



Asia's Strategic Geography

Toshi Yoshihara
Advanced Strategy Program

CSBA

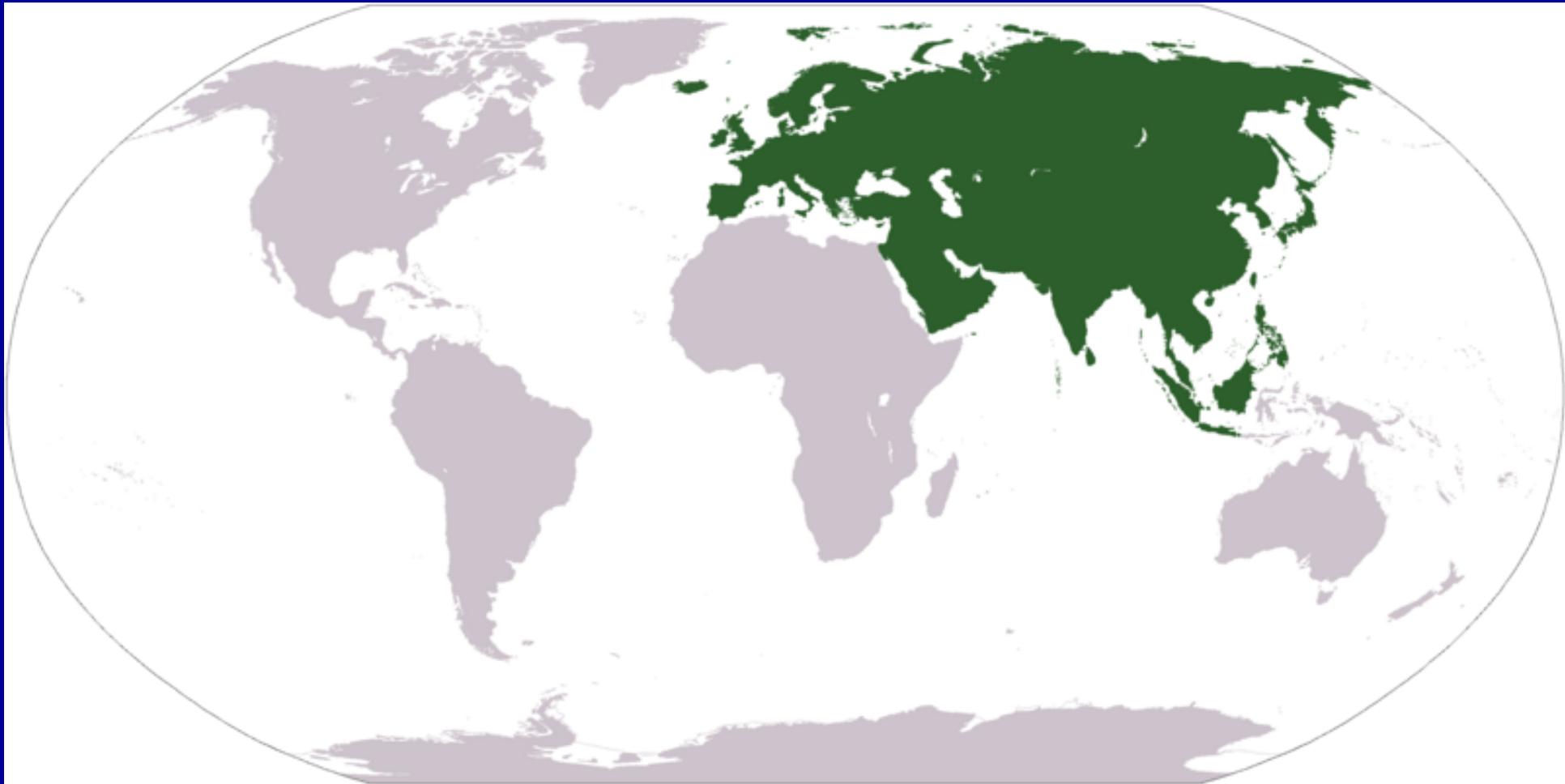
Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

Why Geography Matters

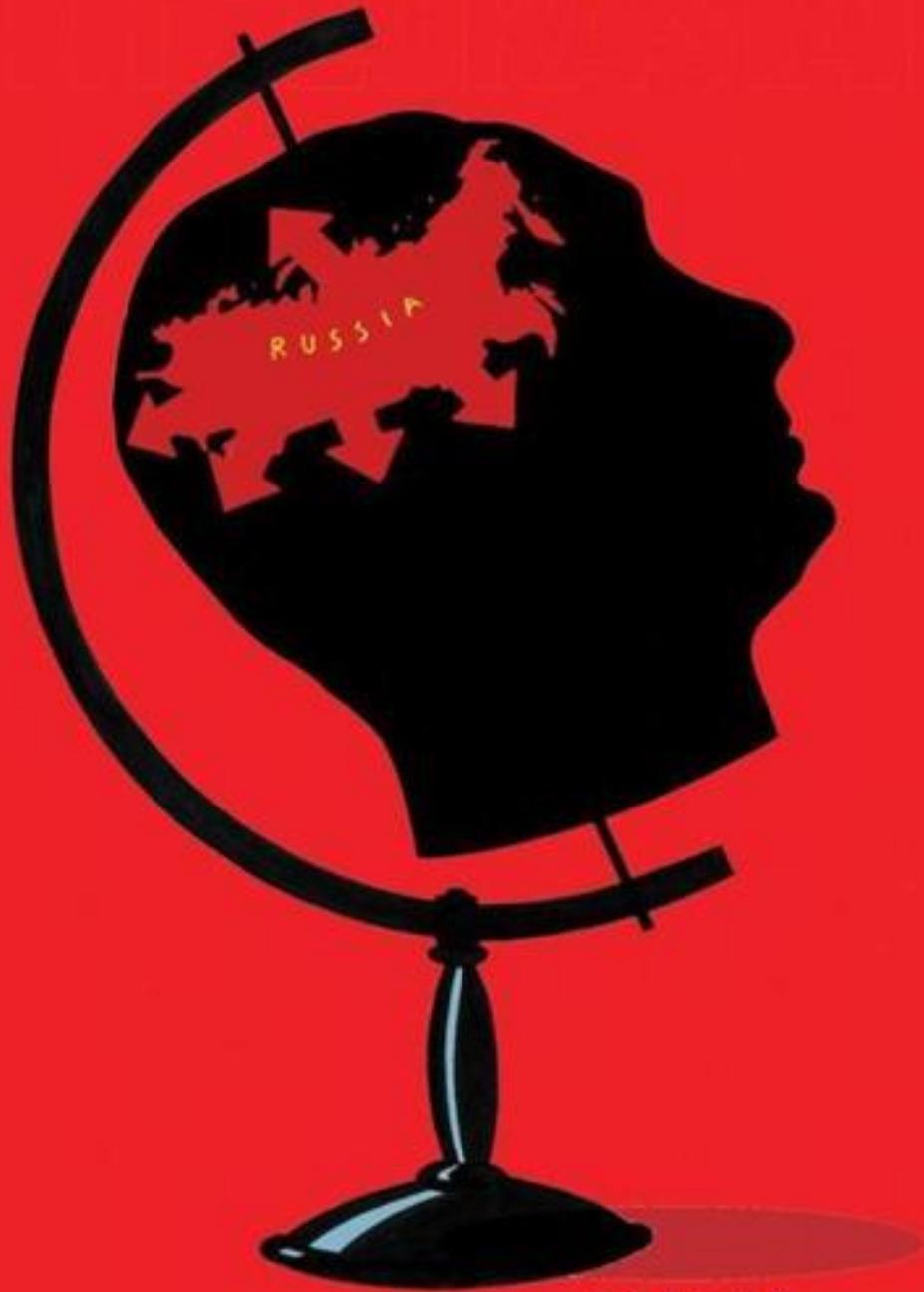
Geography and Strategy

- **Picking prime real estate**
- **Places to exercise power and influence**
- **Places to contest and fight over**
- **Alliances, forward presence, economic ties, international institutions**
- **Preserve position, expand real estate, transform system**

The Grand Chessboard: Eurasia







SELGUR





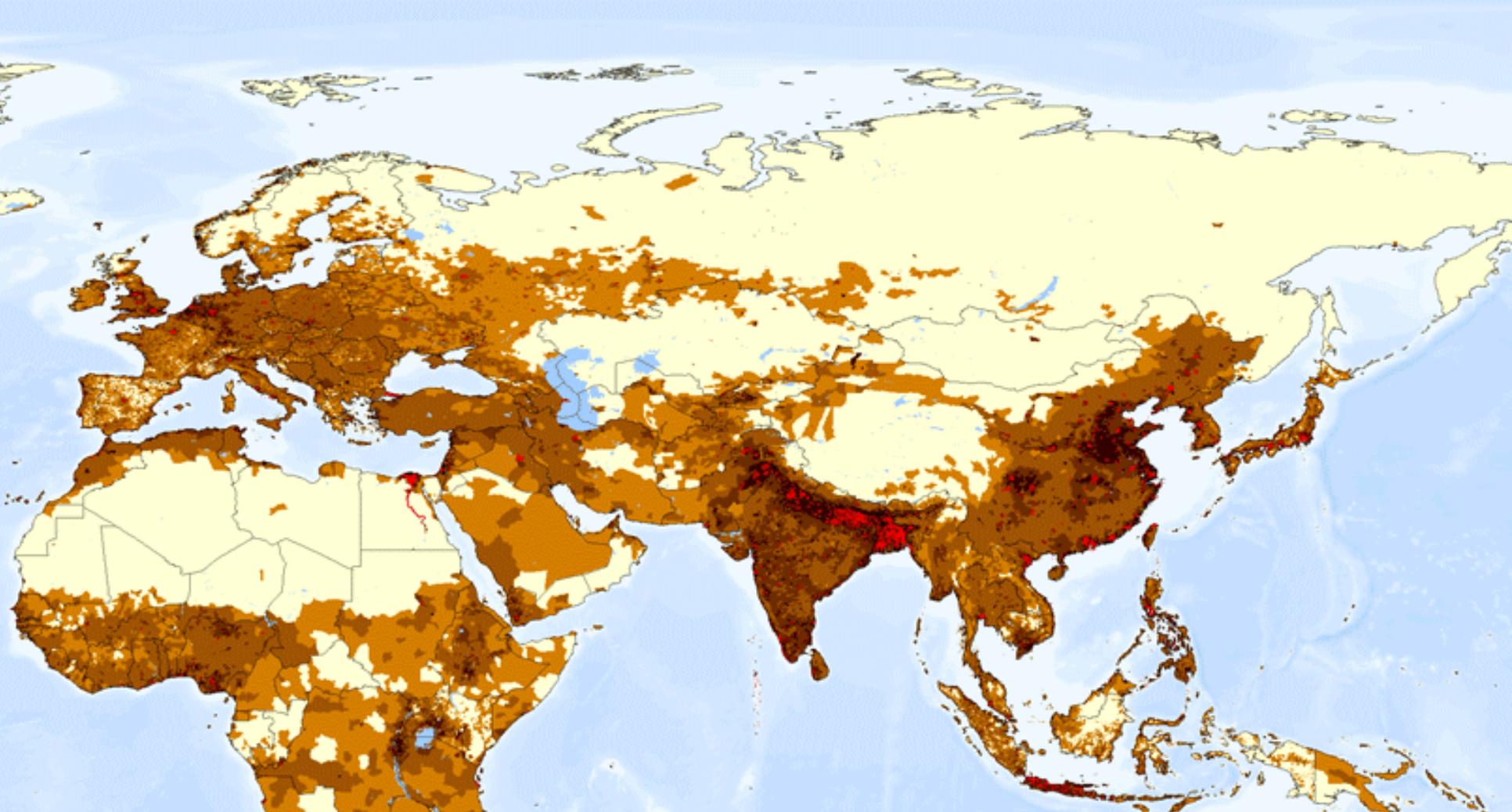
I. Rimland Theory

Nicholas J. Spykman

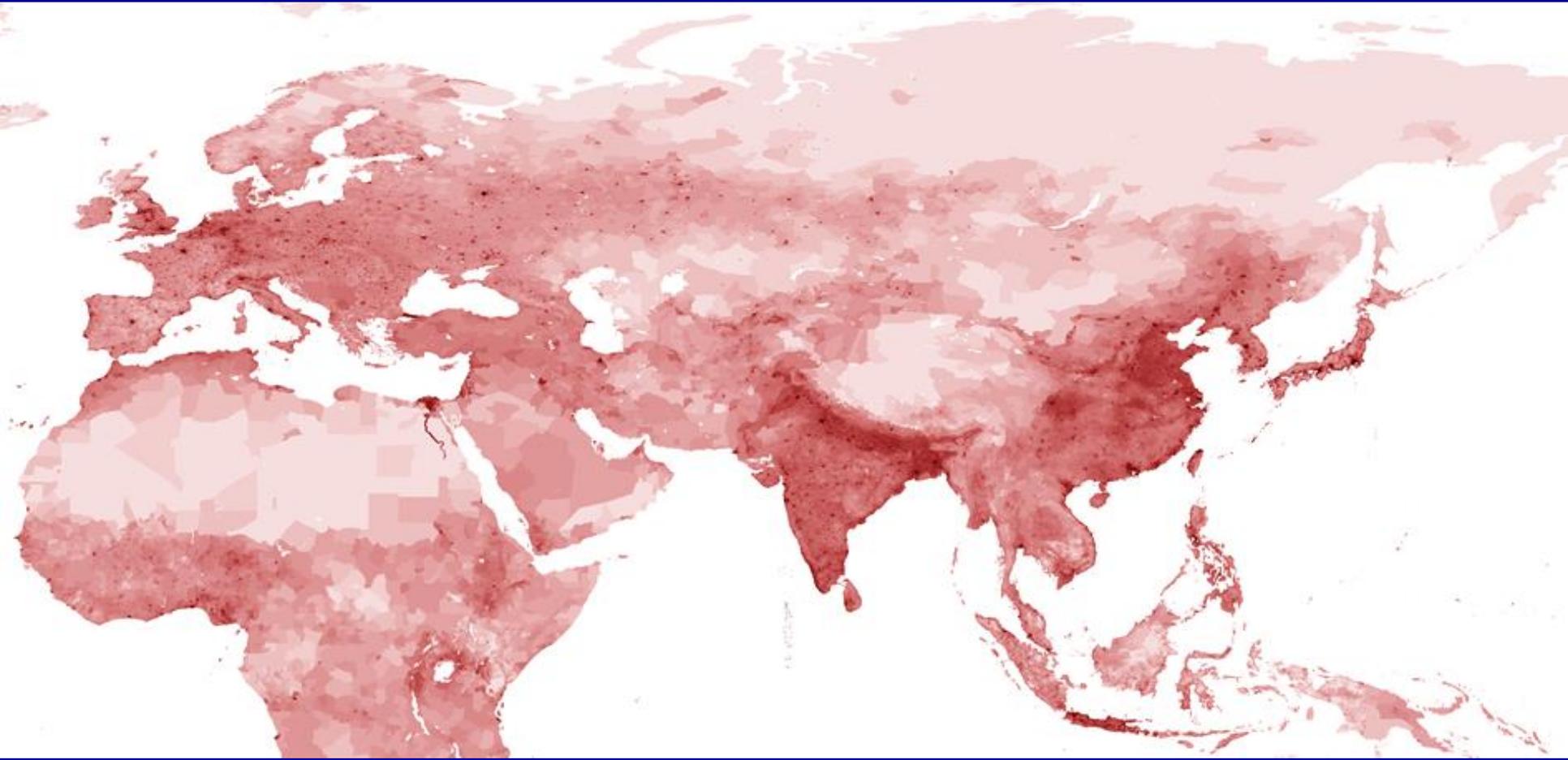


1893-1943

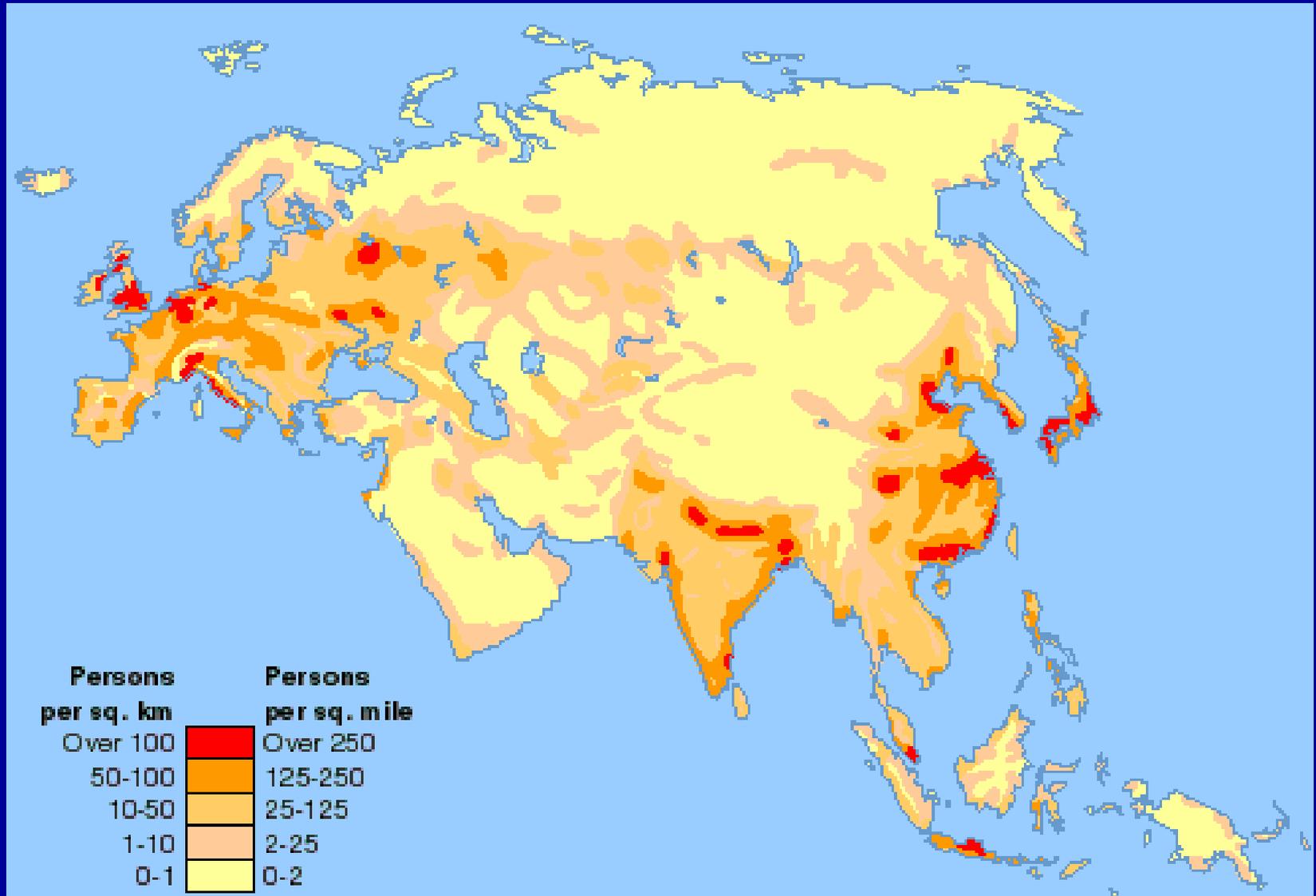
Population Density in 2015 (est.)



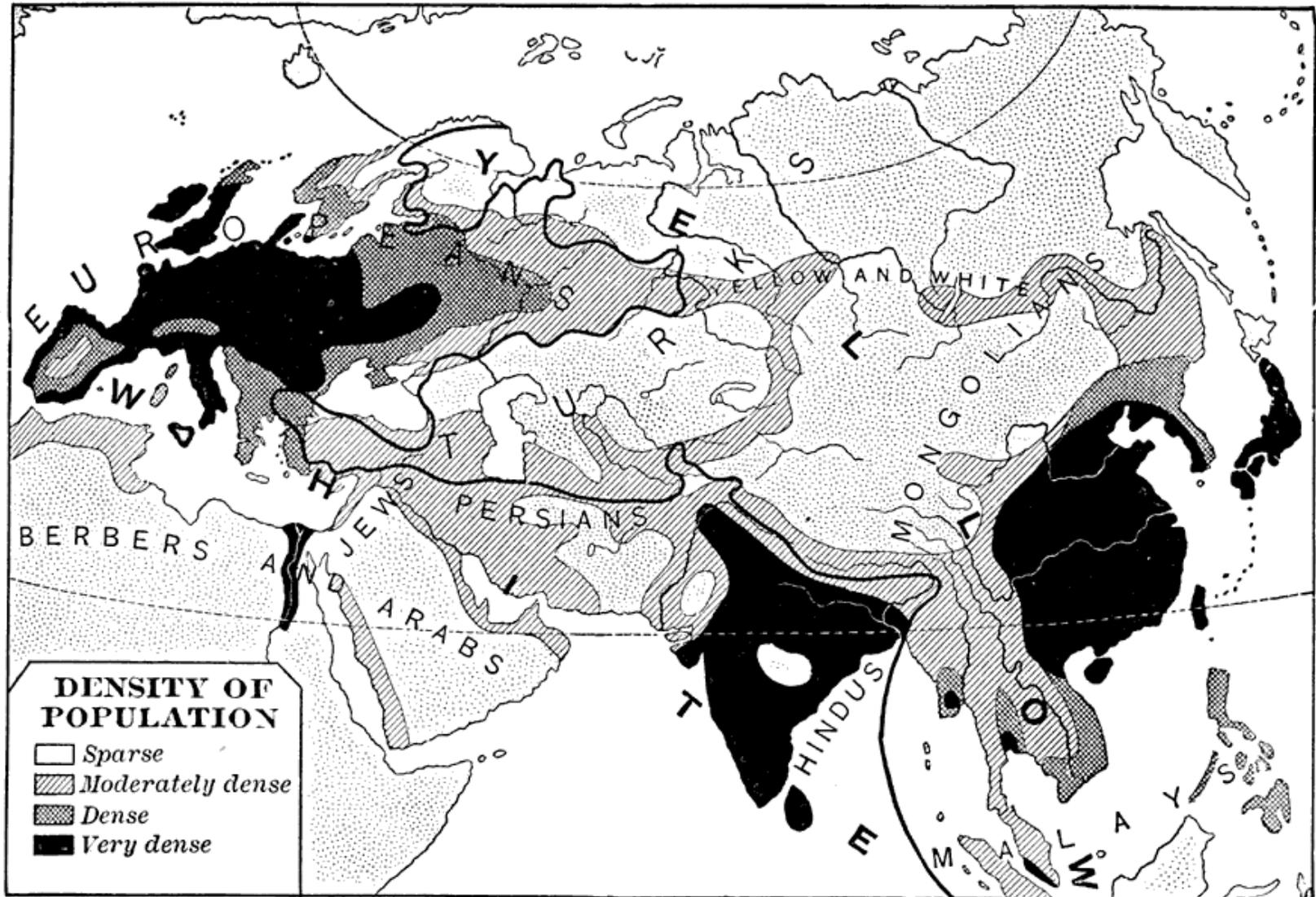
Population Density in 2005



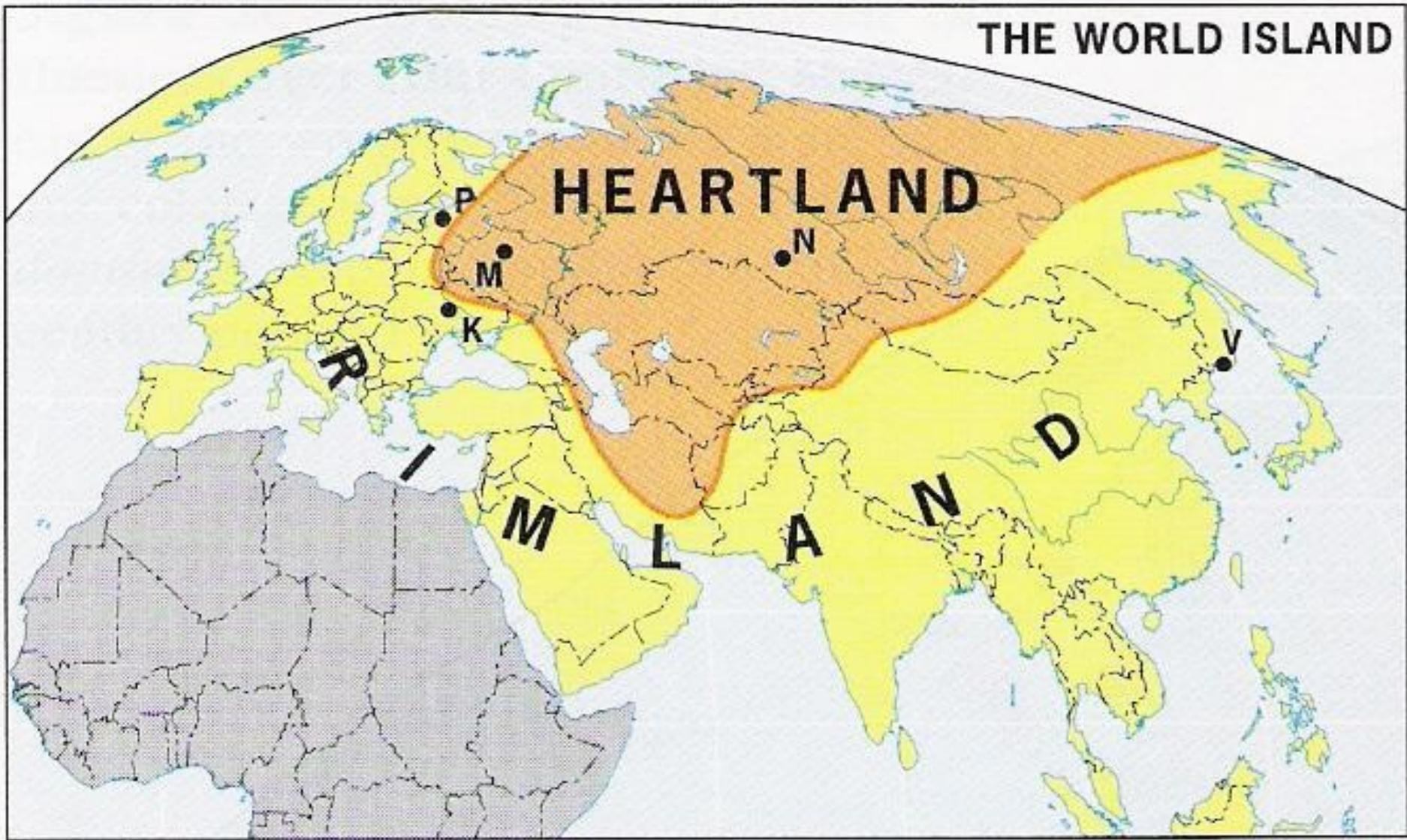
Population Density in 1990



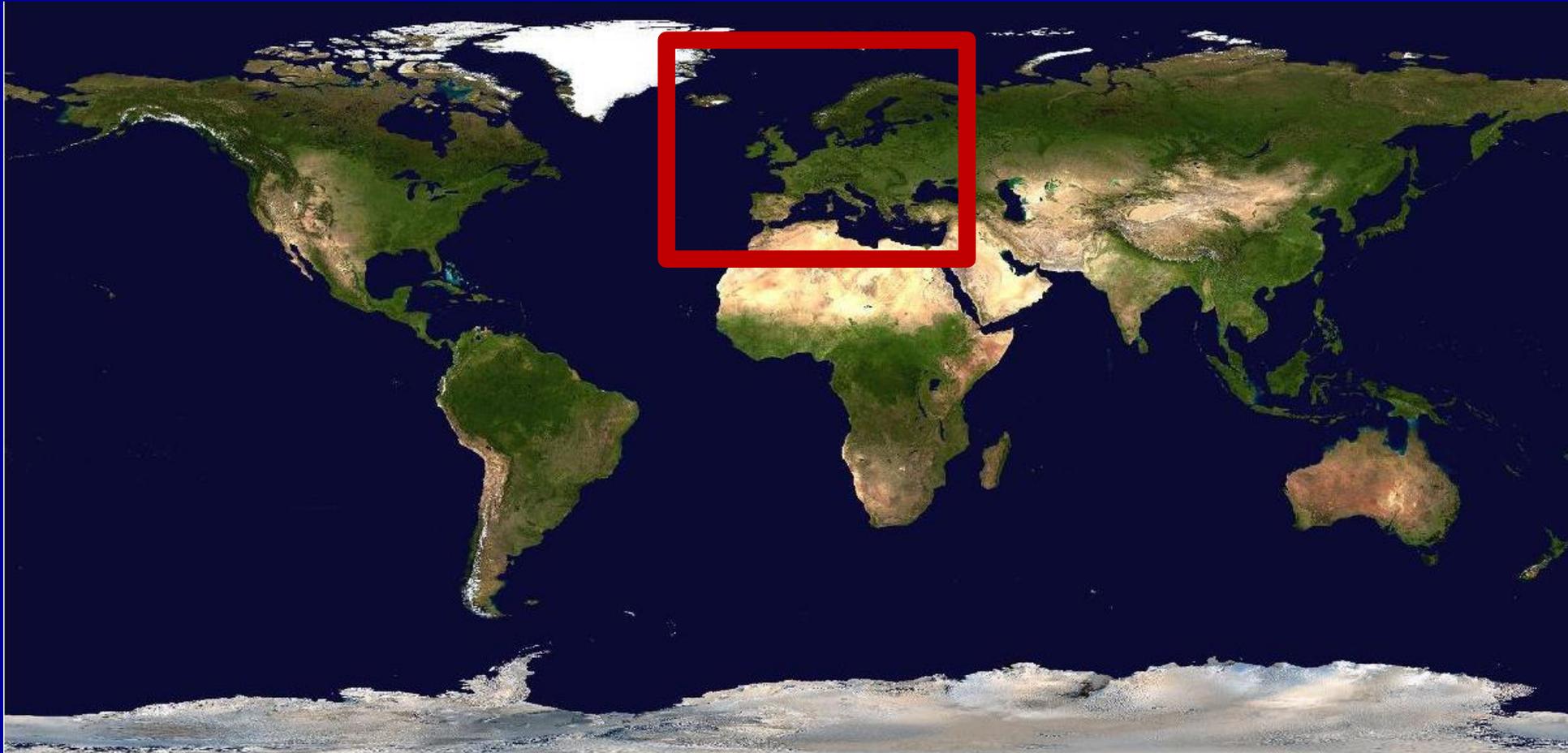
Population Density in 1898



THE WORLD ISLAND



Euro-Centric Worldview



Asia-Centric Worldview



Spykman's U.S.-Centric Worldview



Rimland Encirclement

“The Western Hemisphere center of power could be outweighed by a combined Eurasian power potential, which would possess **two and one-half times the area** and **ten times the population** of the Americas.”

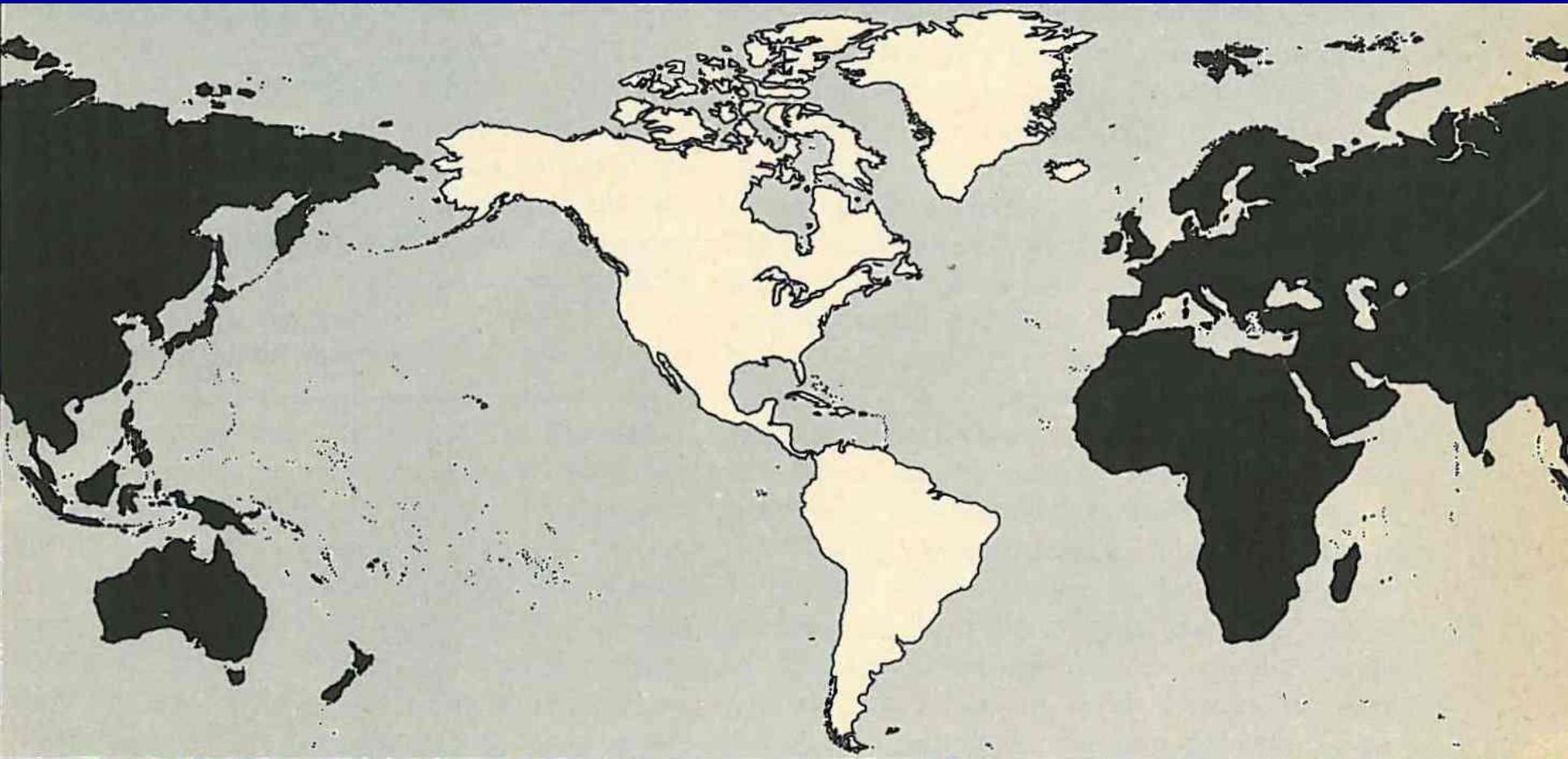
“**[T]he United States would still find herself irresistibly encircled by a superior force if she should ever be confronted by a united Eurasian rimland.**”

Geography of the Peace, 1944, p. 45.

From Embrace to Strangulation

“The New World would then be surrounded by two gigantic empires controlling huge war potentials...[T]he balance of power across the ocean [would be] destroyed, and the relative power potential of the two great land masses would then turn the geographic embrace of the Western Hemisphere by the Old World into political strangulation.”

America's Strategy in World Politics, 1942, pp. 194-195.

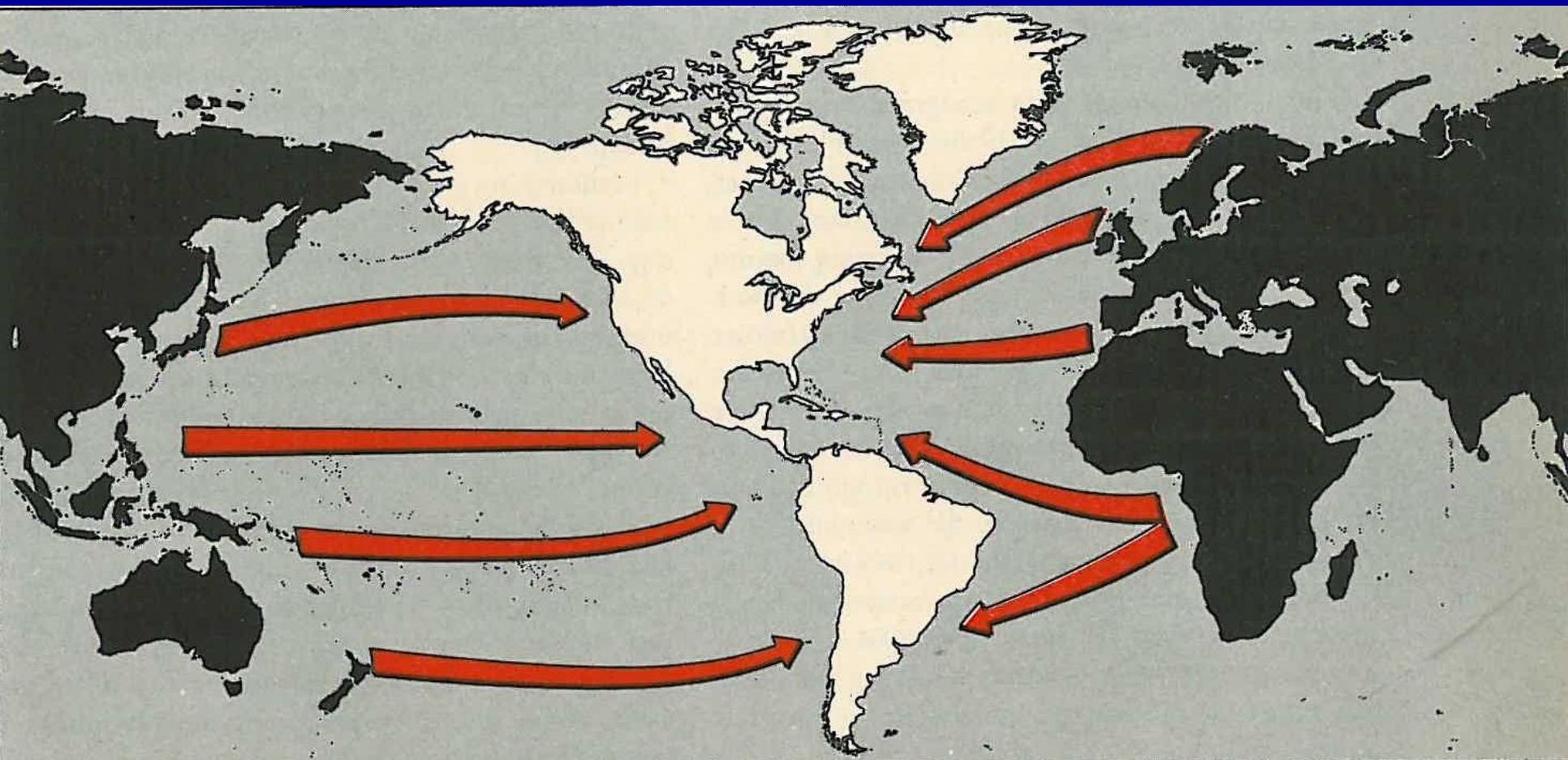


MAP 32. THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE ENCIRCLED

A Moat No More

“[A] balance of power in the transatlantic and transpacific zones is an absolute prerequisite for the independence of the New World and the preservation of the power position of the United States. There is no safe defensive position on this side of the oceans. Hemispheric defense is no defense at all.”

America's Strategy in World Politics, p. 457.

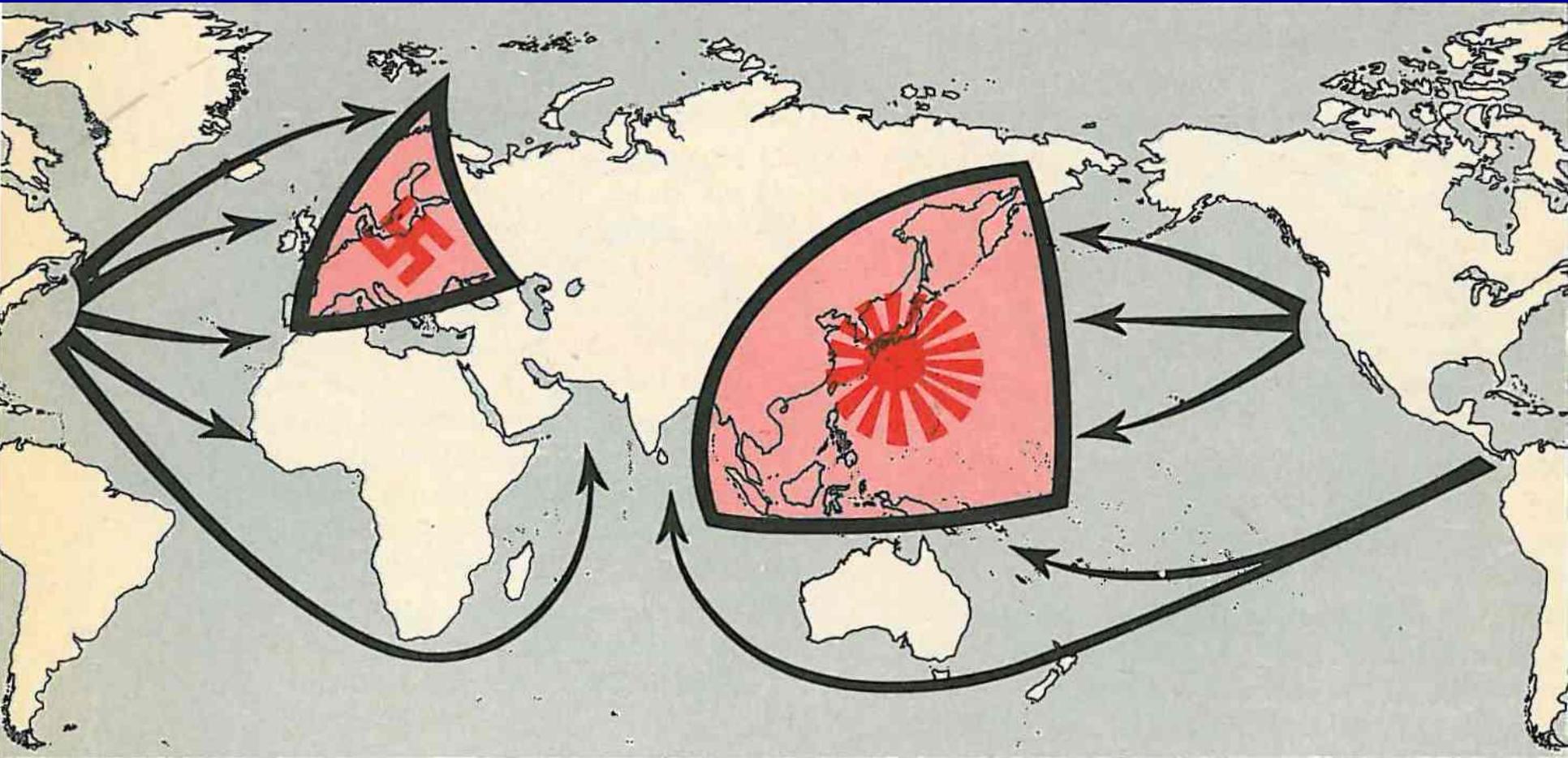


FDR

December 9, 1941

“[I]n the last few days we have learned a terrible lesson...There is no such thing as impregnable defense against powerful aggressors who sneak up in the dark and strike without warning. **We have learned that our ocean-girt hemisphere is not immune from severe attack—that we cannot measure our safety in terms of miles on any map anymore.**”





MAP 41. THE BATTLE ZONES, 1943

Lesson Learned

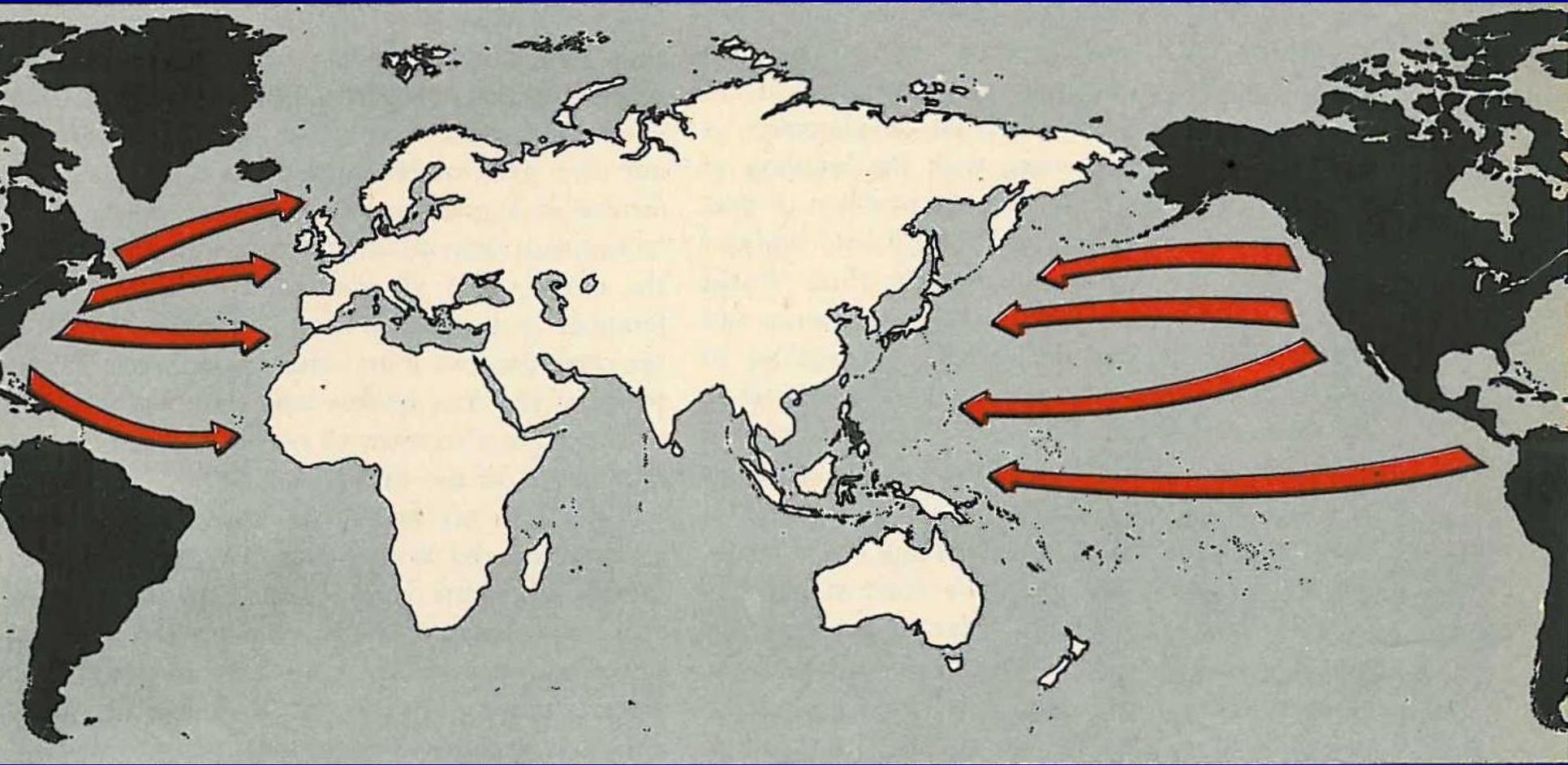
“If we are to avoid conclusion of such an encirclement in the future, **our constant concern in peace-time must be to see that no nation or alliance of nations is allowed to emerge as a dominating power in either of the two regions of the Old World from which our security could be threatened.**”

Geography of the Peace, p. 34.

Postwar Obligation

“It is those same centers of power which composed the battle zones in this war which will continue to indicate the strategic areas for the organization of the peace. **It is the peace-time relationship between the power factors in these regions which will make or mar the security of the world in general and the Western Hemisphere in particular.** Because of this, the United States is obliged to safeguard her position by making certain that no overwhelming power is allowed to build itself up in these areas.”

Geography of the Peace, p. 51.

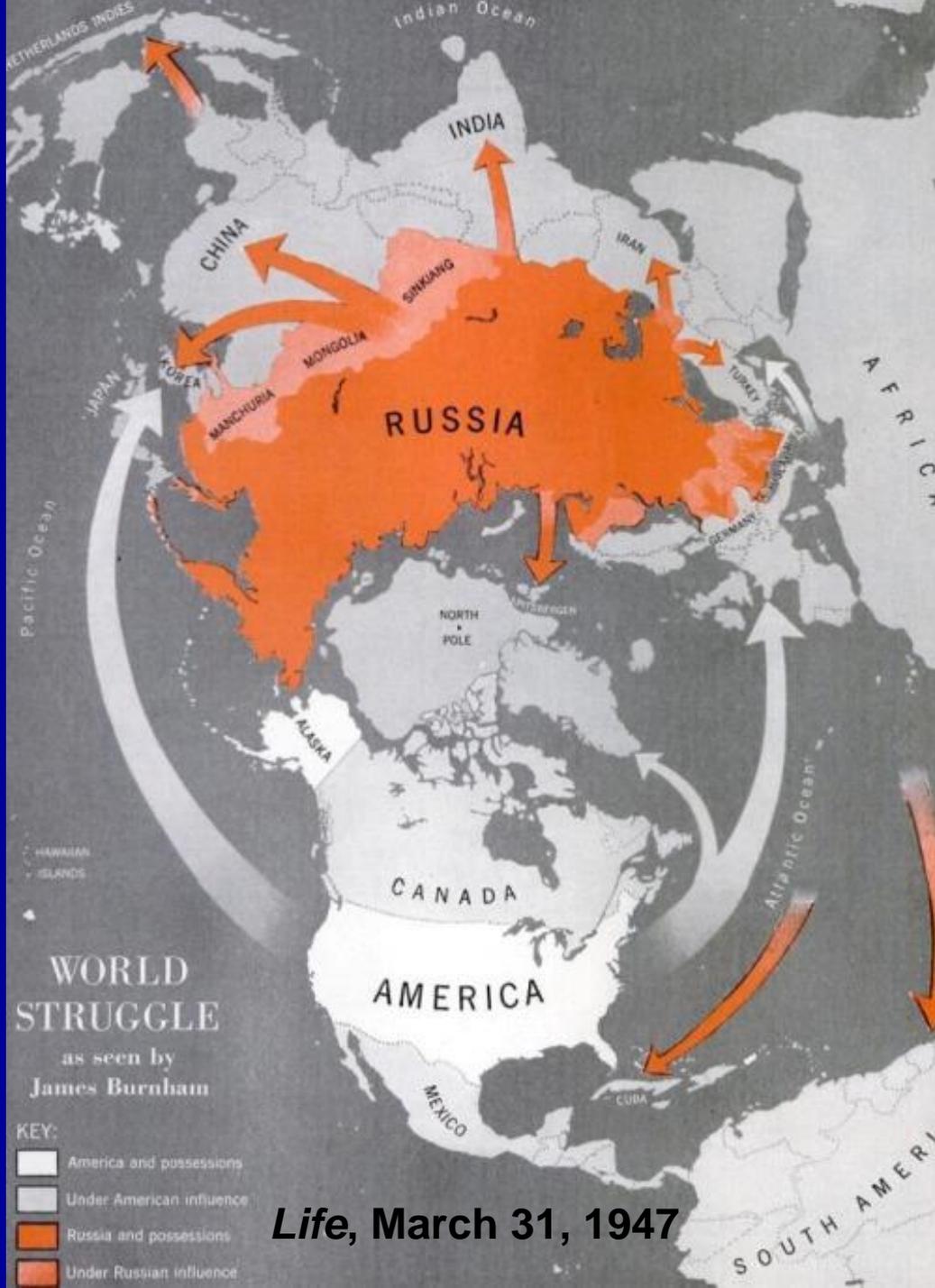


II. Rimland Strategy in Practice

The best defense is a good offense

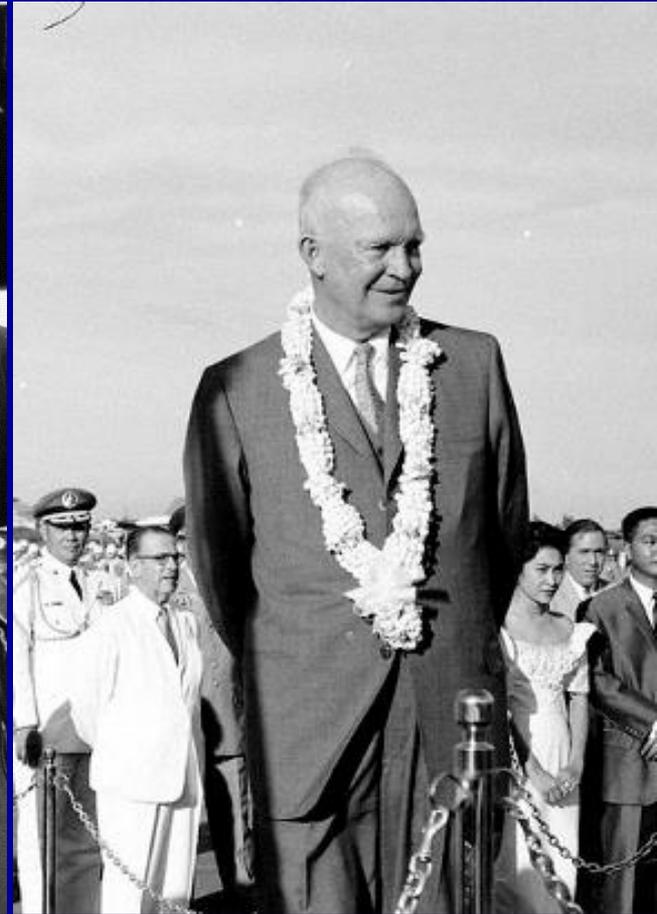


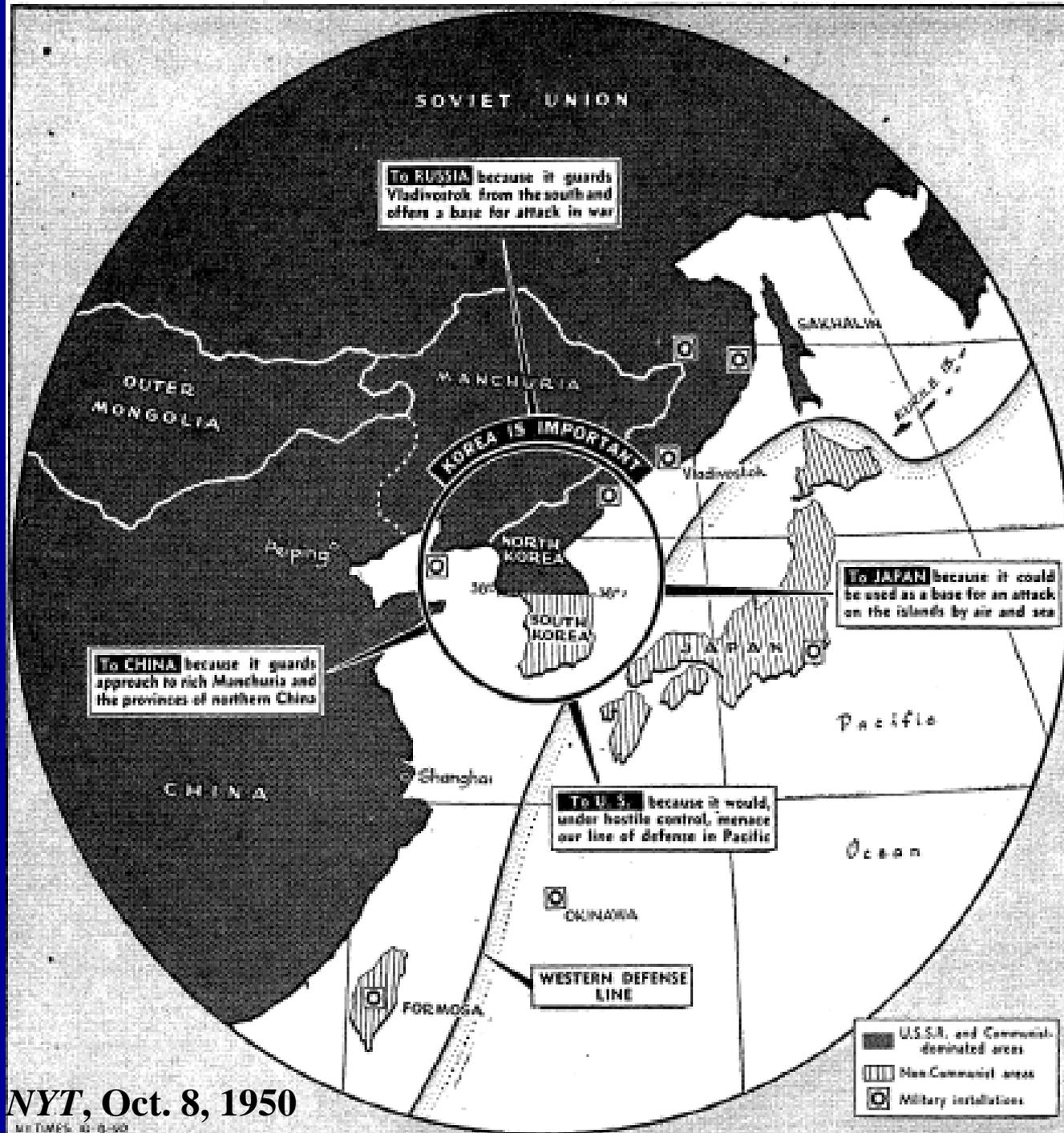
The Sino-Soviet Bloc and
Three Central Strategic Fronts



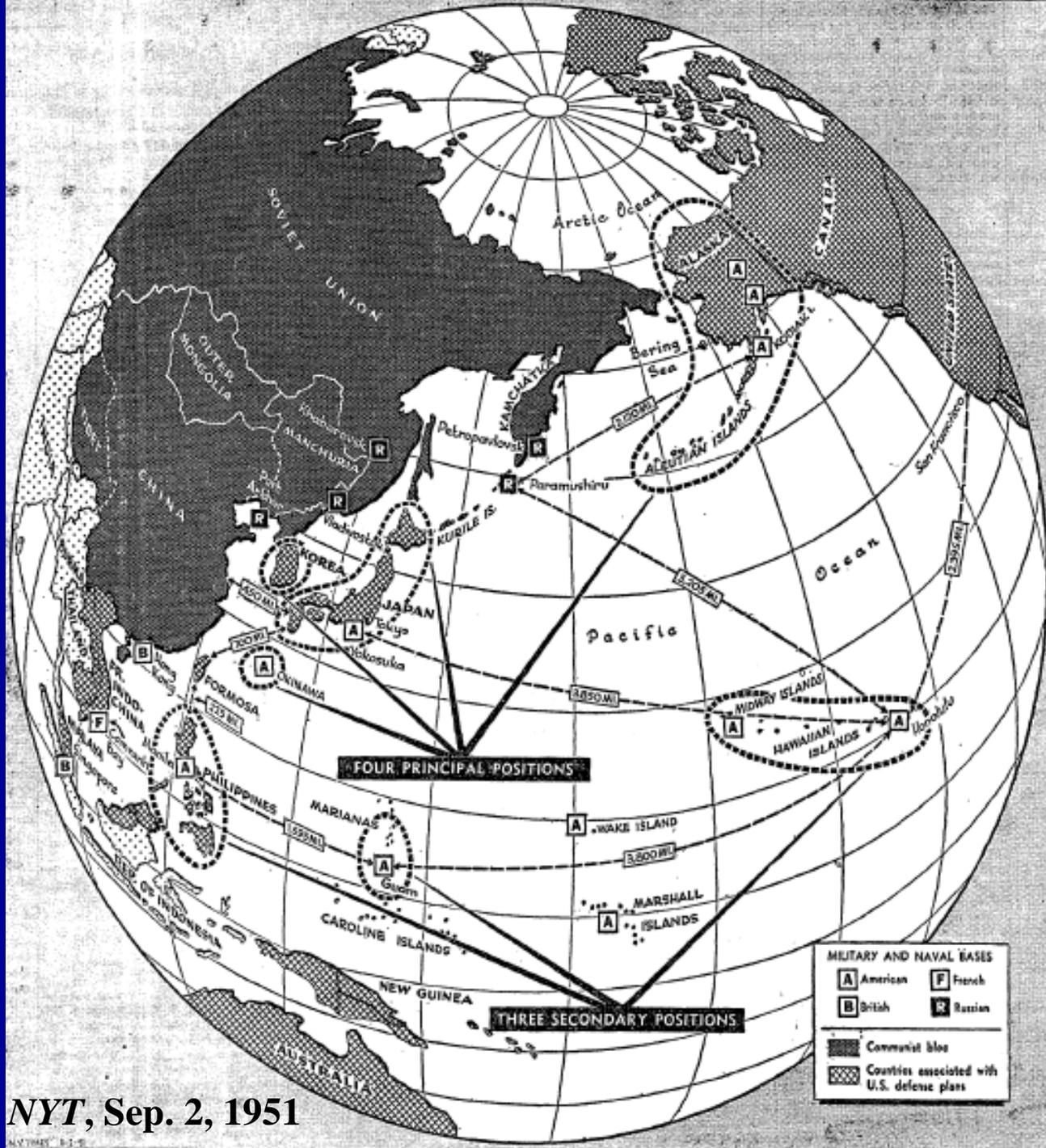
Life, March 31, 1947

Cold War in Asia





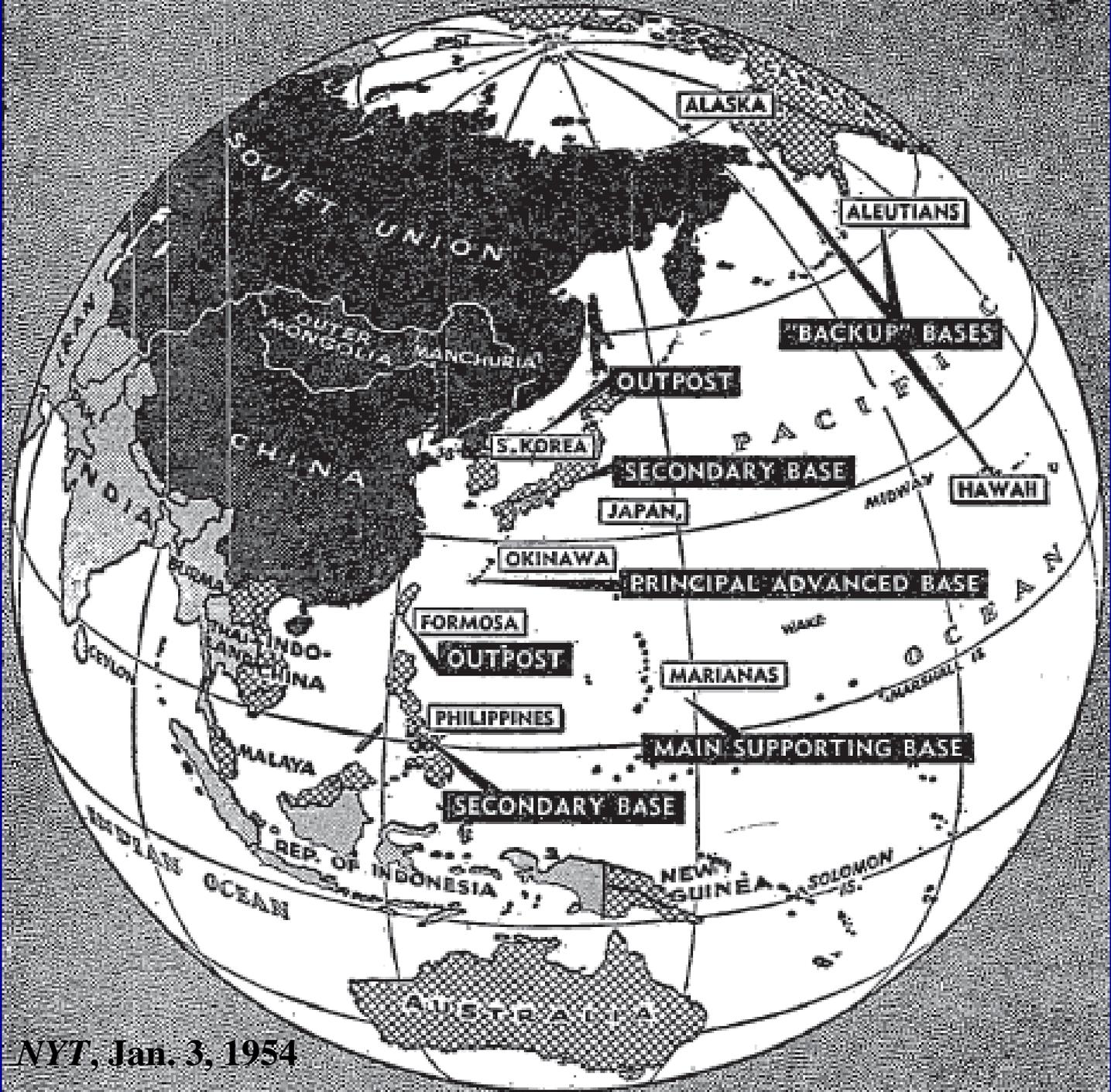
NYT, Oct. 8, 1950



NYT, Sep. 2, 1951



CSM, Dec. 5, 1951



NYT, Jan. 3, 1954

THE CRITICAL AREA



NYT, Jan. 30, 1955

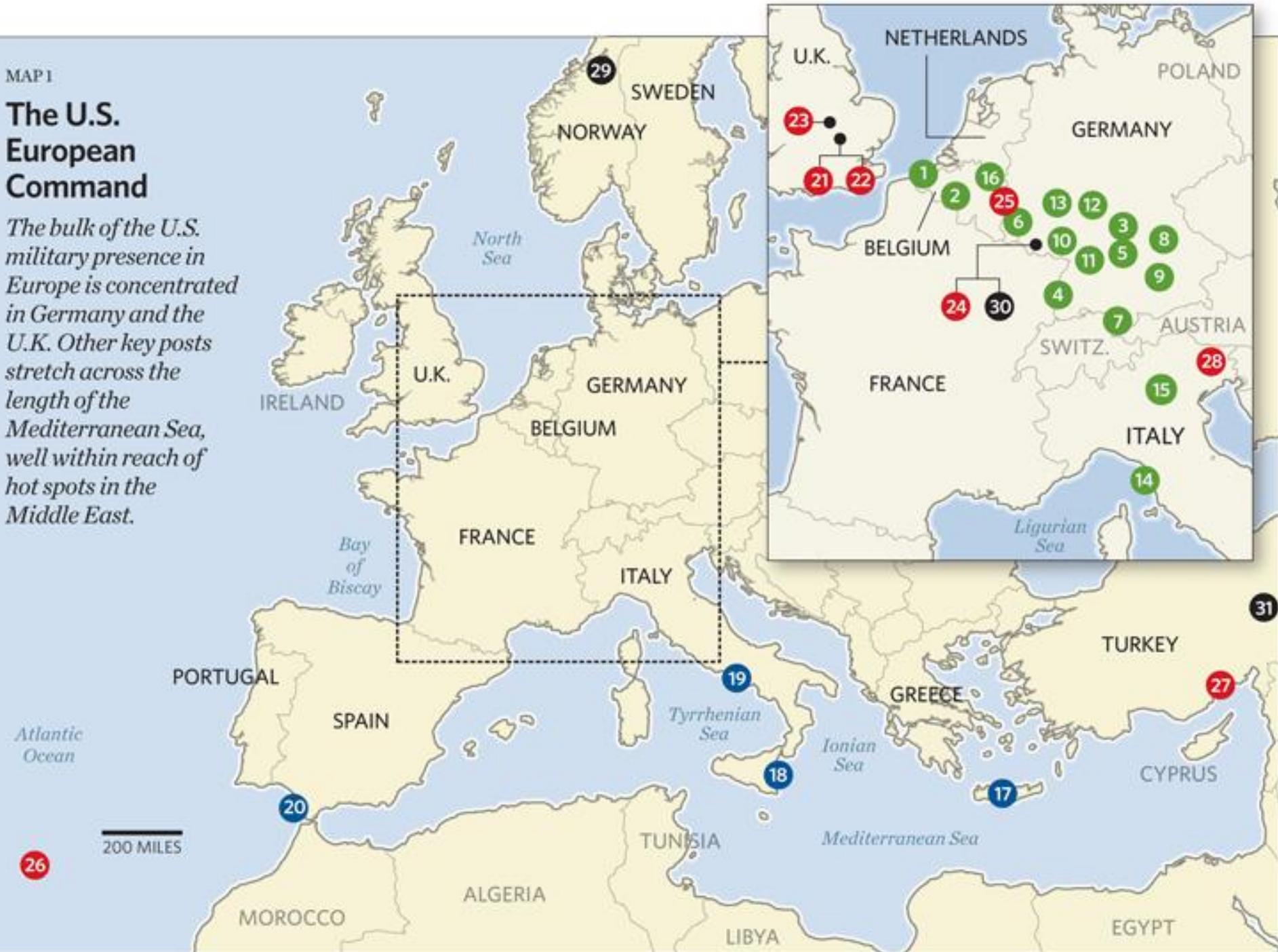
THE STRATEGIC PICTURE



MAP 1

The U.S. European Command

The bulk of the U.S. military presence in Europe is concentrated in Germany and the U.K. Other key posts stretch across the length of the Mediterranean Sea, well within reach of hot spots in the Middle East.



U.S. MILITARY IN THE WEST PACIFIC

■ With active U.S. bases • Naval bases ▲ Air Force bases

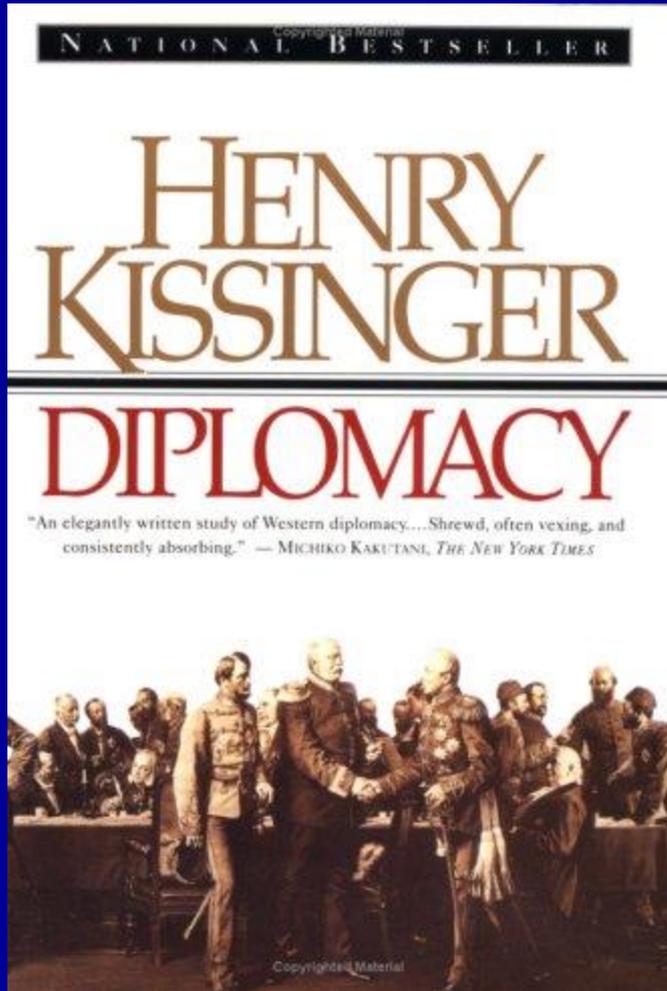


NAF: Naval Air Facility, CFA: Commander Fleet Activities

Sources: Military Balance 2011, Commander Navy Installations, Pacific Air Forces



Kissinger Channels Spykman



“Geopolitically, America is an island off the shores of the large landmass of Eurasia, whose resources and populations far exceed those of the United States. **The domination by a single power of either of Eurasian’s two principal spheres—Europe or Asia—remains a good definition of strategic danger, Cold War or no Cold War.**”

Diplomacy, 1994, p. 813.

Spkyman Through Kissinger's Eyes

“For such a grouping would have the capacity to outstrip America economically and, in the end, militarily. **That danger would have to be resisted even were the dominant power apparently benevolent, for if the intentions ever changed, American would find itself with a grossly diminished capacity for effective resistance and a growing inability to shape events.**”

Diplomacy, p. 813.

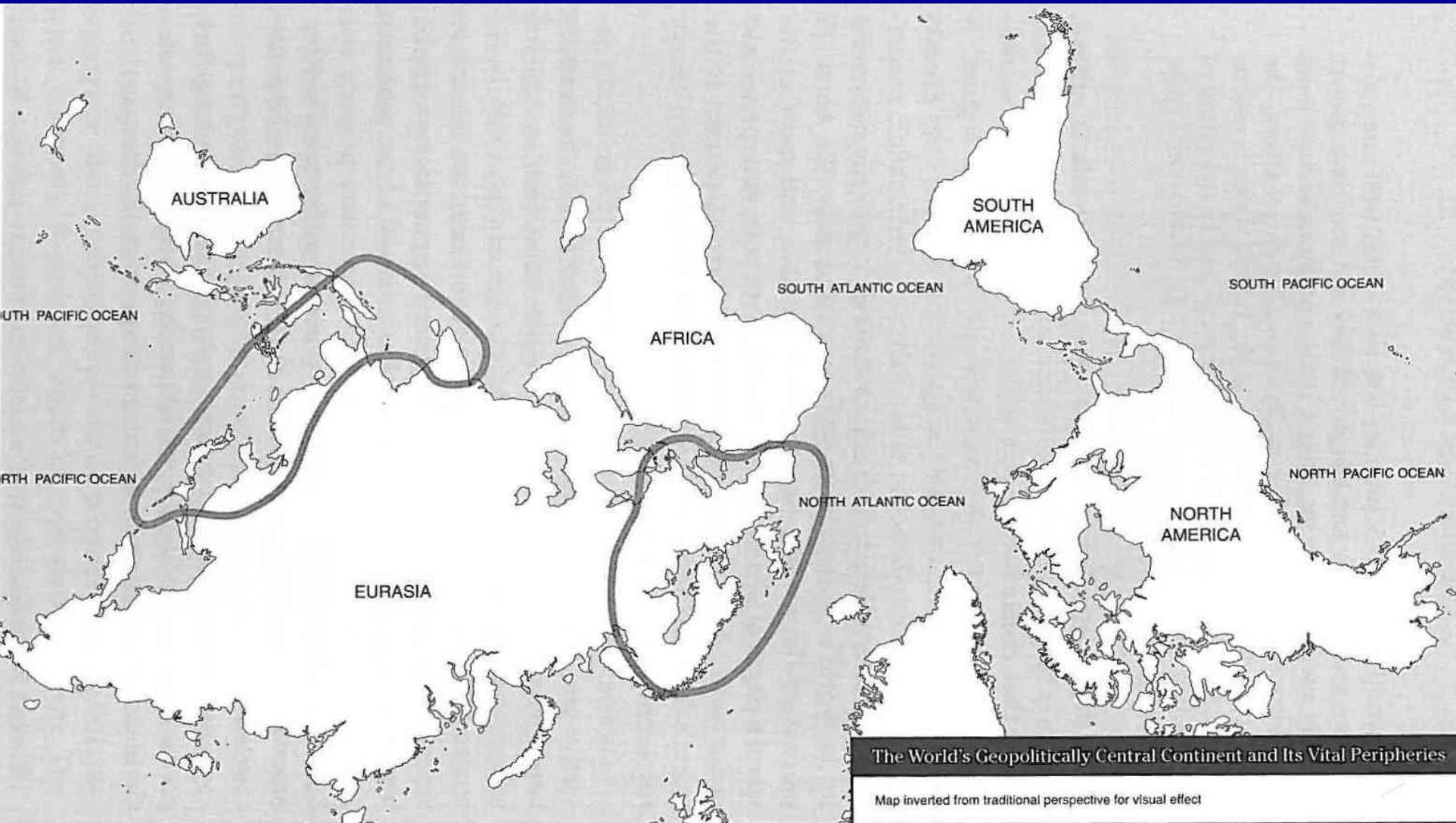


Zbig Revives the World Island



“Eurasia is the globe’s largest continent and is geopolitically axial. **A power that dominates Eurasia would control two of the world’s three most advanced and economically productive regions.** A mere glance at the map also suggests control over Eurasia would almost automatically entail Africa’s subordination, rendering the Western Hemisphere and Oceania geopolitically peripheral to the world’s central continent.”

The Grand Chessboard, 1997, p. 31.



Leaked 1992 Defense Planning Guidance

~~SECRET / NOFORN~~

PRINCIPAL DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2000

18 FEB 1992

In reply refer to:
I-91/28291



STRATEGY
AND
RESOURCES

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PROGRAM ANALYSIS & EVALUATION
COMPTROLLER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: FY 94-99 Defense Planning Guidance Sections for Comment (U)

“Defense Strategy Objectives”

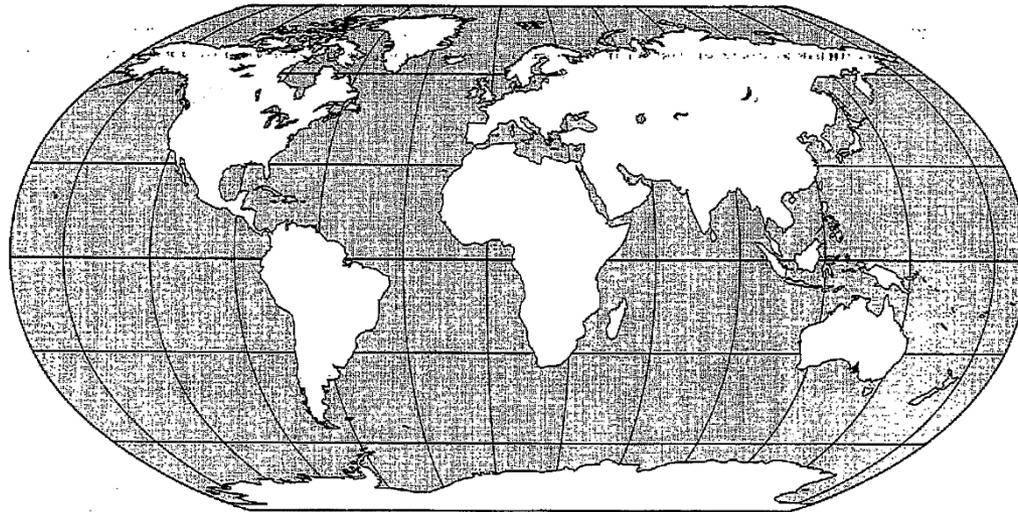
(S) Our first objective is to prevent the reemergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power. These regions include Western Europe, East Asia, the territory of the former Soviet Union, and Southwest Asia.

In East Asia / Pacific...

“To buttress the vital political and economic relationships we have along the Pacific rim, **we must maintain our status as a military power of the first magnitude in the area.** This will enable the U.S. to continue to contribute to regional security and stability by acting as a balancing force and **prevent emergence of a vacuum or a regional hegemon.**”



Defense Strategy for the 1990s: The Regional Defense Strategy



**Secretary of Defense
Dick Cheney**

January 1993

“Defense Policy Goals”

The third goal is to preclude any hostile power from dominating a region critical to our interests, and also thereby to strengthen the barriers against the reemergence of a global threat to the interests of the United States and our allies. These regions include Europe, East Asia, the Middle East/Persian Gulf, and Latin America. Consolidated, nondemocratic control of the resources of such a critical region could generate a significant threat to our security.

“East Asia/Pacific”

To buttress the vital political and economic relationships we have along the Pacific rim, we must maintain a significant military presence in the area, which even before current reductions in Asia represented only a small proportion of U.S. forces worldwide. We must maintain sufficient forward deployed forces and power projection capability to reassure our regional allies and friends, to preclude destabilizing military rivalries, to secure freedom of the seas, to deter threats to our key political and economic interests, and to preclude any hostile power from attempting to dominate the region. A strong U.S. military position, welcomed by

Clinton Era

- **1995 East Asia Strategy Report: "the prevention of the rise of any hegemonic power or coalition" an enduring American security interest in Asia.**
- **The 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR): "fostering an international environment in which critical regions are stable, at peace, and free from domination by hostile powers."**

QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW REPORT



September 30, 2001

“U.S. Interests and Objectives”

“Precluding hostile domination of critical areas, particularly Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asian littoral, and the Middle East and Southwest Asia.”

Footnote: “The east Asian littoral is defined as the region stretching from south of Japan through Australia and into the Bay of Bengal.”

“Regional Security Developments”

“Although the United States will not face a peer competitor in the near future, the potential exists for regional powers to develop sufficient capabilities to threaten stability in regions critical to U.S. interests. In particular, Asia is gradually emerging as a region susceptible to large-scale military competition.”

“Maintaining a stable balance in Asia will be a complex task. **The possibility exists that a military competitor with a formidable resource base will emerge in the region.** The East Asian littoral - from the Bay of Bengal to the Sea of Japan - represents a particularly challenging area.”

THE QDR IN PERSPECTIVE

MEETING AMERICA'S NATIONAL SECURITY NEEDS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



*The Final Report of the
Quadrennial Defense Review Independent Panel*

Stephen J. Hadley, Co-Chair

William J. Perry, Co-Chair

Richard Armitage

J.D. Crouch

Charles Curtis

Rudy deLeon

Joan Dempsey

Eric Edelman

Sherri Goodman

David Jeremiah

George Joulwan

John Keane

Richard Kohn

John Lehman

Alice Maroni

John Nagl

Robert Scales

James Talent

Paul Van Riper

Larry Welch

ADVANCE COPY

2010 QDR Independent Panel

- **A key security interest = “the preservation of a favorable balance of power across Eurasia that prevents authoritarian domination of that region”**
- **Credited U.S. for preventing a single power from dominating Western Europe, the Pacific, and, more recently, the Middle East**

ENSURING a Strong U.S. Defense for the Future

THE NATIONAL DEFENSE PANEL REVIEW OF
THE 2014 QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW

William J. Perry, Co-Chair

John P. Abizaid, Co-Chair

MEMBERS

James Cartwright

Eric Edelman

Michèle Flournoy

Frank Kearney

Michael Maples

Jim Marshall

Gregory Martin

James Talent

2014 National Defense Panel

“Preservation of reasonable stability in key regions of the world. World War II demonstrated that America cannot isolate itself from conflict overseas that threatens our vital interests and allies. Both our security and prosperity are enhanced by peace and stability in key regions...Absent America’s leadership, large parts of the world would likely evolve to dangerous imbalances, particularly in Eurasia, threatening American trade and investment and potentially leading to conflicts greatly damaging to the United States.”

Fighting and Winning in the Rimlands

“In the current threat environment, the United States could plausibly be called upon to deter or fight in several regions in overlapping time frames: on the Korean peninsula, in the East or South China Sea, in the Middle East, South Asia, and quite possibly in Europe...Credibly underwriting such a force sizing construct would require a robust mix of forward stationed, forward-deployed, and prepositioned forces **postured for rapid response in key regions, most importantly Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and Europe.**”

III. Asian Rimland Today

ASIA'S MEDITERRANEAN: STRATEGY, GEOPOLITICS, AND RISK IN THE SEAS OF THE INDO-PACIFIC

MICHAEL AUSLIN

FEBRUARY 29, 2016

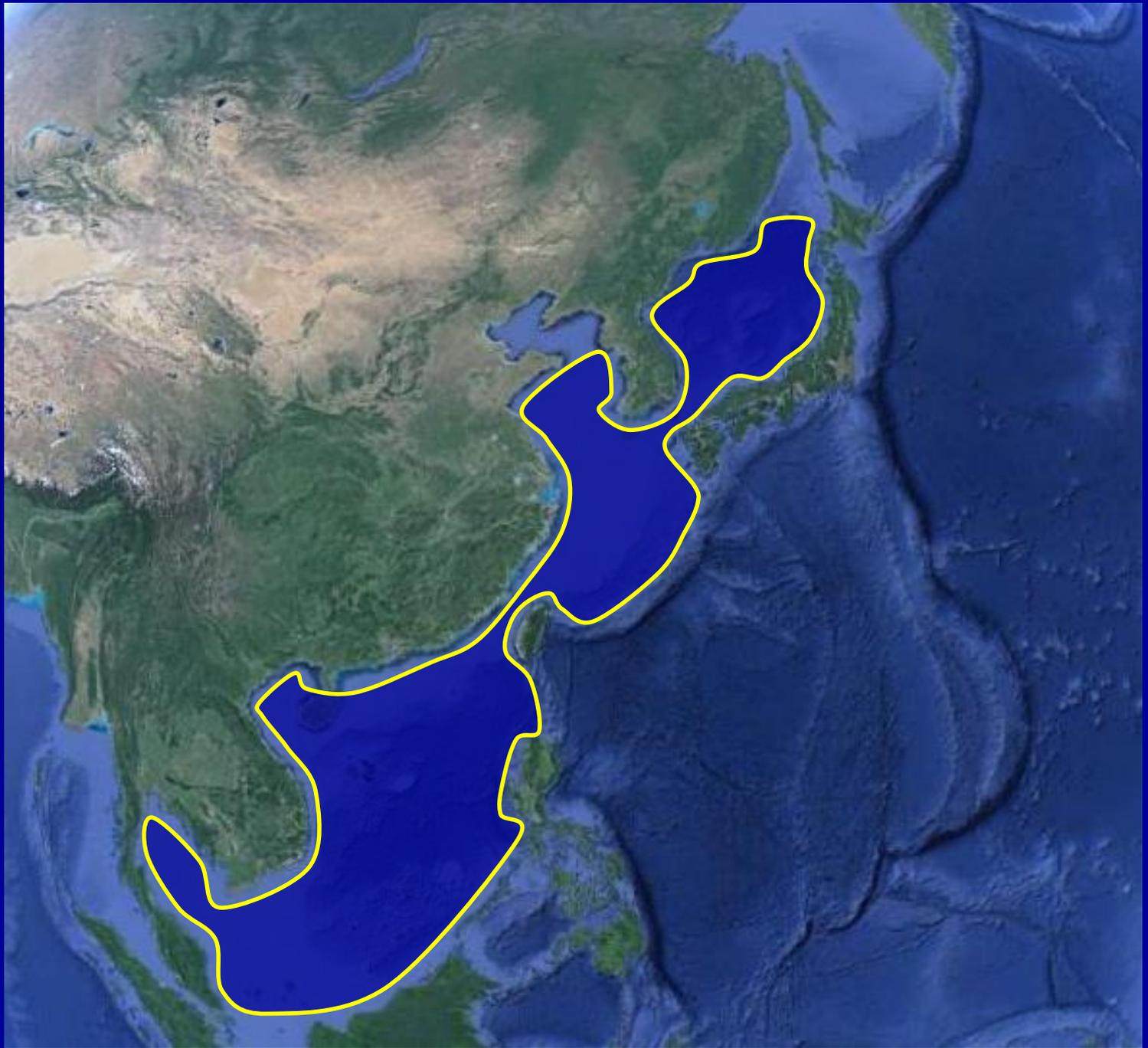


Blindness to Geography

“Today we have lost a conscious understanding of the strategic importance of the inner seas, at a moment when we face the greatest challenge to our control of them since 1945. We focus serially on one area when a problem crops up, and then return to a posture of benign neglect after taking short-term tactical action. We should instead acknowledge the matter bluntly: China is contesting for control...of the marginal seas and skies of Asia...”

“Asiatic Mediterranean”

“The integrated waters of the Sea of Japan, the Yellow Sea, and the East and South China Seas, are as vital to the history, identity, and trade of eastern Asia as the Mediterranean is to Europe. The great factories and workshops of [East Asia], on whom our global trading network depends, are located along the littoral of the Asiatic Mediterranean. It forms the hinge between maritime Eurasia and the entire Western Hemisphere. **To return to Spykman’s formulation, control of the Asiatic Mediterranean means control of Asia.**”

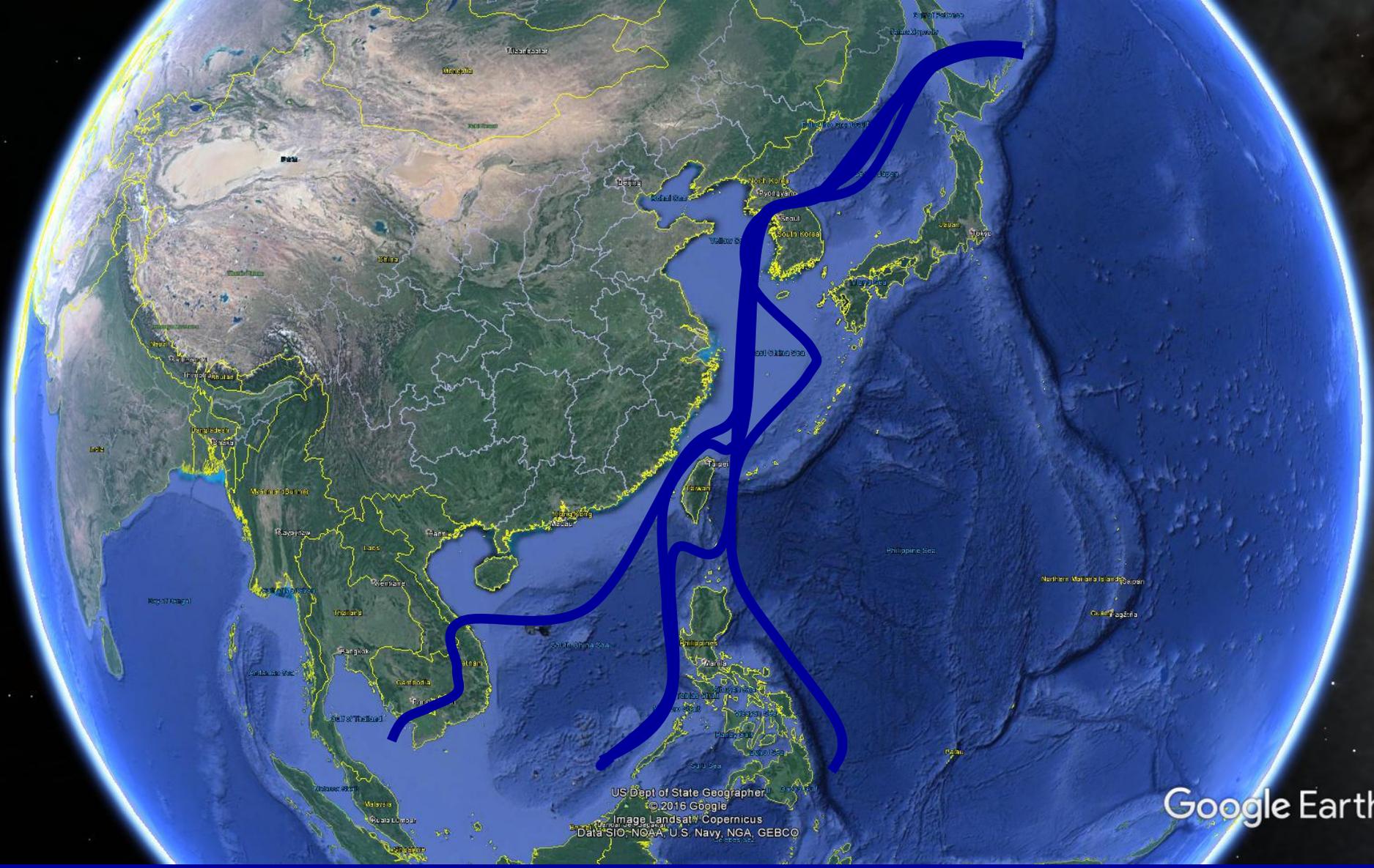


China's Challenge

“[China] threatens the maritime freedom of the Asiatic Mediterranean, and thus ultimately of Asia's productive and trading capacities. It also is positioning China to have **the preponderance of power that can be brought against Asia's rimlands**, as well as against what Spykman called the ‘outer crescent,’ which, in Asia, includes Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Australia.”

Policy Implications

“We must consciously adopt the idea of the Asiatic Mediterranean, stretching from Kamchatka in the north to the Strait of Malacca in the south, recognizing that all its waters are interconnected and are the ‘soft underbelly’ of Asia. We must then accept that our goal is to ensure our continued and full control of the Asiatic Mediterranean and the insurance of its stability.”



US Dept of State Geographer
© 2016 Google
Image Landsat Copernicus
Data SIO-NOAA U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO

Google Earth

Some Questions

- **What about plain vanilla defense?**
- **Where do you hold the line? What do you write off?**
- **What are the risks of overextension?**
- **What are the risks of entanglement?**
- **How do you sell such a forward strategy to different audiences?**

Concluding Thoughts

- **Geography matters**
- **Rimlands matter**
- **Getting all three rimlands right**
- **Intra-theater and inter-theater balance**