

The Geographical Pivot of History: Discussion

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pivot state, which is always likely to be great, but with limited mobility as compared with the surrounding marginal and insular powers.

I have spoken as a geographer. The actual balance of political power at any given time is, of course, the product, on the one hand, of geographical conditions, both economic and strategic, and, on the other hand, of the relative number, virility, equipment, and organization of the competing peoples. In proportion as these quantities are accurately estimated are we likely to adjust differences without the crude resort to arms. And the geographical quantities in the calculation are more measurable and more nearly constant than the human. Hence we should expect to find our formula apply equally to past history and to present politics. The social movements of all times have played around essentially the same physical features, for I doubt whether the progressive desiccation of Asia and Africa, even if proved, has in historical times vitally altered the human environment. The westward march of empire appears to me to have been a short rotation of marginal power round the south-western and western edge of the pivotal area. The Nearer, Middle, and Far Eastern questions relate to the unstable equilibrium of inner and outer powers in those parts of the marginal crescent where local power is, at present, more or less negligible.

In conclusion, it may be well expressly to point out that the substitution of some new control of the inland area for that of Russia would not tend to reduce the geographical significance of the pivot position. Were the Chinese, for instance, organized by the Japanese, to overthrow the Russian Empire and conquer its territory, they might constitute the yellow peril to the world's freedom just because they would add an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent, an advantage as yet denied to the Russian tenant of the pivot region.

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Before the reading of the paper, the PRESIDENT said: We are always very glad when we can induce our friend Mr. Mackinder to address us on any subject, because all he says to us is sure to be interesting and original and valuable. There is no necessity for me to introduce so old a friend of the Society to the meeting, and I will therefore at once ask him to read his paper.

After the reading of the paper, the PRESIDENT said: We hope that Mr. Spencer Wilkinson will offer some criticism on Mr. Mackinder's paper. Of course, it will not be possible to avoid geographical politics to a certain extent.

MR. SPENCER WILKINSON: It would occur to me that the most natural thing and the most sincere thing to say at the beginning is to endeavour to express the great gratitude which, I am sure, every one here feels for one of the most stimulating papers that has been read for a long time. As I was listening to the paper, I looked with regret on some of the space that is unoccupied here, and I much regret that a portion of it was not occupied by the members of the Cabinet, for I gathered that in Mr. Mackinder's paper we have two main doctrines laid down: the first, which is not altogether new—I think it was foreseen some years back in the last century—that since the modern improvements of steam navigation the whole of the world has become one, and has become one political system. I forget the

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exact expression that Mr. Mackinder used ; I think he said that the difference was something like that of a shell falling into an enclosed structure and falling into space. I should wish to express the same thing by saying that, whereas only half a century ago statesmen played on a few squares of a chess-board of which the remainder was vacant, in the present day the world is an enclosed chess-board, and every movement of the statesman must take account of all the squares in it. I myself can only wish that we had ministers who would give more time to studying their policy from the point of view that you cannot move any one piece without considering all the squares on the board. We are very much too apt to look at our policy as though it were cut up into water-tight compartments, each of which had no connection with the rest of the world, whereas it seems to me the great fact of to-day is that any movement which is made in one part of the world affects the whole of the international relations of the world—a fact which, it seems to me, is lamentably neglected both in British policy and in most of the popular discussions of it, and I am exceedingly grateful to Mr. Mackinder for having laid so much stress on that in his paper. Then the other point—the main point, I take it, which he has brought out is really as to the enormous importance to the world of the modern expansion of Russia. I cannot say that I am thoroughly convinced of some of Mr. Mackinder's historical analogies or precedents, unless, indeed, we are to take his paper as carrying us a very long way ahead. Mr. Mackinder takes us back over four hundred years, and talks of the Columbian epoch. Well, I cannot pretend to be able to go four hundred years forward ; if one can go a generation forward, it is quite as much as some of us can manage. Now, these great movements of Central Asian tribes on to Europe and on to the different marginal countries may, I think, be over-estimated in their importance. They have left occasional survivals of the past, but they have not left the world much richer in ideas, and very seldom represented any permanent alterations in the conditions of mankind ; and they have been possible because the expanding forces of Central Asia hit upon a very much divided margin. For instance, the movement of the Ottoman Turks, and before that the Turkish movements upon the Byzantine Empire and upon the region that had been the Byzantine Empire, invariably struck upon regions in which government was in decay or obsolescent, and most of the movements which struck upon Central Europe, the movements north of the Black sea, struck upon Europe at a time when government was very little organized, and when the states had very little of solidarity between them. Therefore, I hold they do not afford very much parallel for the future ; and I should be disposed to dwell on the counterbalancing phenomenon, which is that you have had in the west of Europe a small island, which, having attained to its own political unity, and having in the conflict for its own independence developed its sea-power, has been able to affect the marginal regions and to acquire the enormous influence which was revealed to us, a little exaggerated, perhaps, on the map which Mr. Mackinder showed—the British Empire—exaggerated because it was a map on Mercator's projection, which exaggerated the British Empire, with the exception of India. My own belief is that an island state like our own can, if it maintains its naval power, hold the balance between the divided forces which work on the continental area, and I believe that has been the historical function of Great Britain since Great Britain was a United Kingdom. Now we find a smaller island state rising on the opposite side of the Euro-Asian continent, and I see no reason at all to suppose that that state should not be able to exercise on the eastern fringe of the Asiatic continent a power as decisive and as influential as that which the British Isles, with a smaller population, have exercised upon Europe.

Sir THOMAS HOLDICH : When one hears a lecture such as Mr. Mackinder has just given us, so full of thought and so thoroughly well worked out, with such an amount of food for reflection contained in it, it takes a great deal of moral digestion to assimilate it, and more assurance than I possess either to criticize it, or even to discuss it. But there is just one question I should like to ask Mr. Mackinder, and in co-relating the facts of geographical conditions with the history of the human race, it seems to me a not unimportant one. Mr. Mackinder has told us that in the beginning of things the Mongol races all started from a centre in high Asia, spreading outwards, westwards, southwards, and eastwards, finding, however, Tibet an impossible barrier in their way, and never exactly occupying India. But we must remember that before the Mongolians spread, there were other Central Asian tribes who spread equally from districts which were not so very far removed from the position which the Mongolians themselves first occupied—the Scyths and the Aryans—and that they did find their way into India. That, however, is a matter of detail. What I should like to know from Mr. Mackinder is, what he considers to be the original reason of that extraordinary overflow from the country which we are disposed to consider to be the cradle of the human race, to all the different parts of the world. Was it simply the nomadic instincts of the people, a sort of hereditary compulsion which obliged them to flow outwards; or was it an actual alteration in the physical characteristics of the country in which they dwelt? We know that the physical conditions of the world alter very much from time to time, and it seems to me impossible to reconcile the idea of a great inland country, which must once have been full of a teeming population, and have supported that population, as you may say, with an abundant power of agricultural wealth—that under such conditions a people should have had a desire to spread out and to wander forth into other parts of the world, seeking for they knew not what. I fancy, myself, that one of the great reasons, one of the great compelling reasons, for all these migrations really has been a distinct alteration in the physical condition of the country. That is a point which seems to me to be rather important when we are discussing a subject like the present one, which brings the conditions of geography to bear on the facts of history. There is just one other little matter which was referred to somewhat doubtfully by Mr. Mackinder to which I might refer. He pointed to South America as a possible factor in that outer belt of power which was to bring coercion to bear on the inner power pivoting about the south of Russia. Now, from what I have seen lately, I have not the least doubt that that will be the case. The potentiality of South America as a naval power I look upon as very great. I believe that in the course, say, of the next half-century, in spite of the fact that just now Argentina has sold two ships to Japan, and Chili has sold a couple of ships to us—in spite of that fact, there will be an increase of naval strength in South America, resulting from purely natural causes, for the defence of her own coast and the protection of her own traffic, which will be only comparable to the extraordinary development which we have seen during the last half-century in Japan. This seems to me certainly to be one of the factors, if we are to look forward, with which, in the future naval politics of the world, we shall have to reckon.

Mr. AMERY : I think it is always enormously interesting if we can occasionally get away from the details of everyday politics and try to see things as a whole, and this is what Mr. Mackinder's most stimulating lecture has done for us to-night. He has given us the whole of history and the whole of ordinary politics under one big comprehensive idea. I remember when I did Herodotus at the university, he made the whole of history base itself upon the great struggle between the east and the west. Mr. Mackinder makes the whole of history and politics

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base themselves on the great economical struggle between the great inside core of the Euro-Asiatic continent and the smaller marginal regions and islands outside. I am not sure myself that these two struggles are not one and the same, because now we have discovered that the world is a sphere, east and west have only become relative terms. I would criticize one thing Mr. Mackinder said when he described Russia as the heir of Greece. It was not the ancient heir of Hellenic Greece, but of Byzantium, and Byzantium was the heir of the old Oriental monarchies with the Greek language and a tinge of Roman civilization thrown over it. I should like to go back, if I might, for a moment to this geographical economic foundation on which Mr. Mackinder built the framework of his lecture. I think I would conceive the thing somewhat differently. There are, to my mind, not two, but three economico-military forces. If we begin with the ancient world, you have the broad geographical division into the "steppes" of the interior, the rich marginal land suitable for agriculture, and the coast, and you have corresponding with these, three economical and three military systems. There is the economical and military system of the agricultural country, the system of the coast and sea-faring people, and the system of the steppes; each had its peculiar weaknesses and its peculiar sources of strength. The strongest in many ways was the marginal and agricultural state. There you got the great solid military Empires, your Egyptian, your Babylonian, your Roman Empire, your large armies and citizen infantry, your great development of wealth. But these contained certain elements of weakness. Their own prosperity or the defects of their form of government would lead ultimately to slothfulness and weakness. Now, outside those you had two other systems. You had the steppe system, whose military strength lay, firstly, in its mobility, and, secondly, in its inaccessibility from the slower-moving agricultural powers. As regards the supposed "hordes" of invaders which came from the interior, I do not myself believe there ever were those very large hordes and large populations in the interior. The fact is this, the steppe populations were small then as now, but from the fact of their mobility the heavier and slower military armies could not successfully attack them. In ordinary times, when the agricultural states were strong, the people of the steppes simply ran away from them, and the others found it too much trouble to conquer them. You remember the difficulty the Roman legions had with the Parthians; and I think we can find a very much more recent example of the difficulty a civilized state finds in conquering a steppe-power. Only a short time ago, the whole of the British army was occupied in trying to coerce some 40,000 or 50,000 farmers who lived on a dry steppe-land. That photograph Mr. Mackinder was showing reminded me exactly of what you could have seen not so many months ago in South Africa—I mean, that picture of waggons crossing the river was, except for the shape of the roof over the waggon, exactly like a picture of a Boer commando crossing a drift. We had the same difficulty in coercing them that all civilized powers have had with steppe people. Now, whenever the civilized powers on the marginal countries have grown weak and have allowed small hired armies to do their work, they have got into difficulties, and that is where, it seems to me, the strength of the steppes has always come in. There is no great economic strength at bottom, but the fact that they could retire into their inaccessible wilderness, and come upon the others in times of their weakness, gave the steppe peoples their power. Then there is the third system, that of the maritime coast peoples: they had even less pure military strength, but they had the greatest mobility—the mobility, I mean, of the Vikings or the Saracens when they ruled the Mediterranean, and the Elizabethan Englishmen when they harried the Spanish Main. Coming to more modern times, there has been a certain further change in the agricultural

conditions, and the development, out of the old agricultural states, of the modern industrial state. Then I would also notice that many countries which were steppe became agricultural and industrial. You have that, and you have also the fact that very rarely in history do you get any state rising to great power by one system alone. The Turks began by being the people of the steppes, and came down and swept over Asia Minor; they then formed a regular military power, and conquered the great Turkish Empire; lastly, for a period they became the leading naval power in the Mediterranean. In the same way, you find the Romans, in order to beat the Carthaginians, became a sea-power as well as a land-power; and, in fact, for a power to be great it must have both these elements of strength. The Romans were a great military power with the marginal region as their base and with sea-power behind them. We ourselves have always had as a base the industrial wealth of England. The Russian Empire, which covers the great steppe region, but is no longer in the hands of the old steppe people, is really a portion of the agricultural world, economically, which has conquered the steppe and is turning it into a great agricultural industrial power, and therefore giving a power which the pure steppe people never possessed. Mr. Mackinder referred to the fact that it is only within the last century that the agricultural races have occupied and populated the southern steppe of Russia proper. They are doing the same thing in Central Asia; in fact, the old steppe people are being squeezed out altogether, and you get, coming closer and closer together, two leading industrial-military powers, the one radiating out from a continental centre, and the other beginning from the sea, but gradually going further into the continent in order to have the big industrial base which it requires, because sea-power alone, if it is not based on great industry, and has a great population behind it, is too weak for offence to really maintain itself in the world struggle. I do not intend to make many more remarks, but there is just one point—a word of Mr. Mackinder's suggested it to me. Horse and camel mobility has largely passed away; and it is now a question of railway-mobility as against sea-mobility. I should like to say that sea-mobility has gained enormously in military strength to what it was in ancient times, especially in the number of men that can be carried. In the old days the ships were mobile enough, but they carried few men, and the raids of the sea-people were comparatively feeble. I am not suggesting anything political at the present time; I am merely stating a fact when I say that the sea is far better for conveying troops than anything, except fifteen or twenty parallel lines of railway. What I was coming to is this: that both the sea and the railway are going in the future—it may be near, or it may be somewhat remote—to be supplemented by the air as a means of locomotion, and when we come to that (as we are talking in broad Columbian epochs, I think I may be allowed to look forward a bit)—when we come to that, a great deal of this geographical distribution must lose its importance, and the successful powers will be those who have the greatest industrial basis. It will not matter whether they are in the centre of a continent or on an island; those people who have the industrial power and the power of invention and of science will be able to defeat all others. I will leave that as a parting suggestion.

MR. HOGARTH: As the hour is rather late and the temperature rather low, I will not take up your time with any very lengthy remarks. We certainly have had a wonderfully suggestive paper, and I think it is neither necessary to advise the reader of the paper nor any one who has listened to it to try and think imperially. I would only ask Mr. Mackinder, when he replies, to make me certain about one point. Does he really mean to imply—I think it is an interesting fact if he meant to establish it—that the state of things which is coming



to pass in this inner pivot land will be entirely different to anything that has been seen there before? That is to say, something like a stationary state of things has been brought about, and the country is being developed, till it will even be able to export its own products to the rest of the world; and therefore we are never to see again the state of things that has existed all through ancient history in that a great central region which has continually sent its populations down into the marginal countries, while the marginal countries have sent back to it their influences of civilization, each operating in turn upon the other. The only other observation I would like to make is to reinforce Mr. Amery's objection to Mr. Mackinder's Græco-Slav. I am afraid I cannot accept that division of civilization between the Greek and the Roman. So far as Russia can be called a civilized country at this moment, it has, I think, not been civilized by the Orthodox Church; in fact, I have yet to learn of any civilizing influence exerted by the Orthodox Church on a great scale. Its civilization is far more due to the social culture which was introduced by Peter the Great, and that was more Roman than Greek. But it is to my first question I should like Mr. Mackinder to give a clear answer. I should like to know what he seriously anticipates is going to be the effect on the world of this new distinction between the marginal and the central pivot lands.

Mr. MACKINDER: I have to thank all the speakers for dotting my *i*'s and crossing my *t*'s. I am delighted to find my formula work so well. I do mean exactly what Mr. Hogarth says; I mean that for the first time within recorded history—and this is in reply to Sir Thomas Holdich as well—you have a great stationary population being developed in the steppe lands. This is a revolution in the world that we have to face and reckon with. I doubt very much, and there I agree with Mr. Amery, whether the numbers who came from the heart of Asia were very great. It seems to me quite as he puts it, and that their mobility was of the very essence of the whole thing. A small number of people coming from the steppe lands could do many things, given relative mobility as compared with the agricultural population. With regard to Sir Thomas Holdich's inquiry as to what should send them forth, Sir Clements Markham has pointed out that the nomads did not pour forth once only. I dealt with the fact that for a thousand years the nomadic peoples came through Russia. I fail to see that, when you have this constant succession of descents upon the marginal lands, you are called upon to ask for any special physical change to explain it. All the accounts we have from the time of the earliest Greeks describe the drinkers of mares' milk, and picture for us the nomadic mode of life; therefore I start with the fact that these peoples were nomadic and remained nomadic through two thousand years, and I do not see any evidence that we need either to call in any great physical change or yet to assume any great settled population. As far as I can see, Sven Hedin refuses the idea that you must necessarily ask for a great change of climate in order to explain the existence of the remains in Central Asia. You have powerful winds and much sand, and from time to time the sand is swept over hundreds of miles across the desert. The sand determines the flow of the rivers and the position of the lakes, and some great storm diverting a river into another course would no doubt suffice to ruin a town abandoned by the water. The mere fact that there were nomads, and that there were rich countries to be plundered, seems to me to be almost sufficient for my theory. In the future, I think, you are bound to have different economic provinces, one based mainly on the sea, and the other on the heart of the continent and on railways. I do not think Mr. Amery has allowed sufficiently for the fact that the very largest armies cannot be moved by means of a navy. The Germans marched nearly a million men into France; they marched, and used the railways for supplies. Russia, by

her tariff system and in other ways, is steadily hastening the accomplishment of what I may call the non-oceanic economic system. Her whole policy, by her tariff system, by her break of gauge on her railways, is to separate herself from external oceanic competition.\* With regard to the basis of sea-power in industrial wealth, I absolutely agree. What I suggest is that great industrial wealth in Siberia and European Russia and a conquest of some of the marginal regions would give the basis for a fleet necessary to found the world empire. Mr. Amery's way of putting the three groups of powers is slightly different from mine, but it is essentially the same. I ask for an inner land mobility, for a margin densely populated, and for external sea forces. It is true the camel-men and the horse-men are going; but my suggestion is that railways will take their place, and then you will be able to fling power from side to side of this area. My aim is not to predict a great future for this or that country, but to make a geographical formula into which you could fit any political balance.

There was a point with regard to the Græco-Slav: in the sense in which Mr. Hogarth and Mr. Amery have taken me, I agree with them, but after all I cannot help feeling that Christianity fell on two very different soils—the Greek philosophic and the Roman legal, and that it has in consequence differently influenced the Slav and the Teuton. However, that is a mere incident, and if I qualify my statement by speaking of the Byzantine, I shall then get near to what Mr. Amery asks, and I think I shall do away with the necessity of introducing the example of Rome which Mr. Hogarth brought forward. As regards the potentialities of the land and of the people, I would point out that in Europe there are now more than 40,000,000 people in the steppe land of Russia, and it is by no means yet densely occupied, and that the Russian population is probably increasing faster than any other great civilized or half-civilized population in the world. With a decreasing French population, and a British not increasing as fast as it was, and the native-born populations of the United States and Australia coming nearly to a standstill, you have to face the fact that in a hundred years 40,000,000 people have occupied but a mere corner of the steppe. I think you are on the way to a population which will be numbered by the hundred million; and this is a tendency which you must take into account in assigning values to the variable quantities in the equation of power for which I was seeking a geographical formula. The point with regard to Korea and the Persian gulf which was put by Mr. Spencer Wilkinson exactly illustrates my correlation of the Far Eastern, Middle Eastern, and Near Eastern questions. I represent these as being the present temporary form of the collision between the external and internal forces acting through the intermediate zone, which is itself the seat of independent forces. I quite agree that the function of Britain and of Japan is to act upon the marginal region, maintaining the balance of power there as against the expansive internal forces. I believe that the future of the world depends on the maintenance of this balance of power. It appears to me that our formula makes it clear that we must see to it that we are not driven out of the marginal region. We must maintain our position there, and then, whatever happens, we are fairly secure. The increase of population in the inner regions and the stoppage of increase in the outer regions may be rather serious; but perhaps South America will come in to help us.

The PRESIDENT: I confess I have been entranced by Mr. Mackinder's paper, and I could see by the close attention with which it was listened to by the audience

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\* The Russian customs ring is, of course, so placed as to add to the pivotal area for economic purposes considerable sections of the marginal lands, although not of the oceanic coasts.—H. J. M.



that you all shared my feeling in that respect. Mr. Mackinder has dealt with the old, old story from the very dawn of history, the struggle between Ormerzd and Ahriman, and he has shown us how that struggle has continued on from the very dawn of history to the present day. He has explained all this to us with a brilliancy of description and of illustration, with a close grasp of the subject, and with a clearness of argument which we have seldom had equalled in this room. I am sure you will all with me give a unanimous vote of thanks to Mr. Mackinder for his most interesting paper this evening.

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## BATHYMETRICAL SURVEY OF THE FRESH-WATER LOCHS OF SCOTLAND.\*

Under the Direction of Sir JOHN MURRAY, K.C.B., F.R.S., D.Sc., etc., and  
LAURENCE PULLAR, F.R.S.E.

### PART IV.—LOCHS OF THE ASSYNT DISTRICT.

In this paper it is proposed to deal with the results of the work of the Lake Survey among the lochs in the Assynt district of Sutherlandshire, viz. (1) Lochs Assynt, Leitir Easaich, Awe, Maol a' Choire, Bean-nach, Druim Suardalain, and na Doire Daraich, which drain into Loch Inver; (2) Lochs Cròcach and an Tuirc, which drain into Loch Roe; (3) Lochs Borralan, Urigill, Càrn, Veyatie, a' Mhiotailt, and Fionn, which drain into Loch Kirkaig; (4) Lochs Skinaskink, Gainmheich, and (5) Lurgain, Bad a' Ghaill, and Owskeich, which drain into Enard bay. The relative positions of these lochs will be seen at a glance in the index map shown in Fig. 1. Some notes on these lochs drawn up by Mr. Garrett before leaving for Borneo have been made use of in preparing the descriptions.

### INTRODUCTORY.

The bathymetrical and other details regarding the lochs dealt with in this paper are collected together in the table on p. 446 for convenience of reference and comparison. These details are not repeated in the text, but other particulars are given under the name of each loch. Where the elevation above the sea was not determined by levelling from bench-mark, the approximate elevation is given in brackets; in the case of Lochs Urigill, Càrn, Lurgain, and Owskeich, the Ordnance Survey level is given, with an indication of the date when levelled.

From this table it will be seen that in the twenty lochs under consideration 2540 soundings were taken, and that the aggregate area of the water-surface is over  $12\frac{1}{2}$  square miles, so that the average number

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\* Continued from vol. xxiii. p. 61. Maps, p. 548. The maps illustrating this paper are reduced from the 6-inch Ordnance Survey charts, and are published by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.