

CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN GEOPOLITICS IN EURASIA

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Abstract

According to Classical Geopolitics Europe is a geographic peninsular region on the western edge of the Eurasian “World Island”. Europe is aided by its internal geography in bouts of unification, often imposed through force, and led by the Germans in Mitteleuropa projecting into the Eurasian Heartland of Russia, and along the Eurasian “Rimland” and its maritime trade routes and chokepoints. Presently Europe has both integration and disintegration forces in economics and politics. Current trends could be leading to a German-led superpower in a multi-polar world, with the potential decline of the United States, and the emergence of other new civilizational superpowers, such as Asia and Pan Arabia, with nodes of power in the Eurasian Heartland, along the Eurasian Rimland and its encircling oceanic trade routes.

Europe will have to contend with its internal economic, political, social challenges, and also solve its resource dependency (especially for oil and gas imports), through continuing vibrant trade to secure its imports, and maintain exports. Only by the EU amassing its aggregate ability to deepen unity from within, and project its accumulated power without can it ensure external international trade. So Europe may then be emboldened to achieve dominance into the Eurasian Heartland and around the Eurasian Rimland and its maritime trade routes.

Keywords: *Europe, Eurasia, Heartland, Rimland, trade routes, chokepoint.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Rimland of Classical Geopolitics (shown in Figure 1) is the Eurasian continental coastal land region between the Heartland and the Eurasian maritime highway, the encircling seas.

Europe is on the Spykman (1944) “Rimland”, on the west coast of the “World Island” (Eurasia) atop Africa, west of Russia, and on the sea lane of the great maritime highway from the Barents Sea to the far eastern Mediterranean Sea with two major sea gates or chokepoints, the Strait of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal. Europe also borders Western Russia’s sphere of influence which is often strategic in the power play between the European and Russian powers. Obviously with such a geostrategic location, Europe has been of great importance across the panorama of history for empires and kingdoms to project their influence afar. Following the same line of thinking, Rogers (2011, p. 25) says to ignore European geography and geopolitics would be a [big] mistake.



Figure 1: The Spykman Rimland

In this contemporary and dramatic epoch the classical geopolitics of the Spykman Rimland is one of the most enduring dynamic and fruitful systems of analysis for a comprehensive and systematic understanding of Europe, in the current state of international affairs and forces, which shape the present world. Spykman (1944, p. 43) argued that, “Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; Who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world”. For Europe to have increased dominance, its geopolitics should maintain and extend influence into Eurasia, across the Rimland and its maritime highway.

Waltz (1993) highlights that Spykman foresaw the post-World-War-Two international order just as he predicted the pre-war conditions, with international relations continuing to operate within the same fundamental power patterns, largely associated with Eurasia, specifically with the Rimland continuing to take primary importance.

Europe also borders the Eurasian Heartland and this location, in classical geopolitical terms, naturally tends toward conflict between Europe and Russia, with the victor at any time amassing strategic advantage for increased dominance across Eurasia (Mackinder, 1904).

Europe’s challenges and future as a superpower will be in the looming multi-polar world order (Missiroli, 2013) within which there is the potential decline of the United States, and the emergence of other civilizational superpowers, such as Asia and Pan Arabia (Leigh and Vukovic, 2011a, pp. 47-66; Ferdinand, 2007; Lewis, 2009; Garton Ash, 2011).

In this study “Europe” and the “EU” will be used interchangeably throughout as synonyms unless obviously shown otherwise in context. The UK is not generally highlighted as its EU membership is increasingly problematic, and this could indicate its eventual withdrawal from the EU (Crook, 2013). We will consider the importance of European power projecting into the Heartland, and investigate the great geostrategic challenge and importance of Europe’s projection of power into the Rimland, and along the trade routes, and into the chokepoints of the Eurasian Rimland’s maritime surrounds. Prudent manipulation of these geopolitical factors is imperative for continued European economic development through trade (Spykman, 1942; 1944).

2. SPYKMAN’S CLASSICAL GEOPOLITICS

The World Island (Eurasia) classical geopolitical model of Nicholas Spykman emphasizing the Rimland, culminated in his last and posthumously published book, “The Geography of the Peace” (1944). In this book, Spykman’s geostrategy highlights the need for the balance of power in Eurasia to be maintained so that the world balance of power would prevail – without

any new hegemon rising in Eurasia, and limiting the potential dominance of the Soviet Union and any other prospective superpowers, such as China, Japan and India. Alternatively, imagine what incredible power these four nations could amass if they were to ally into a gigantic Asian conglomerate superpower (Zhaokui, 2004; De Courcy, 2005).

Spykman adopted Mackinder's geopolitical divisions of the world but renamed some and changed the emphasis on them (Ostrovsky, 2008/9, p. 17; Foster, 2005; Mackinder, 1904; 1919):

- Even though he accepted Mackinder's Heartland of Eurasia, the Rimland was given primary strategic emphasis (replacing the Heartland as Mackinder's most strategic region) and renamed from, and analogous to, Mackinder's "inner or marginal crescent"
- He also emphasized on the geostrategic importance of the Eurasian Rimland's maritime surrounds, particularly for their role as oceanic highways for transport and trade, through various strategic chokepoints or sea gates.

To complete this framework for classical geopolitics, we should also consider that Alfred Mahan argued for sea power's great importance, and this is still very relevant when considering the Rimland's maritime surrounds, where the world's superhighway trade routes and vital chokepoints are, in the increasingly globalised world of today. He argued for sea power if a nation is to have the diplomatic and naval military presence to thrive. Sea power assumes trans-oceanic intercontinental trade, and requires intercontinental overseas relations with other nations for resources and markets, a merchant and military navy for the maintenance of trade and projection of power, and far flung commercial ports and naval bases along the sea lanes (Mohan, 2007, p. 9; Mahan, 1890).

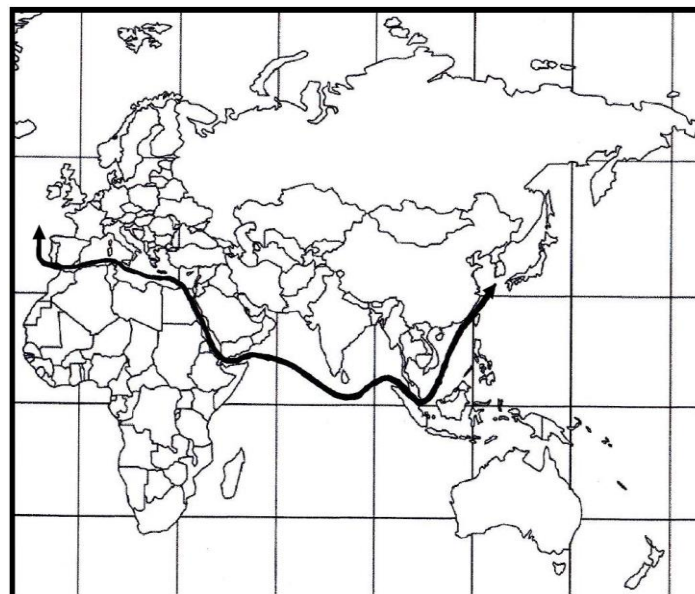


Figure 2: Eurasian Main Maritime Trade Route

Therefore, it is inherent for this land and sea area – the Rimland and its maritime surrounds – to function as a vast arena of conflict involving sea power and land power. The Rimland includes the countries of Western Europe, the Middle East, Persian Gulf, southwest Asia, China and the Far East up to far eastern Russia along the Bering Sea. The hugely strategic Rimland coast and maritime regions include the trade routes which are arteries supplying the goods for economic development and its maintenance from Europe to Asia and even worldwide. Control of these maritime areas gives incredible power and influence to the

possessor (Bordonaro, 2009). Figure 2 shows the main Eurasian maritime trade route connecting Europe all the way to Asia through the Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

3. “RISE OF THE REST” IN A MULTI-POLAR WORLD

Fareed Zakaria (2009) has argued that the world is currently experiencing the “rise of the rest”. And as U.S. hegemony declines precipitously (even possibly to the point of being irrelevant) (Reid, 2004; Kupchan, 2008), due to unsustainable debt and a consumer-based economy, the eventual outcome may shift towards American isolation and withdrawal from significant international engagement in a post-American world. This isolationist attitude could facilitate the rise of new civilization-based superpowers – possibility a united German-led Europe, an Asian international conglomerate centered around Russia and China, plus non-Arab Iran heading a regional alliance of Islamist Pan Arabia (Leigh and Vukovic, 2011a, pp. 47-66; Ferdinand, 2007; Lewis, 2009). This would place the most significant nodes of power on the Eurasian World Island, with one extension of Pan-Arabian North Africa along the south of the World Island Rimland maritime coast, as shown in Figure 3.

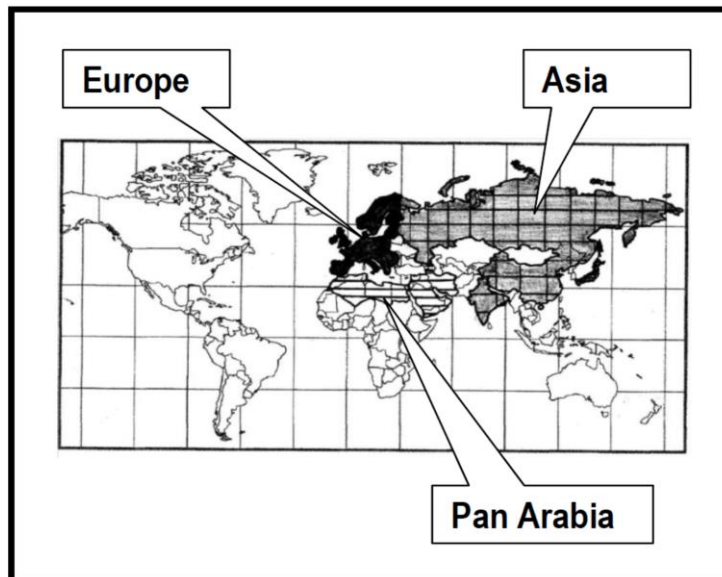


Figure 3: Prospective Civilization Superpowers

Europe’s geostrategic location, its internal geography, the remaining natural resource reserves, and the emergence of a hegemonic Germany, will all influence how Europe establishes itself an eminent place in the newly looming multi-polar world order (Missiroli, 2013). Europe has many of the credentials that may facilitate its development to be a dominant civilizational superpower (Leigh, 2009). However, Europe’s power may be vulnerable due to its overextended banking system, the pervasive debt of its states, the diverse levels of (seventeen Eurozone) member states’ economic development under one currency, and the legacy of political disunity lingering within the nationalism of member nations. Europe may also be further undermined by its overly high level of international resource dependence, and much of these imports are brought through Rimland oceanic trade routes and from Russia through the Heartland (Missiroli, 2013, p. 17).

4. EUROPE'S GERMANY OR GERMANY'S EUROPE?

Europe's current rise to an international superpower is aided by its internal geography. Europe is primarily composed of smallish, sovereign nations, without formidable internal physical barriers that would effectively separate these states. For instance, without natural internal barriers, except for navigable rivers and remnant forests, the Great Northern Plain allows easy internal physical access across northern Europe (Wolff, 2008). Even the Alps in the south have not been an impassable barrier into Mediterranean Europe (Behar, 2010). Open internal political borders facilitate economic and political integration and encourage the free movement of people, trade and capital. Within this network, Germany nestles in Mitteleuropa (the heart of Europe) and its tendrils of power and influence reach east and west, north and south. History demonstrates that during periods of Germanic expansion (since the Germanic Holy Roman Empire), its projection of power can be across large swathes of Europe.

In the past, the combination of smallish states and few internal physical barriers proved to be an incubator for conflict, highlighted most famously by two World Wars when the Allies fought to contain Germany. However, in light of a resurgent and again dominant post-World-War-II Germany, combined with a European common currency (in the Eurozone), and Europe-wide integrated economic and political systems, Europe's topography may facilitate the merger into one civilizational superpower on the Rimland, rather than revert to inciting violent conflict.

However, increasingly many voices are beginning to interpret the new Europe, the EU, to be a cloak for German expansion, or eventually even German nationalism, empowering a looming German European empire (Osborne, 2011). Therefore, Europe's topography may allow a Berlin-dominated Brussels to rule Europe into one cohesive international super-state. In such a union, the people, trade and militaries would be able to move across Europe relatively seamlessly and effortlessly.

When taken as a collective whole, Europe rivals the United States, with economic diversity, a larger diverse manpower base (with half a billion population), plus more gold reserves (Anonymous, 2013a), even excluding the Vatican's private reserves, and a more trade-driven economy (thanks largely to Germany) with the largest value of external trade in the world (Anonymous 2011a).

Furthermore, Europe has access to ports in the Atlantic Ocean, North Sea, Barents Sea, Baltic Sea, Black Sea, and Mediterranean Sea. Europe's shape is not defensively ideal, particularly given its extended border with Russia's sphere of influence (from the Barents Sea overland to the Black Sea), and other lengthy borders on the Mediterranean. However, this does allow Europe to project its power into multiple international arenas. For example, Europe sits in western Eurasia, atop Africa. And with the inclusion of Cyprus into the EU, Europe's sphere of influence now thrusts into the Middle East and also waits to stir beneath the southern coast of Turkey. And, even though EU membership is not expected for Israel, the inclusion of Israel as an ally with privileged associated status, could give Europe an extra presence in the Mediterranean and the Middle East along the Rimland and its maritime surrounds, further enhancing projections of its power. As a result, Germany through the EU (due to its large amalgamated geostrategic spread and influence) could become a major player across multiple arenas.

As historically evidenced by the Holy Roman Empire and both world wars, Europe often experiences forced unification by a strong Germanic state. Germany is Europe's typical "center", both geographically, economically and often politically. So a powerful German

nation tends to dominate Europe, whenever it has the power and opportunity to do so. The late erstwhile British Prime Minister Lady Margaret Thatcher went against the political tide in the early 1990s when she said, “Some people say you have to anchor Germany to Europe to stop these [domineering] features from coming out again. Well, you have not anchored Germany to Europe, but Europe to a newly dominant Germany. That is why I call it a German Europe” (Gardels, 2011).

So the European Union essentially tied Europe to Germany. As Germany goes, so goes the rest of Europe. Furthermore, given the recent development of Germany becoming the world’s second largest exporter and its contributions to the EU as a benefactor eventually bankrolling the bailouts in several EU nations (Evans-Pritchard, 2013), Europe looks primed to survive into the new world order with Germany at the helm. Since a strong Europe requires a strong Germany, and Germany now has the largest economy and population in Europe with increasingly dominant political leadership, it is expected that Germany will provide the fundamental cornerstone to the looming European superpower. This superpower would require the integration of the European military into one command structure, and if Germany can orchestrate this feat, then it will undoubtedly be in the driver’s seat for all of Europe, allowing it to project a powerful international agenda.

It is commonly believed that there are only two nuclear nations in Europe, the UK and France. Upon closer scrutiny it becomes clear that is not so. When the nations that warehouse NATO nuclear weapons are included, then the number of nuclear nations grows considerably by four more, to a total of six as shown in Figure 4. These “undeclared nuclear weapons states” are: Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy (Rozoff, 2009; Chossudovsky, 2010). Furthermore, these weapons await use in these nations free of any technological restrictions from NATO. In any emergency Europe would be free to use these hundreds of weapons according to its own agenda.

Additionally, of the four undeclared nuclear states, Germany is the most heavily nuclearized country with three nuclear bases which may store nuclear weapons. Germany produces nuclear warheads for the French Navy and stockpiles American-made nuclear warheads while possessing the capabilities to deliver these weapons (Chossudovsky, 2010). Within the military ambit it is also interesting to note that Germany is the third largest exporter of weapons in the world (Knipp, 2013).



Figure 4: Nuclear Nations in Europe

So all this would give a German-led Europe powerful backup in any international diplomacy or conflict. As Alfred Mahan (1912, p. 31) said, “Force is never more operative than when it is known to exist but is not brandished”. And the main credible military powers that could threaten Europe, in addition to the USA, are from within the Eurasian Heartland (Russia) and along the Eurasian Rimland and maritime surrounds (China, Japan and India).

Even further, it is interesting to note that Germany has shaken off reluctance for international military missions. At this time Germany is active in eleven international military missions with a total of over 6,500 soldiers in Afghanistan, Turkey, Lebanon, Kosovo, the Mediterranean Sea, Mali/Senegal, Sudan, South Sudan, D.R. Congo, Uganda and the Horn of Africa (Anonymous, 2013b). This military presence is mainly focused on the Eurasian Rimland, or in proximity to the coastal region around the Rimland, with strategic importance placed on monitoring and controlling events and trends there. Critics would say this is a manifestation of growing confidence or even boldness in German foreign policy to project power for its own agenda afar. Surely the German agenda is already being expressed to some extent in European foreign policy. As Europe fully unifies and develops a single-command multipurpose military (with a navy, air force and army) it is expected to act more powerfully for the German foreign policy.

Also to support the European projection of maritime power across the Rimland’s coast, the UK and France have several military naval bases stretching across the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the North Pacific Ocean (Rogers, 2009, pp. 31-32). Along with international relations these military naval infrastructures lay the beginnings of a network to protect the supply and transport of goods for trade in and out of Europe along the trans-ocean trade routes of the World Island maritime periphery.

Within the same maritime arena, there is growing palpable awareness and concern in Germany that trans-oceanic trade must be protected and maintained. German prosperity depends greatly on this maritime trade requiring secure sea lanes which must be protected by a powerful navy. A powerful German navy does protect these trade routes, it has been declared, against political, ethnic, religious and economic conflicts, and also piracy and the global reach of international terrorism, all of which are likely threats to the unhindered sea links and the free exchange of goods in trade (Bundeswehr, 2013) around the Eurasian Rimland.

5. EMERGING CHALLENGES FOR A GERMAN-LED EUROPE

Despite Germany’s tremendous growth, the varying levels of economic development among EU members may prevent Europe from easily achieving its desired status as a future superpower through soft or amicable democratic processes. For example, the following indexes indicate the south is impoverished relative to the north: current account balance, net public savings and gross private savings (Taylor, 2012). Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden and Finland) have apparently sound economic and fiscal profiles and high incomes per capita (Anonymous, 2013c), while central, old or core Europe, including Germany, France, and Italy, possess the largest economies, and fairly high standards of living. Except for Italy, no southern or eastern European nation in the EU has a GDP per capita above the EU average, with eastern Europe generally being the worst off (Vella-Baldacchino, 2006).

Specifically southern Europe, encompassing Portugal, Greece, Spain and Cyprus have poorer and lower performing economies (Anonymous, 2013d) and eastern Europe with Slovenia, Czechia, Estonia, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria have lower than EU average GDP per capita (Vella-Baldacchino, 2006; Anonymous, 2011b). This creates a problematic dichotomy of wealthy (mainly the north – with Scandinavia, Benelux and Core Europe) and poor nations (mainly southern and eastern

Europe), and is particularly complicated and problematic when considering that the EU, with 27 nations, also includes the Eurozone (of seventeen economically diverse nations across Europe) with its inadequate one-size-fits-all currency – the euro.

It is economically impossible to use one currency across states with multiple different economic development levels, since fiscal and monetary policy becomes ineffective when it is not responsive to the economic circumstances in each state. One size does not fit all. The poorer economies like that of Greece and Portugal require much different policies and management than richer economies of countries like Germany and Denmark.

Even the contrasting monetary policies of two Eurozone leaders, France and Germany, highlight the divergence of approaches to fiscal management. France favors a loose currency, whereas Germany's politics are centered on tight money controls. And given that Germany's economy is export driven, the value of the euro in international trade could markedly affect the level of German exports and trade balance. An EU nation not so export driven would probably desire a differently valued euro than what the Germans prefer. Europe needs to find a solution to contrasting monetary policies so they do not negatively impinge on one another, if the member states are to integrate more effectively and harmoniously.

If the EU is unable to find a solution to the multiple stages of economic development, Germany risks becoming bankrupt by continuing to finance other European nations' debt, and the EU may become unstable and risk collapse, preventing any sort of European preeminence in the multi-polar world order arising on the World Island.

In addition, some EU countries, to qualify for economic bailouts, experience increasing imposed economic austerity (largely from Berlin through Brussels), and the stripping of citizens' bank accounts through "haircuts" (ostensibly to ease the national debt and banking indebtedness) (Corbett and Chossudovsky, 2013), along with the loss of national sovereignty. This austerity and loss of consumer capital and national autonomy produce rising grassroots dissatisfaction with EU membership against the pro-European leadership (Catalinotto, 2013). The severity of this austerity and loss should not be underestimated. Marios Christou (2013), an economist at the University of Nicosia, says that "the stripping of Cyprus bank accounts of at least 40%, in the two major Cypriot banks, is a ruthless bloodless destruction of a people".

In response to the government-imposed haircut and capital controls, the depositors, in the first month of the ensuing austerity, withdrew 10% of the total Cyprus bank accounts' deposits, thus revealing a high level of grass-roots resistance and mistrust against the banking regime being set up by the government and its authorities, proffered by the EU and its Troika (comprised of the International Monetary Fund, European Commission and European Central Bank) (Durden, 2013). An increasingly severe government-imposed austerity wave across the whole European south, could set up opposing agendas between governments and their peoples leading to civil hostility and unrest, and the use of hard engagement and containment policies by the governments to maintain civil law and order (Jenkins, 2013).

The recent elections, in Greece and Cyprus, are already transitioning these nations towards becoming subdued vassal states of Europe. If the recent economic frailties and inability to impose budgetary balances continue, it can be reasonably assumed that Spain and Portugal are going the same way. Further, if both the global recession continues and the troubled southern European states fail to improve economically, the dissolution of the EU may appear unavoidable unless harsh, less democratic measures are taken not only to strip citizens' savings (in their bank accounts) but also their wealth more comprehensively (for example with land and provident fund taxes and other wealth taxes) in order to prop up the governments and financial institutions (Evans-Pritchard, 2013). And we already see this lack of democracy arising with recent unelected EU-appointed premiers in Italy (with Mario Monti) and Greece (with Lucas Demetrios Papademos) trending towards alienation of governments and their peoples, not only due to imposed non-democratic measures, but also

the hijacking of national political leadership, power and policies which the people perceive to be unfair and even illegal.

Varying degrees of national economic development and therefore political power in the EU probably mean that there will be a restructure across Europe in the political and economic arenas (Granville, Henkel and Kawalec, 2013; Salmon, 2011). The fundamental principles of a restructure would lead to a German-led core Europe and a periphery both in economic and political terms. Whatever the final currency for the core is, it surely will be pushed towards international currency status, freely convertible, and be different from the periphery's currency. The periphery states may even go back to their own original currencies and so form a collection of weakened European vassal states, fragmented economically into different national currencies. And as the periphery will have weakened economic vitality, it could be assumed that the level of political representation into the centralized European political system of the core would be minimized.

Is Europe an empire? José Manuel Barroso, the president of the European Commission, hailed the European Union as an "empire" when he said, "I like to compare the EU as a creation to the organization of empire" (Waterfield, 2007). This gives credence to the idea that the EU is an empire or superpower in the making and is befitting of the suggestion that there could be peripheral vassal states.

For Europe to have any chance of dominion on the World Island Heartland, and along the Rimland and its maritime trade routes and their chokepoints, it must amass the aggregate of the EU to reach a critical-mass level of both economic and political power as a basis to project into this international continental and oceanic arena.

6. EUROPEAN RESOURCE DEPENDENCY

Biscop and Andersson (2007, p. 75) have argued that the Persian Gulf, Russia, the Caspian Basin and North Africa are the umbilical cords that keep the EU dependent on Eurasia (and the North African nations bordering its maritime surrounds) for energy resources.

So if the EU manages to survive intact against the disintegration forces of its present economic malaise, the next immediate concern is undoubtedly its level of international resource dependency (Ahtonen and Frontini, 2013) as it imported 84% of its oil and 64% of its gas in 2009 (European Commission, 2011). In total Europe imports massive quantities of food, minerals, oil, and natural gas. Without these overly high levels of imports, the European economy and civilization will collapse in days or weeks.

Even more specifically, 40% of European oil was imported from the Persian Gulf in the early 2000's (Leigh and Vukovic, 2011a, p. 129), while it was reported in 2009 that 36% of European gas (through pipelines) and 31% of European oil and 30% of its coal were imported from Russia (European Commission, 2013a). Consequently, with the potential and increasing boldness of an Iran-led Islamist Pan Arabian alliance (in the Persian Gulf and across North Africa) (Goodspeed, 2011; Garton Ash, 2011), and Russia looking east to nestle in a new geopolitical home of an Asian conglomerate superpower (Weitz, 2012; Leigh and Vukovic, 2011, p. 60), Europe could be almost entirely energy dependent on big rivals and threatening foes from across the Eurasian World Island Heartland and Rimland, thus weakening Europe's chances of dominating this super-continent.

So Europe is vulnerable to the service of trade and overland gas pipelines from Russia, and trade along Eurasian maritime trade routes. These trade routes stretch from the Strait of Gibraltar chokepoint to the Strait of Malacca chokepoint (and beyond) and also include the other vital chokepoints in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region – the Suez Canal, the Bab el Mandab and the Strait of Hormuz (Leigh and Vukovic, 2011b) as shown in Figure 5. Delays or closures along these Russian overland trade routes and pipelines, maritime trade

routes and chokepoints, could easily inflict an energy and imports crisis in Europe without oil, gas and other products, exacerbating the already stressed economic conditions and difficulties.

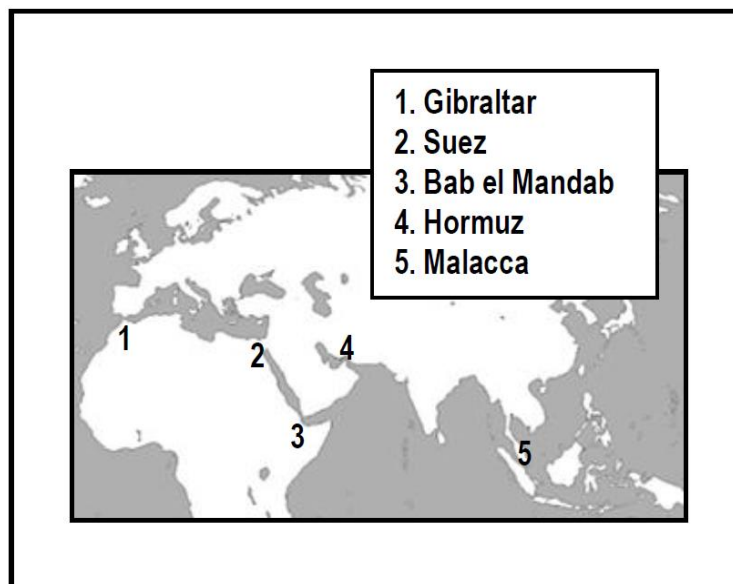


Figure 5: Chokepoints on Eurasian Maritime Trade Routes

Even more distressing from a European point of view is Russia's determination to maintain Europe's dependence on its Russian gas. In addition to the existing overland Europe-bound Russian gas pipelines passing through Eastern Europe, the new pipeline project, the North Stream, takes additional gas into Germany (for further distribution to Europe) from Russia. Furthermore, Europe, in an effort to further diversify out of over dependence on Russian gas, recently developed the Nabucco project concept to boost pipeline-gas imports from the Caspian Basin, not Russia. However, Russia aggressively responded with the possibility of the South Stream project, to pipeline Russian gas directly, through the Black Sea, into Europe, essentially gutting the potential viability of the projected Nabucco pipeline, and ensuring Europe's continued Russian dependence (Gilbert, 2009). And other pipeline projects are also being considered. However, even without any of these projected pipelines, oil imports from the Caspian Basin already amount to over 8% of EU oil imports (European Commission, 2013b).

Furthermore, prospective Europe-bound oil and gas pipelines, overland and undersea, from the Persian Gulf and Caspian Basin, will only increase the strategic location of these regions' oceanic and overland trade routes which include the Black Sea and Turkish Straits chokepoint.

European dependence anxiety may be tempered slightly by the anticipation of commercial offshore oil and gas fields south of Cyprus, and in proximity to Israel, potentially heralding a growing economic cooperation between these two countries, and by default also including the EU (Wurmser, 2013; Anonymous, 2013e). This will encourage the EU presence even more into this strategic Rimland region and its maritime surround, the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean.

It is also interesting to note that the European identity perceives the Mediterranean Sea as a European lake belonging largely to Europe and its sphere of influence. Figure 6 shows that from Gibraltar to the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe juts out into the Sea prominently with mainland Spain, Italy and Greece, and European islands along the way like Sardinia, Sicily,

Malta, Crete and Cyprus. These peninsulas and islands (along the Rimland maritime trade routes) give credence to the idea that this Sea is indeed European.

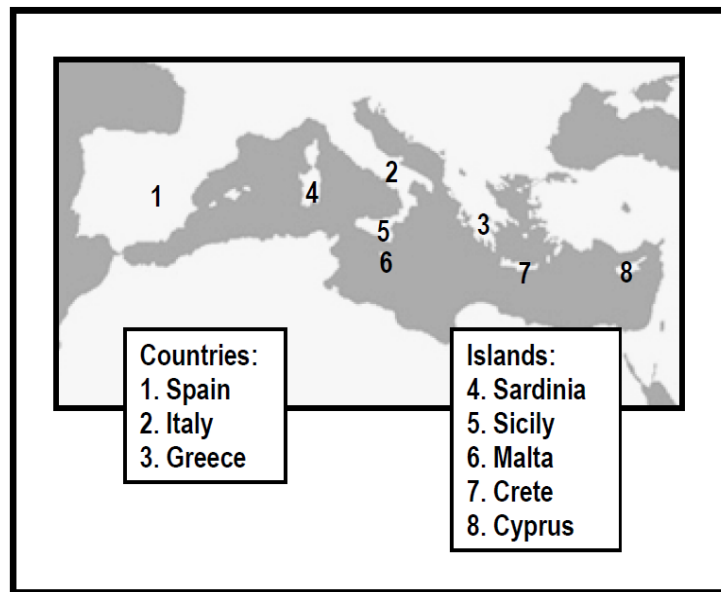


Figure 6: Europe Prominent in the Mediterranean

However, European vulnerability to energy imports is not just a challenge involving Russia, but also the Persian Gulf which is an arena in which Iran is increasingly bold (Leigh and Vukovic, 2010; Leigh and Vukovic, 2011a, p. 129). Iran has irked much of the international community for several years with its refusal to halt its nuclear program or allow external inspection in the spirit of transparency. Also as the Strait of Hormuz runs along the Iranian coast overlooked by Iranian highlands, it is easy for Iran to monitor and even control the traffic passing through the strait. Iranian identity includes its right to control much of the Persian Gulf region and the Strait itself which Iranian leadership often threatens to close if any geopolitical or military threat becomes significant. With the added growing influence of Iran in nations of the Arab Spring (Goodspeed, 2011), the diffusing Iranian influence and power across the Middle East and North Africa is extremely worrying to Europe.

The current problematic European oil supply imported from the Persian Gulf, North Africa and Russia, accounts for a whopping 57% of oil imports. The Persian Gulf makes up 15% of oil imports into the EU, and North Africa and Russia account for 12% and almost 30% respectively (European Commission, 2013b). All of this trade and international economic activity, vital to Europe, is on or around the World Island, and it is here that Europe must have significant influence to ensure the security of this trade along the land and sea trade routes (Missiroli, 2013, p. 17).

It is also expected that conventional oil supply for export from many producer nations will decline due to growing domestic needs as these nations develop themselves economically (Lahn and Stevens, 2011, pp. VII,2; Stevens and Hulbert, 2012, p. 4). And this along with the fact that 54 of the 65 major oil producer nations are beyond peak oil production (due to oil fields' exhaustion) will lead to continuing production and export decline in the coming years (Alekklett, 2007, p. 60). So conventional oil could be much more scarce leading to fierce competition from importer nations (like the already developed nations of the USA and Europe, plus developing nations like China and India) to maintain their import needs. Such expected fierce competition could lead to conflict at diplomatic and military levels, largely across and around Eurasia where most of this oil is produced.

Also Europe develops agricultural projects and imports food and other primary products. Europe is the world's largest food importer, and the value of its food imports are more than 35% of the value of its food exports (Von Witzke and Noleppa, p. 6). In total Europe imports from Eurasia, the USA, Africa and South America, and in the process confronts direct and increasing competition, for these agricultural commodities and other primary products, from other importers such as China, India, Japan and other countries. And the level of aggressive pursuit of the products from Africa and South America is increasing. Vying for advantage for food and other primary products will surely grow to fever pitch as "the race for what's left" intensifies for countries and blocs of countries to maintain and increase their economic development (Klare, 2012). This will be a major challenge for Europe to maintain its imports and could involve serious conflict in the future. This resource dependency hinders Europe in the future world order, since any prolonged conflict with a Pan-Arabian alliance or an Asian conglomerate superpower (which could include Russia) could result in a drastic European energy and food imports crisis.

Europe, for obvious reasons, needs good international relations and a certain level of dominance, and the ability to project power and influence around the Eurasian Rimland, and beyond, through commercial and military naval infrastructures, and so protect trade with North Africa, the Persian Gulf and Asia, in addition to South America and Sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, through international relations and ability to project military power, Europe has to maintain the trade routes across the World Island, for example, with the Caspian region and Russia across the Heartland.

7. CIVILIZATION SETS CLEAVAGE LINES BETWEEN NATIONS

It has not gone unnoticed that Europe is predominantly Christian. This is highlighted by the late Pope John Paul II and erstwhile Pope Benedict, who argued for Europe as a Christian Empire, even going as far as to exclude Turkey on the basis that it is Islamic (Leigh, 2009, pp. 25-27). Many European elites are against full EU membership for Turkey. For example, both Nicolas Sarkozy (previous French President) and Angela Merkel (German Chancellor) have dismissed the possibility of EU membership for Turkey on the basis that it is not European. Former Turkish President Turgut Özal stated that the reason Turkey is not accepted for membership into the EU is because, "we are Muslim and they are Christian" (Toghill, 2011/2012, p. 21). And Turkey's Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan says the EU risks becoming a Christian club (Boland and Dombey, 2005).

If this is symptomatic of civilization's global power to align the nations into blocs (replacing post-World-War-Two political ideology as the cleaver), then it may be as Samuel Huntington (1993) says in the new world order, civilization is to be the cleavage lines separating nations into political blocs. This could pit Christian Europe against the looming civilization superpowers of an Asian conglomerate and an Islamist alliance.

Some critics may comment that Russia is not Asian, but at most Eurasian geographically, and that culturally or civilizationally it is not Eastern or Asiatic. However, Nadia Arbatova, a political scientist of the Russian Academy of Sciences, has said that Russia has been rejected by the West as an equal partner, and as Russia does not fit with the Islamic states, it may have no choice but to reestablish friendly ties and deep cooperation in economic, political and military matters with its Asian brothers in a pan Asiatic alliance (Arbatova, 2000).

As the religious power of extremist Islamism increasingly incubates in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and North Africa (which is already increasingly apparent in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere) (Goodspeed, 2011; Lewis, 2009), it may be that this will spark a response of a Catholic Christian revival in Europe. This Roman inspiration could also initiate increasing unification to weld Europe more effectively together

into one united political bloc, fortified to confront the perceived external “pagan” foe. And eventually this may be exactly what the EU leadership needs to unite Europe from within to withstand the foe from without. Further, if Asia grows to be more assertive, and particularly if Russia and China conglomerate together (Wilhelmsen and Flikke, 2011, pp. 865-867) to form the core of an international Asian superpower alliance, the EU would begin to feel increasingly vulnerable to amassing geopolitical power of continental scale in potentially rival civilization blocs – all on the World Island Rimland, along or bordering the maritime trade routes, and in Russia’s case also on the World Island Heartland.

Such potential rivalry on a massive scale worldwide, with emerging superpowers, could also lead them to compete with Europe in many ways for trade, oil and gas supplies, political influence and the projection of military power. As a result, Europe’s trade and its projection of economic and political power could be curtailed, putting European economic development at risk. The ability for Europe to project the soft power of economic and political influence would be thwarted, possibly leading to hard times economically, and result in severe repercussions towards political instability and civil unrest. This would increase the chances of inter-civilizational conflict, even in military arenas, if the level of perceived threat to Europe reaches unacceptable or unbearable levels. And the arena of such conflict would be across the Heartland and along the Rimland and its maritime surrounds.

8. CONCLUSION

Europe’s internal topography may help it ensure a dominant role in the new world order by allowing it to be governed as one cohesive political unit from Mitteleuropa by the German nation. Europe will have free movement of factors of production without internal natural or political barriers. Strong economic and political leadership or pressure from Germany is needed to deepen integration across the bloc. And with this deepened integration, combined with Europe’s geostrategic location, the European Union may project its power, through good international relations, a competent commercial navy, and a multipurpose single-command military (including a military navy with trans-ocean infrastructures), into multiple world arenas. These arenas are across the Eurasian Heartland, and along the Rimland’s maritime trade routes and chokepoints, to Russia, the Caspian Basin, Africa, the Middle East, The Persian Gulf, and Asia, and even beyond.

However, a potential European superpower will be hindered by its tardiness to establish an effective monetary and fiscal policy among the various members due to the varying levels of economic development. A restructure both politically and economically, into a core and periphery iteration, may be inevitable if the EU is to survive. It may be that Europe’s “Achilles’ heel” is its dependence on energy and other imports. These imports emanate from around the world – the Persian Gulf, Asia, Africa and South America, and in a time when there is a “race for what’s left” (Klare, 2012) by the larger nations. Europe is overwhelmingly dependent on the Persian Gulf and Russia for oil and natural gas – both on the Eurasian World Island – on the Rimland and in the Heartland respectively.

Europe’s position as future world hegemon will be unsustainable unless it can address the economic crisis and drastically solve its international energy dependence largely sourced from the Heartland (Russia) and the Rimland (the Persian Gulf) and the nations south of the Rimland’s maritime region (North Africa).

When faced with the emergence of these civilization-based superpowers of Islamist Pan Arabia led by Iran, and an Asian conglomerate built on Russia and China, each with centralized political power on the Eurasian World Island, Europe will be energy dependent on its two close neighbors and potential economic and military rivals. Any attempt at a power play against either regional entity, each within its own bloc of nations, could result in an

energy resources or trade embargo of imports and exports against Europe, rendering a critical diplomatic, and dare it be said, potentially military confrontation for Europe to maintain its development as a superpower with dominance into the Eurasian Heartland, and Rimland and its maritime trade routes.

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