanks almost impossible in that area. In fact, swamps would appear to be a greater obstacle to the use of tanks than are deserts, mountains, or even rivers. They may, however, lose their protective power entirely in cold winters, and when frozen over become instead, on account of their level surface, a region of easy movement.[7]

The value of a desert frontier lies not only in the difficulty of its terrain but also in its lack of water, which compels an invading force to follow a specific route along known wells and thus prevents an attack at an unexpected point. Recent engineering developments have tended definitely to lessen the protective power of deserts by making possible the construction of railroads and motor roads, but certain desert areas retain even today a very considerable defense value. The Thar desert east of the Indus, extending about four hundred miles northeastward from the Rann of Cutch, forces an invader of northwestern India to limit his route to the narrow strip between the desert and the Himalayas, as the battlefields of centuries around Delhi mutely testify. In the same way, the deserts east and west of Egypt and the Nile cataracts have limited the possibilities of invasion of that land to approaches from the sea or from the Sinai peninsula, and the Sahara rather than the Mediterranean is still the southern limit of European culture and civilization.

The most effective natural barrier, however, is a combination of desert and mountain areas—namely, high plateaus. The value of

[7] D. H. Cole, *Imperial Military Geography* (London, 1926), pp. 23–24.

a mountain range as a protection against invasion depends on various factors—the number and altitude of the passes and whether or not they are blocked by snow, the direction of the passes, whether the slope to the passes is easier on one side than on the other, whether the mountain range runs counter to the direction of advance, thus blocking it, or parallel to it, offering a choice of routes to the invader, and the possibility of strategic railroads to the base of the mountains or over the passes. The Alps slope more gently on the French side than on the Italian, and the semi-circular shape of the range causes routes to converge near Turin and Milan so that invading forces from France moving by different routes can unite easily in Italy, while Italian armies advancing into France must diverge, making communication increasingly difficult. In fact, the Alps, which appear at first glance to offer complete protection to the peninsula, have more than once proved the "splendid traitor" to Italian defense that Napoleon once called them. It is possible to follow the rivers of Central Europe which rise in the Alps through passes leading to the Po tributaries; it is possible to reach Italy from the valley of the Danube and its tributaries; and in the west the mountains stop short of the coast, leaving an open strip of level coast-land leading directly into the heart of Italy.

The value of a mountain range as a barrier depends, too, not so much on its absolute height as on the topography of the mountain region in general. The Alps are higher than the Pyrenees, but have broad valleys and many passes, while the Pyrenees stretch like an unbroken wall from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic; and the Dinaric Alps, although low, block the access of Hungary to the Adriatic because of their special type of limestone topography. The Andes interpose an almost complete barrier between Chile and Argentina because of the small number of passes; and the Zagros effectively bar Iran from Iraq. The Hindu Kush range, although at first glance it appears to furnish adequate protection to northwestern India, has low passes and has never been an effective barrier from either a commercial or a military point of view. The Himalayan range, however, offers the combination that has already been suggested as ideal—a mountain range backed by a desert plateau, and blocks the direct way from China to India more effectively than any fortification that man could devise.

That mountains, even when not perfect barriers for defense,

contribute nevertheless to the stability of frontiers[8] can be seen in the history of those countries whose frontiers are merely lines in open plains. The boundaries of Poland, Hungary, and the present Baltic states have shown a lamentable tendency to shift, as has the open border between France and Germany. In other words, the existence of a mountain range as a frontier almost always offers a certain degree of security, whether or not it is a complete barrier.

The preceding illustrations have made it clear that regional location, both in terms of sea or land orientation and in terms of the relative strength of neighbors, is definitely affected by topography and climate. These conditioning factors must be kept constantly in mind in any attempt to classify a particular state as having a certain type of regional location and to find in that state's policy the elements characteristic of that location type.

So we find that, although the entire policy of a state does not derive from its geography, it cannot escape that geography. Size, shape, location, topography, and climate posit conditions from which there is no escape, however skilled the Foreign Office, and however resourceful the General Staff. Belgium, with her present size, cannot place her industrial centers beyond the reach of enemy bombing planes; the present configuration of Czechoslovakia invites the loss of her western wedge of territory; Syria and Iraq will continue to be the crossroads between East and West; Thibet will always be a barrier state; and the Arctic ports of Russia will not thaw. With these facts foreign policy must reckon. It can deal with them skillfully or ineptly; it can modify them; but it cannot ignore them. For geography does not argue. It simply is.

[8] Brunhes and Vallaux consistently refuse to admit the Alps and Pyrenees as contributing factors in the stability of the southern French frontier: "Il est à remarquer que, sur le long développement des frontières françaises, celles qui montrent le plus de tendances à s'immobiliser sont les frontières montagneuses des Alpes et des Pyrénées. Ce ne sont point ces chaînes de montagnes qui contraignent la frontière à la fixité. Dans les Pyrénées, la fixation date de deux siècles; dans les Alpes, elle date de cinquante ans; mais dans l'un et dans l'autre cas, la montagne n'a été qu'un élément passif. L'équilibre instable des forces produit par la densité variable du peuplement et par les variations de valeur des territoires donne ici, comme pour beaucoup d'autres faits de la géographie politique, l'explication du mouvement et du repos. C'est là une première donnée qui nous servira à ramener à sa juste valeur la notion des frontières naturelles." *Op. cit.*, p. 354.