

## GEOSTRATEŠKE PERSPEKTIVE SLOVENIJE V SPREMINJajoČEM SE SVETU

## GEOSTRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES OF SLOVENIA IN A CHANGING WORLD

**Povzetek** Članek je namenjen opredelitvi geostrateških temeljev Slovenije ter z njimi povezane paradigme in perspektiv, s katerimi se lahko država v prihodnosti sreča. Posebna pozornost je namenjena identifikaciji geopolitičnega osrčja Slovenije in elementom, ki so z njim povezani, da bi prepoznali dejavnike, ki vplivajo na njen geostrateški položaj. Rdeča nit argumentacije temelji na geopolitičnih teorijah Mackinderja (Osručje) in Spykmana (Obrobje). Da bi jo poudaril, se avtor sklicuje na organsko geopolitično teorijo Friedricha Ratzela, dela Saula Cohena, Rudolfa Kjelléna in Karla Haushoferja. Ob koncu članka so predstavljene geostrateške možnosti Slovenije v kontekstu nenehno spreminjajočega se sveta.

**Ključne besede** *Geopolitika, geostrategija, Slovenija, Jadran, osručje, obrobje.*

**Abstract** The article focuses on Slovenia's geostrategic foundations, and defines its geostrategic paradigm and perspectives. It pays particular attention to identifying the country's geopolitical core and its underlining elements in order to discern the key influencing factors that could have an impact on its geostrategic position. The main argument is underpinned by using Mackinder's Heartland and Spykman's Rimland geopolitical theories. To reinforce it, the author also refers to Friedrich Ratzel's Organic geopolitical theory, and the work of Saul Cohen, Rudolf Kjellén and Karl Haushofer. The article concludes with possible geostrategic options for Slovenia in the context of an ever-changing world.

**Key words** *Geopolitics, Geostrategy, Slovenia, Adriatic, Heartland, Rimland.*

## Introduction

In the third decade of the 21st century, Europe and the world found themselves in a considerably different geostrategic situation, unthinkable just a few years before, and especially at the end of the Cold War. The Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 seems to mark a turning point in Europe's contemporary history. It can be perceived in a much broader context than purely as an act of aggression against a sovereign state which undermines the basic principles of international law, enshrined in the UN Charter<sup>1</sup>, and the Helsinki Final Act<sup>2</sup>. Following Vladimir Putin's speeches<sup>3</sup> on the eve of the invasion, tendencies to relativize the history and geopolitical events of the past 100 years, and in particular since 1991, became more apparent, and the upcoming geopolitical consequences more far-reaching.

Having one (or potentially two)<sup>4</sup> of the great powers overtly challenging world order means that a major geostrategic shift has appeared, and a new strategic balance is in the making, as also acknowledged by Henry Kissinger<sup>5</sup> and George Friedman<sup>6</sup>. To achieve such a new balance, the very fundamentals of Europe's peace are being put into question by undermining the territorial integrity and questioning the statehood tradition of certain countries. Putin's first February speech did exactly that, as the Russian President built up his argument beginning from the aftermath of the 1917 October revolution. He stated that *»Ukraine never had a tradition of genuine statehood«, and that »modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia, more precisely, Bolshevik, communist Russia ... after the revolution of 1917 and Lenin and his associates did it in a very rude way towards Russia itself – by separating, tearing away from it part of its own historical territories«* (Putin's speech of 21 Feb 2022). He goes on to list other examples (e.g. territorial changes in Romania and the historical region of Bessarabia) and stresses that *»Stalin endowed Poland with part of the original German territories, and in 1954 Khrushchev for some reason took away Crimea from Russia and gave it to Ukraine«* (Putin's speech of 21 Feb 2022).

In Europe, this type of political discourse, especially from one of the great powers, has been unheard of since at least the Second World War. It could be especially worrisome for all those European countries which were not independent before 1991 and without a recognised statehood tradition before 1918. Alongside Ukraine

<sup>1</sup> Article 2, para 4 states that *»all UN Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations«* (UN Charter, 1945, p 3).

<sup>2</sup> *Territorial integrity of Member States is, among other things, one of the cornerstones of the Helsinki Final Act, based on which the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) was established.*

<sup>3</sup> *With the aim of justifying the invasion on Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the Russian public twice, on 21st February and on 23rd February 2022.*

<sup>4</sup> *Russia and China*

<sup>5</sup> *At the 2022 World Economic Forum in Davos, the former US Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, stated that »the Ukraine conflict has produced a rupture in the economic arrangements that have been made in the period before, so that the definition and operation of a global system will have to be reconsidered«* (Kissinger, interview, 23 May 2022).

<sup>6</sup> *In his article of 3 May 2022, »The Beginning of a New Era«, George Friedman stated that systemic shifts occur cyclically, »roughly 30-40 years apart« and that »we are now in an era in which shifts occur«* (Friedman, 3 May 2022).

and some others<sup>7</sup>, Slovenia too falls into that category. To understand the strategic options that such countries have on a geopolitical chessboard it is therefore important first to try to understand the fundamentals of the contemporary geostrategic game, and second to understand individual countries specific geostrategic positions, the elements that form these positions (e.g. political, military, historical, economic, geographic, etc.), their features, and possible future developments. In this article, the author presents and analyzes each of these aspects by referring to several geopolitical theories (such as the Heartland theory of Mackinder, the Rimland theory of Spykman, the Organic theory of Ratzel, or the geopolitical thoughts of Kjellén and Haushofer). He also illustrates his arguments by using the book by Saul Cohen, *»Geopolitics, The Geography of International Relations«* especially with a view to determining Slovenia's *perspectives in the new geostrategic reality*<sup>8</sup>.

## 1 EUROPE'S GEOSTRATEGIC CONTEXT UP TO 2007: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

A century ago, the British geographer Halford Mackinder, in his book *»Democratic Ideals and Reality«*, stated that the one *»who rules East Europe commands the Heartland, who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island, who rules the World-Island commands the World«* (Mackinder, 1996, p 106). Later Nicholas Spykman in *»The Geography of the Peace«* claimed that *»the Rimland of the Eurasian land mass must be viewed as an intermediate region, situated as it is between the Heartland and the marginal seas«* and that the *»Rimland functions as a vast buffer zone of conflict between sea power and land power«* (Spykman, 1944, p 41)<sup>9</sup>. *»Who controls Rimland rules Eurasia, who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world«* (Spykman, 1944, pp 41, 43). Whereas Mackinder's work points to *»a struggle of Heartland-dominated land power against sea power, placing the Heartland-based land power in the better position«*, Spykman held that the *»Rimland was the key to world power, as the maritime-oriented Rimland was central to contact with the outside world«* (Kaplan, 2013, p 96).

These theories, and those related to the Eurasian landmass, laid the foundations of modern geopolitics and its strategic implications, and are graphically presented in Figures 1 and 2 (See p 114). Spykman's theory heavily influenced the US Cold War Containment strategy<sup>10</sup> towards the Soviet Union, which, at that time, practically controlled the whole of Mackinder's Heartland. This strategy was implemented

<sup>7</sup> Such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Latvia, Moldova, North Macedonia, and Slovakia.

<sup>8</sup> Full names of the authors are: Halford Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman, Friedrich Ratzel, Rudolf Kjellén, Karl Haushofer, and Saul Bernard Cohen.

<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, according to Cohen, there are *»two major geographical settings that provide arenas for the development of distinctive geopolitical structures, maritime and continental«* (Cohen, 2015, p 38).

<sup>10</sup> The idea of containing the communist (Soviet) expansion by creating strategic alliances in geographic areas which correspond to what Spykman calls the *»Rimland«*. It was first voiced by US diplomat George F. Kennan in 1946 and 1947.

through the Truman doctrine<sup>11</sup> in 1947, which became the basis of American foreign policy throughout the Cold War. It contributed, in 1949, to the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and of various security agreements in East Asia, such as those with Japan and with South Korea<sup>12</sup>. The Marshall plan (or the European Recovery Programme), initiated by the US after the Second World War, was a tool of the Containment strategy, and helped the economies of the Western European nations to recover by fostering economic cooperation. Even though the European Union itself does not stem from the Marshall Plan, the latter inspired the European integration process which began in 1951 with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community.

Since the Truman era, the Containment strategy has become a standard in US foreign and defence policy. It was advocated by two influential political advisors and strategic thinkers, Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzeziński<sup>13</sup> even after the end of the Cold War and the dismantlement of the Soviet Union. The reason was the renewed interest of the US in Eastern Europe and Central Asia as a way to expand its influence from the Rimland to the very Heartland. Their arguments influenced the US Defence Planning Guidance of 1992, the so-called »Wolfowitz doctrine«. This document set the scene for post-Cold War US strategic thinking, where the main US political and military objective was to prevent the emergence of a rival superpower, and to be prepared to take unilateral actions (US Defence Planning Guidance, 1992, pp 2, 5). Key elements from this Strategic Guidance were taken over in the 2002 Bush Doctrine, which marked the first decade of the 21st century. It proclaimed a unilateral approach towards geopolitical issues, the enlargement of NATO to Eastern Europe, and the outreach of US strategic interests into the Caucasus and Central Asia (thus entering Mackinder's Heartland and fighting the War on Terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan, which corresponds to Spykman's Rimland).

At the beginning of the 21st century the world's geopolitical setting, according to Cohen, was composed of geostrategic realms<sup>14</sup>, geopolitical regions<sup>15</sup>, shatterbelts<sup>16</sup> and national states with five orders of national power level (Cohen, 2015, pp 37, 48, 51). In this context, the first or the highest level consists of »major powers – the US, the EU, Japan, Russia and China. These all have global reach, serving as the cores of the three geostrategic realms« (Cohen, 2015, p 51), where the maritime realm, led

<sup>11</sup> Harry S. Truman was US President from 1945 to 1953. In his speech to the US Congress in March 1947, Truman announced US support to all nations that were threatened by the Soviet Union, with the aim of containing Soviet geopolitical expansion during the Cold War.

<sup>12</sup> After the 1950-53 Korean War.

<sup>13</sup> Zbigniew Brzeziński, US diplomat and political scientist, touched upon this topic in his books »Diplomacy« and »The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives«.

<sup>14</sup> 1 – Atlantic & Pacific maritime realm, 2 – Eurasian continental Russian heartland, 3 – Mixed maritime-continental East Asia.

<sup>15</sup> Maritime-related regions are North America, South America, Maritime Europe & Maghreb, and the Asia-Pacific Rim; the other two realms encompass only one region each with the same name as the two realms.

<sup>16</sup> Deeply fragmented regions of the Middle East and most of Africa, which are global destabilizers.

by the US and supported by the EU and Japan, dominated the other two<sup>17</sup>. In Cohen's system, a special status is granted to »gateway« states or regions, which »play a novel role in linking different parts of the world by facilitating the exchange of peoples, goods and ideas<sup>18</sup>« (Cohen, 2015, p 54). The value of gateway countries consists in their mitigation role which »helps to convert former barrier boundaries to borders of accommodation« (Cohen, 2015, p 55). In this context, according to Cohen »Estonia is beginning to serve such a role as a link along the geostrategic boundary between the European portion of the maritime realm and heartlandic Russia, and Slovenia plays such a role between Central and South-Eastern Europe« (Cohen, 2015, p 55).

## 2 A CHANGING WORLD (2007-2022): GEOSTRATEGY IN PRACTICE

US supremacy was unquestioned until 2007, when the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, in a speech in Munich, claimed that US supremacy in the world's strategic affairs had left Russia and others out. Putin went further to argue that »the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world«, that the »force's dominance inevitably encourages a number of countries to acquire weapons of mass destruction«, and that the world had »reached that decisive moment when we must seriously think about the architecture of global security« (Putin's Munich speech, 2007). Furthermore, Putin stated that Russia, as a successor to the Soviet Union, had complied with all agreements, be them nuclear or conventional, and in return »NATO has put its frontline forces on Russia's borders« (Putin's Munich speech, 2007). The same message was repeated in February 2022 when Putin recalled Russia's continued strategic uneasiness with »the expansion of the NATO bloc to the east, bringing its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders« (Putin's speech of 23 Feb 2022). Russia seems to perceive NATO (and EU) expansion towards its borders as a loss of its strategic depth, which lies, according to Friedman, as far as possible »west of the line from St. Petersburg to Rostov on Don« (Friedman, 2016, para 4), a loss to which Russia needs to react.

A change in Russia's behaviour on the world scene can therefore be traced back to 2007, but it was first visible in the following year, after the NATO Summit in Bucharest, when the war in Georgia broke out. As of that moment, events and moves on the strategic chessboard began to accelerate and fundamentally altered the world's geostrategic landscape. The declared unilateralism of the 1990s was gradually eroded by overt discussions about a transition into multilateralism on the one hand, and by remarks about China and Russia trying to impose a new world order on the other. The sequence of major events up to the beginning of the War in Ukraine in 2022, as the author sees them, are presented in Figure 3 (See p 115).

<sup>17</sup> The second order consists of regional powers with the potential to extend their power to other regions. The third, fourth, and fifth orders consist of those states with a limited reach to parts of their regions only (based on Cohen, 2015, p 51).

<sup>18</sup> Characteristics of gateway states, based on Cohen, are their strategic economic location or the adaptability of their inhabitants to economic opportunities.

Geostrategic shifts usually announce the transformation of old political and strategic paradigms. Modern history offers plenty of examples, such as the events after the fall of Napoleon, the 1856 Crimean War, the 1878 Berlin Congress, the two World Wars, and others. Most of them have changes of borders as a common denominator. Furthermore, the disappearance of various empires after the First World War (Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian Empires) and the birth (Poland, Yugoslavia, etc) or territorial expansions (Italy, Japan, Romania) of some countries, underpin the argument of Friedrich Ratzel<sup>19</sup> and Rudolf Kjellén<sup>20</sup> about the Organic geopolitical theory. In the last strategic change, which occurred in the 1990s, Slovenia became independent for the first time, and thus a sovereign actor on the chessboard of the European Rimland. As we again face geostrategic turbulence with possible consequences to Europe's political geography, we will elaborate next on Slovenia's geostrategic context, its prospects, and its strategic »*marge de manoeuvre*«<sup>21</sup>.

### 3 SLOVENIA ON THE GEOSTRATEGIC MAP

In Slovene geopolitical and geostrategic thinking<sup>22</sup>, Slovenia is usually defined as a »*contact area*« which »*creates some difficulties in the allocation of Slovene territory to standardized categories*« (Bufon, 2003, p 125). Bufon sees it as a country »*on the edge*« or »*in the contact area of many geopolitical and interest spheres*« (Bufon, 2003, p 128), important for the »*control of the Balkans as a contact point between the USA on one side and Russia and Turkey on the other*« (Bufon, 2003, p 128). Similarly, Slovenia is placed, according to Črnčec (2010, p 41), »*in between*«, and is at the same time a »*Central European and Southern European country*«<sup>23</sup>. From the standpoint of the »*military-geographic classification, there is no doubt that Slovenian space has always been an integral part of the Southern Theatre of War*« (Črnčec, 2010, p 42). Furlan defines Slovenia as »*a continental and maritime country*« and as »*a crossroads between the Central European, Southern European and Mediterranean geostrategic and geopolitical spaces*« (Furlan, 2020, p 208).

In the geopolitical context of Mackinder and Spykman, Slovenia's position falls outside the Heartland but within the Inner or Marginal Crescent. In Spykman's words, it forms part of the western, European part of the Rimland, being in between the Heartland and the marginal seas, that is, the Adriatic. As the Rimland functions overall as »*a vast buffer zone of conflict between sea power and land power*«

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Ratzel was one of the founders of German geopolitics and a father of the »Organic theory«, in which he compared political entities (e.g. states) with a living organism, claiming that in order to survive both are searching for nourishment, firstly in terms of food, and secondly (independent states) in the form of territorial expansion.

<sup>20</sup> Rudolf Kjellén was a Swedish political scientist and geographer who first coined the term »geopolitics« in 1899. His work was influenced by Friedrich Ratzel.

<sup>21</sup> In English: room for manoeuvre, flexibility, limitations to doing something, options.

<sup>22</sup> The first known paper on Slovene geopolitics was the 1926 article »Geopolitičen oris Jugoslavije« by Silvo Kranjec.

<sup>23</sup> Based on this fact, Slovenes could be identified as »Central European Southerners« (Črnčec, 2010, p 41).

(Spykman, 1941, p 41), the same could be said about the territory of Slovenia and of the territories where Slovenes have traditionally dwelt since their settlement in the 6th century. To the West it has traditionally touched the Roman (maritime) world or Italy, and to the East the Ugro-Finnic (continental) world, or Hungary. At the same time, this territory has served the Germanic (continental) world (which is by tradition land-oriented) as an access to the seas to the south (the Mediterranean/Adriatic). Throughout modern history, the Maritime powers (France, the United Kingdom, and the USA) have made efforts to cut off the Germanic world from access to this sea. In this context, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS), which was established in 1918<sup>24</sup>, served as a barrier to German access to the Adriatic and at the same time as a guarantor<sup>25</sup> against the reconstitution of the Habsburg Monarchy.

After the Second World War, due to its geostrategic position, socialist Yugoslavia (and in this context Slovenia as one of its constitutional federal units) served as a buffer zone between the two geopolitical blocks, the Western (capitalist) Maritime-oriented one, located in Spykman's Rimland, and the Eastern (communist), land-oriented one covering all of Mackinder's Heartland. As Yugoslavia covered the eastern part of the Adriatic it was, based on Mackinder's adapted Heartland boundary<sup>26</sup>, an extremity of the European part of the Rimland bordering the Heartland (Cohen, 2015, p 22).

The breakup of the Soviet Union (and also Yugoslavia) could be seen as a victory of capitalism over communism, but also of the Maritime powers over one Land power<sup>27</sup>, which was by then practically controlling the whole Heartland and an important part of the Rimland<sup>28</sup>. This geostrategic shift facilitated the re-emergence of other traditional powers, such as Germany and Turkey in Europe, and China and Japan in the Asia-Pacific region. At that time (the beginning of the 1990s) it seemed that the geopolitical theories of Mackinder and Spykman had been overcome. At the same time, in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia, other geopolitical theories re-emerged, notably the Organic theory of Ratzel<sup>29</sup> and Kjellén. With the opening of the strategic vacuum, the Organic theory re-appeared first in strategic borderland areas: the Balkans and the Caucasus. The wars in former Yugoslavia and Nagorno-Karabakh were to some extent a mixture of the legacy of post-WWI events and the related unsettled territorial conflicts, and of the renewed impact of the re-emergence of powers such as Germany in the Balkans and Turkey (and Iran) in the Caucasus.

<sup>24</sup> *From 1929 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.*

<sup>25</sup> *Together with the Kingdom of Romania and Czechoslovakia.*

<sup>26</sup> *In 1943 Mackinder moved the boundary of the Heartland west, thus in principle setting the border with the European part of the Rimland along ideological borders, where Yugoslavia was outside, while its eastern neighbours, Romania and Bulgaria, formed part of the Heartland (based on Cohen, 2015, p 21).*

<sup>27</sup> *The Soviet Union.*

<sup>28</sup> *Eastern Europe and, to some extent, China.*

<sup>29</sup> *Political concepts that include territorial expansions, such as Greater Serbia, Greater Croatia and/or Greater Albania.*

After nearly a decade, this vacuum was filled by international organizations such as NATO and the European Union, which, within two decades, practically integrated most of the European part of the Rimland and thus, at least temporarily, froze the impact of the Organic theory. In this context Cohen sees maritime Europe together with Maghreb as a separate geopolitical region, »*Maritime Europe*« (Cohen, 2015, pp 44-45). By entering the Euro-Atlantic organizations in 2004, the newly independent countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including Slovenia, seemed to overcome their traditional status as a strategic buffer zone. But the events that followed proved this assumption to be short-lived or just too optimistic.

### 3.1 Geostrategic focal point

In global geostrategic thinking, the importance of the Slovene-inhabited territories has been usually linked to the »*Adriatic question*« and in particular the »*Trieste question*«. This north Adriatic town has continually drawn the attention of great powers, as possessing it and controlling its port held considerable strategic value. Geographically, Trieste is the most northern access point of Central Europe to the Mediterranean, and traditionally was controlled by German-speaking countries<sup>30</sup>. It represented the (only) direct German access to the warm seas. The traditional German school of geopolitics, embodied by Haushofer and his followers, places it in the »*German cultural space*« (Grafenauer, 1994, pp 30, 31). When able to possess Trieste, German-ruled countries basically cut Europe along the north-south line (from the North Sea to the Adriatic), thus placing Western Europe in the situation of having no direct territorial links with Eastern Europe. In this context, Germany and the Habsburg Empire were in an advantageous position to directly influence the European part of Rimland and control the gates towards the Heartland. However, as Trieste was ethnically surrounded by Slovenes, the access to it, be it from German or Italian-speaking lands, would have always crossed Slovenes' territory and thus had a significant geostrategic impact on this nation.

During the 1919 Versailles peace conference, one of the ideas to overcome the so-called »*Adriatic question*« and the related dispute over Trieste and its hinterland between the Kingdom of Italy and other Great Powers was to establish an independent (buffer) country which would stretch from the Adriatic to the river Drava. On the eve of the Second World War, Slovene national leader Anton Korošec allegedly recalled the so-called »*English plan*« for Slovenia, originally drafted at the end of the First World War by Toynbee<sup>31</sup>, who proposed to the UK Foreign office the creation of »*an independent country in the vicinity of Trieste*« (Godeša, 2019, p 339) in order to mitigate the Italian (French and UK) strategic concerns over German access to the north Adriatic. While thinking about solving the issue of Trieste, Toynbee, who

<sup>30</sup> Trieste began to evolve as the most important (open) port of the Habsburg Empire in 1719, which means that it provided strategic access to the southern seas to the German world for 200 years, until 1918 when it came under Italian possession.

<sup>31</sup> An independent Slovene state was proposed, for the first time, by British historian Arnold Joseph Toynbee in his work »*Nationality and the War*«, published in 1915.



was respected not only in the UK but also in the US, stated that the »*Slovene unit should become neither part of Italy nor of new Germany*«. It should »*become either part of a new Yugoslav state or an independent political entity, under European protectorate*« (Lipušček, 2011, p 64).

After the Second World War, Yugoslavia was not granted the port of Trieste, mainly to prevent the Soviet Union (a land power controlling the Heartland) to access, through its political influence over Yugoslavia, one of the key strategic ports of the Rimland's marginal seas, which would open the gates to the plains of river Po and thus to the whole of northern Italy. Instead, a kind of a buffer protectorate was established, called the »*Free Territory of Trieste*«<sup>32</sup>. Seven years later, due to the geostrategic shift<sup>33</sup>, part of the southern half of that territory came under the jurisdiction of Slovenia (itself part of Yugoslavia), which completely changed the geostrategic dimension of Slovenia, providing it with access to the sea through the town of Koper.

The situation after Slovenia's independence proved once more the importance of Trieste and its surroundings on the geostrategic stability of Slovenia. Italy's support for Slovenia's accession to the EU<sup>34</sup> and NATO in the mid-1990s was manifested only after the two countries came to an agreement over the property-related issues emanating from the period of the Free Territory of Trieste (FTT). Thus, an agreement was concluded in the context of the Slovenia Association Agreement, with the EU granting a privileged right to acquire properties to those citizens who left the part of the FTT integrated into Yugoslavia after 1954. It was of vital geopolitical importance for strengthening the stability and prosperity of the young state. Recently reported plans to transform Trieste into one of the main European entry ports of the Chinese-sponsored »*Road and Belt Initiative*« prove yet again its strategic importance.

### 3.2 National heartland

The father of geopolitics, Rudolf Kjellén, saw the state as »*an independent object of study with its own dynamic and logic, power and will, an organic unity of land and people, an organism with body and soul, a personality on the international stage*« (Tunander, 2001, p 453). Kjellén explained his perspective by »*using further metaphors from poetry and prose: like man, the state may lose a limb without perishing, but there are others, without which the state could not survive*« (Tunander, 2001, p 453). Taking Kjellén's definition further and paraphrasing Mackinder, such an area could be called a »*national heartland*«, or the »*historic or nuclear core*« by Cohen (Cohen, 2015, p 39). A national heartland is usually linked to a territory or places (historical, mythological, and/or religious) in which the state or the statehood

<sup>32</sup> *The Free Territory of Trieste was an independent territory under the responsibility of the UN. For a period of seven years, it acted as a free city state. Italian and Slovene were both official languages and thus those nations acted as constitutional nations of that state. It was divided between Italy and Yugoslavia in 1954.*

<sup>33</sup> *From 1948 Yugoslavia distanced itself from the Soviet bloc which enabled better relations with the West.*

<sup>34</sup> *Slovenia and Italy, with the support of the EU Spanish Presidency, signed the so-called »Spanish compromise« in 1996, translated into Annex XIII of the 1999 EU-Slovenia Association Agreement (OJ L 51/67-68 of 26.2.1999).*

idea originated. It serves as a reference point or a nucleus for state legitimacy and tradition. Even nations with little or no statehood tradition try to find such a reference point.

In 1918, the Slovenes emerged in (modern) history as one of the three constitutional nations within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes<sup>35</sup>, and thus placed their name on the world map for the first time (Hassid, 2021, p 28). Before that date the statehood tradition effectively did not exist. There were only two historical reference points which contributed to the development of a statehood idea, which Hassid calls »*the myths*« (Hassid, 2021, pp 56-60). The first was the early (proto)Slovene medieval principality of Carantania (7th-9th centuries) located in today's Austrian Carinthia, and the second was the Principality of Celje (15th century)<sup>36</sup>. The other (proto)Slovene medieval principality of Carniola (8th-9th century), located south of Carantania, was little known and therefore did not figure as a reference. But historically, it was in fact Carniola which, due to its central geographical position among other Slovene-inhabited lands and its ethnic Slovene character, provided the territorial nucleus for the future unification of the Slovene-inhabited lands of the Holy Roman and later the Habsburg Empire. It seems that the death of the Carantanian statehood idea (or myth) in 1918-20<sup>37</sup> made space for a new tradition, with its (geo)political epicentre in the territory of Carniola (Kranjska). The movement was obviously evolutionary, beginning back in the 16th century with the first book written in Slovene, which slowly sparked the awareness of the ethnic specificities of a nation living between the Adriatic and the eastern Alps. Furthermore, many key political and intellectual elites who contributed to the process of national unification<sup>38</sup> came from Celje and its surroundings. Moreover, the area played an essential part in the defence of Maribor and Slovene Styria, and in the military intervention in Carinthia during the crucial months from November 1918 till June 1919.

That said, one could geographically identify the Slovene national heartland as being formed of Ljubljana, Upper Carniola (Gorenjska), Lower Carniola (Dolenjska) without Kočevje/Gottschee<sup>39</sup> and Bela Krajina<sup>40</sup>, the traditional Inner Carniola

<sup>35</sup> *The State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was established on 29th of October 1918, but 33 days later, on 1st of December 1918, together with the Kingdom of Serbia, formed the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.*

<sup>36</sup> *The three golden stars from the coat of arms of the Dukes of Celje represented Slovenes in the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. As of 1991, these three golden stars form the coat of arms of Slovenia, thus forming a symbolic continuity of Slovene statehood tradition as of 1918.*

<sup>37</sup> *The contributions of the Slovenes in Carinthia in implementing the national unification in 1918-20 were modest. Furthermore, the majority of Slovenes voted against unification with the rest of the country in the Carinthian plebiscite on 10 October 1920.*

<sup>38</sup> *For example, the first bishop of Maribor, Anton Martin Slomšek; the leader of the Styrian National Council in 1918 in Maribor and the initiator of Ljubljana University, Karel Verstovšek; the northern border combatant Lt. Franjo Malgaj and his associates; and numerous key figures in organizing national anti-Nazi resistance in Maribor during the Second World War, such as Miloš Zidanšek.*

<sup>39</sup> *A German speaking 'island'.*

<sup>40</sup> *The traditional Uskoki region, geographically separated from the rest of Carniola by the chain of Gorjanci mountains.*

(Notranjska)<sup>41</sup> region, and the territory of the traditional Celje region (Savinjska)<sup>42</sup>. This territory roughly corresponds to the basin of the rivers Sava and Savinja, and comprises various strategic mountain passes, such as the Ljubljana and Postojna Gates, the Rateče valley in the Julian Alps, the Ljubelj/Loibl Pass in the Karavanke Alps, and the pass over the Vitanje mountains, a natural barrier in an east-west direction between Maribor and Celje. To the south, the area is limited by the Kočevski Rog forest and the Gorjanci mountains, and is open towards the river Sava in the direction of Zagreb, Croatia.

Within this national heartland area, Ljubljana acts as a key central point. According to Cohen's classification, it is called a »*Capital or Political Centre*« (Cohen, 2015, p 39). But it would be impossible for it to exert such a role without other organic elements within the heartland. In this context, the author sees the control of the four surrounding towns as crucial for the functioning of the heartland and its capital. These are Postojna, Novo Mesto, Celje and Kranj. They form a square and the entrance to the Slovene heartland, and at the same time an ultimate fortress for the heartland's capital, Ljubljana. In this context it was not by chance that in the 1990s the Slovene Armed Forces held three military Headquarters at operation level in the three of the four towns: Postojna, Kranj and Celje (Šteh, Tovornik, 2013, p 20).

### 3.3 Key geostrategic points outside the national heartland

If the national heartland area is key for the survival of a state, other geographic areas can be essential for its strategic position, which makes a country relevant in the wider geostrategic context. In the case of Slovenia, three towns have such features. The first is Koper, which provides territorial access to the Adriatic Sea. Koper's hinterland represents a connecting area for Italy's access to Croatia and the other countries of the Balkans. The second is Maribor, which is at the crossroads of two strategic axes, the north-south one connecting Austria and Germany with Croatia/Serbia, the other countries of the Balkans and the Middle East<sup>43</sup>, and the east-west one, providing Hungary and Ukraine with access to Italy/France and the shortest access to the sea<sup>44</sup> via the port of Koper. The third town is Nova Gorica, situated at the border with Italy and at the gates to the Friulian/river Po plains, which extend deep into the north of Italy. Nova Gorica is an entry point to the shortest route from Italy via Ljubljana towards Hungary, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It is also the last Slovene urban outpost in the western part of the country. Together with the

<sup>41</sup> The traditional inner Carniola region includes the towns of Idrija and Postojna and stretches to the strategic point of Senožeče, from where the terrain opens towards the Vipava valley and further into the plains of the river Po in Italy, towards the Karst and Trieste (Adriatic) and towards Ilirska Bistrica and the Kvarner/Quarnero Bay at the town of Rijeka/Fiume in the Adriatic.

<sup>42</sup> Which corresponds to the current Celje statistical region.

<sup>43</sup> Pan-European corridor No 10.

<sup>44</sup> Pan-European corridor No 5.

national heartland, these three towns and their associated regions represent what Cohen calls »*the Ecumens*«<sup>45</sup> (Cohen, 2015, p 39).

All three towns have common geopolitical, economic, educational, and spiritual characteristics. From the geopolitical point of view, all have taken up the role of a replacement/substitute for the urban and economic centres lost after the First and Second World Wars. In this context, Maribor could be seen as a replacement for Klagenfurt/Celovec in Austrian Carinthia, Koper as a replacement for Trieste/Trst (in Italy), and Nova Gorica as a replacement for Gorizia/Gorica (in Italy). Educationally, all three towns are University centres<sup>46</sup> alongside the capital, Ljubljana. From a spiritual perspective, all three have traditionally had an ecclesiastical seat, a Bishop or even an Archbishop<sup>47</sup>. Even though Nova Gorica has officially only a co-cathedral seat, it represents the Slovene Rimo catholic tradition of Gorizia/Gorica<sup>48</sup>, which played a key role in preserving the Slovene national identity in the whole Littoral region in the times of the Habsburg Empire, as well as later on during Fascist Italy.

The latest Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia (SDSS), agreed by the National Parliament in 2004, re-emphasises the strategic importance of these three towns by stressing that »*due to their size, population pressures, universal issues and/or anticipated development, special attention shall be devoted to the harmonized development of wider urban areas of the centres of national significance, particularly Ljubljana, Maribor, Koper, Celje and Nova Gorica*« (SDSS, 2004, p 25). In the draft Spatial Development Strategy (SPRS) 2050, Maribor and Koper are recognized as first category towns, whereas Nova Gorica falls into the second category (SPRS, 2020, p 34). Nevertheless, the document acknowledges its importance as cross-border urban agglomeration with Italy's Gorizia (SPRS, 2020, p 16). That said, Maribor, Koper and Nova Gorica are seen as three strategic bastions which open the doors towards the country's heartland.

### 3.4 Geostrategic surroundings – neighbouring countries

Slovenia is bordered by Austria to the north, Italy to the west, Hungary to the north-east, Croatia to the east and south, and the Adriatic Sea to the south-west. All are members of the EU, and three of them are members of NATO.

Austria is a landlocked, continental-oriented country located in the centre of Europe, covering the territory between Germany to the north-west and Italy and the Balkans

<sup>45</sup> *Areas of greatest density of population and economic activity which are, usually, the state's most important political area (based on Cohen, 2015, p 39).*

<sup>46</sup> *In addition to the university, Maribor also hosts the Military School.*

<sup>47</sup> *Since 2006, Maribor has been an Archdiocese and thus a seat of an Archbishop. Gorizia/Gorica is an Archdiocese, which territory, in Habsburg times, covered, among others, the diocese of Ljubljana and the diocese of Trieste-Koper.*

<sup>48</sup> *The first ever two Archbishops in the history of the Slovene nation and the Slovene Catholic Church were the Archbishops of Gorica/Gorizia, Jakob Missia (1897-1902), and Frančišek Borgia Sedej (1906-1931). Jakob Missia was made a cardinal in 1899, the first Slovene ever to be given that rank.*

to the south and south-east. Its strategic focus is on Central Europe, northern Italy and the Balkans, in particular those areas controlled by the Habsburg Empire before 1919. Its main geostrategic partner in Europe seems to be Germany. Its border with Slovenia is defined in the 1919 Treaty of Saint Germain and the 1955 Austrian State Treaty. For Austria, according to Jančar, its *»strategic importance is quite high as it comes third, after Germany and Italy«* (Jančar, 1996, p 95). He adds that *»geopolitically, Slovenia covers the territory which represents the shortest distance for most of Austrian territory to the Mediterranean«*, likewise for its geographical position with regard to transport in the direction of the Balkans and the Levant. *»When strategically heading towards the South, it is difficult for Austria to avoid Slovenia«* (Jančar, 1996, p 95). Cohen sees Austria, together with Slovenia, as a gateway country (Cohen, 2015, p 57). Historically, the territories of South Austria<sup>49</sup> and Slovenia used to form *»Inner Austria«* which, together with the Duchy of Austria, represented the *»nucleus around which the Habsburg Empire was built«* (Lipušček, 2003, p 141)<sup>50</sup>. The loss of Slovene-inhabited territories in Carinthia after the First World War, and the memory of Nazi occupation in Slovenia during the Second World War, have hampered closer strategic cooperation between the two countries.

Italy is a predominantly maritime-oriented country, strategically focused on the Mediterranean region and the Alpine borderlands. Its most important geostrategic partner in Europe seems to be France (Maselli, interview, 5 May 2021). The Italian-Slovene border was defined in the 1920 Treaty of Rapallo<sup>51</sup>, the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty, the 1954 London Memorandum and the 1975 Treaty of Osimo. Italy's eastern border was at the core of both Italian and Slovene geostrategic aspirations for much of the 20th century, and a cause of geostrategic traumas that still partly resonate on both sides of the frontier. The common strategic denominator for both was control over Trieste. Cataruzza (2017, p 290) states that the *»question of the Italian eastern frontier which ended in 1954 played a crucial role in the history of the Italian nation. It remained for about fifty years one of the great themes capable of triggering national mobilization«*. With the Treaty of Osimo, which officially closed the chapter of Italy's eastern border, and Italian recognition of Slovenia as a successor state to the Yugoslav treaties after 1991, gives hope that the Risorgimento<sup>52</sup> is finally over. In this context, both countries can further develop their strategic ties, established in the mid-1990s<sup>53</sup>, as Slovenia represents the gate to the Pannonian plains and beyond (Hungary Romania, Ukraine), as well as to the Balkan region.

<sup>49</sup> *The Duchies of Carinthia and Styria.*

<sup>50</sup> *It could be considered as a »historic or nuclear core« or a kind of »national heartland« of the Habsburg Empire.*

<sup>51</sup> *The first few kilometres of the border, spanning from the Slovene/Austrian/Italian three border point at Mount Peč in the Karavanke Alps to a few hundred metres north of Kotova špica in the Julian Alps, remain the same as that defined in the Treaty of Rapallo in 1920.*

<sup>52</sup> *A political movement for Italian unification initiated in the 19th century.*

<sup>53</sup> *Following the 1996 »Spanish compromise«, and Slovenia's Accession to the EU, Italy launched a »Trilateral Cooperation« with Slovenia and Hungary, thus trying to play a visible role in Central and Eastern Europe.*

Hungary is a landlocked, continental-oriented country with its strategic focus on Central Europe, and in particular the areas historically controlled by the Crown of Saint Stefan before 1919. Its border with Slovenia is defined in the 1920 Trianon Treaty. Historically, its main geostrategic partner in Europe was Germany/Austria, but currently its focus seems to be on the Višegrad<sup>54</sup> countries. Slovenia plays an important role as it is seen as a natural access to the Adriatic through the Port of Koper, not only for Hungary but also for the other Višegrad countries. Furthermore, it provides the shortest route for Hungary towards South-Western Europe (Italy/France/Spain).

Croatia is both a continental and a maritime-oriented country, and at present the continental dimension seems to be prevalent. Its strategic focus lies in Central Europe and the Western Balkans. Historically, it was closely related to Hungary. Its main geostrategic partner in Europe seems to be Germany/Austria. Slovenia is seen as a gateway towards Northern and Western Europe (Austria/Germany and Italy/France). While Cvrtić (2000, p 150) sees Croatia, similarly to Slovenia, as a »gateway to South-Eastern Europe«, Cohen places it in Central and Eastern Europe and in particular in the Western Balkans<sup>55</sup> (Cohen, 2015, p 59). There is an impression that Croatia attempts to compete with Slovenia in positioning itself as a key gateway to the Balkans, as well as a country providing access to the Adriatic through its north Adriatic ports. In this context, Croatia continually demonstrates a certain degree of strategic hostility in relation to Slovenia by trying to limit Slovenia's access to the open seas in the Adriatic<sup>56</sup>. This position is difficult to explain as, historically, there have not been any hostilities or military conflicts between the two countries. Furthermore, both share similar interests as far as the Adriatic and the Balkan regions are concerned.

#### 4 SLOVENIA'S GEOSTRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES

As of 24th February 2022, the world we are living in entered a stage of strategic transformation and is heading towards a new balance of powers. At this point in time, it is difficult to make an estimation as to how long the current conflict will last, what its magnitude will be in the event of further escalation, and what its geostrategic outcome will look like. There are nevertheless some indications: by questioning the territorial integrity or even the *raison d'être* of certain independent states, and by using history of over 100 years ago to justify modern geostrategic goals, Russia

<sup>54</sup> The Višegrad Group (or V4), established in 1991 in the Hungarian town of Višegrad, currently consists of four European Union Member States: Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary. The V4 is a political alliance within the EU with the aim of advancing military, economic and energy cooperation between these countries.

<sup>55</sup> Cohen sees Croatia in a potential confederation together with Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

<sup>56</sup> There have been two attempts, both initiated by Slovenia, to solve the open border issues with Croatia, in 2001 (Drnovšek-Račan Agreement) and in 2009 (the Arbitration Agreement). The first was notified by the Croatian Prime Minister but was not ratified in the Croatian Parliament. With regard to the second, the Arbitral Tribunal in the Hague delivered its Final Award in June 2017, determining the course of the maritime and land boundary between the two countries, but Croatia refuses its recognition and its implementation. After more than 30 years since the two countries became independent, the border question remains open.

is opening up »Pandora's box«, putting into question basic treaties underpinning modern international relations. Furthermore, it questions the overall peace in Europe.

The upcoming period should be therefore especially worrisome, in particular for small, new countries with little statehood tradition, such as Slovenia. Kjellén's Organic theory draws parallels between states and real life, saying that there is a permanent fight for survival, which is also valid between nations and states. After a fortunate period of peace and prosperity following the end of the Cold War, institutionally reflected in the enlargement of the European Union, it seems that we are now entering a new period where a »*fight for survival*« might again be on the agenda. Therefore, it is key for countries to know their geostrategic positions and define their long-term goals in order to be able to form meaningful alliances and face potential adversaries. By paraphrasing ancient Chinese strategist Sun Tzu, in order to survive (or win the battle) one needs to know oneself and one's opponents<sup>57</sup>. And knowing oneself means knowing one's foundations.

Slovenia's geostrategic foundations have been presented throughout this article through the lens of the author, and various conclusions could be drawn. First, Slovenia is situated outside Mackinder's Heartland and forms part of the Western or European part of Spykman's Rimland, between the Heartland and the Adriatic. In its role of geostrategic boundary between Central and South-Eastern Europe, Cohen sees it as a gateway to this region.

This analysis suggests that its location next to the Adriatic is the key geostrategic factor which has been influencing not only the country's overall strategic setting but also its destiny. In this context, providing or denying access to the Adriatic forms the key paradigm in defining Slovenia's geostrategic position. It is particularly so as »*providing access to the Adriatic*« fits well with the approach of the traditional land-centred powers (such as Germany), while »*denying access to the Adriatic*« fits well with that of the traditional maritime-centred powers (such as Italy, France and the UK). Thus, geostrategically, Slovenia finds itself in a major dichotomy, struggling to position itself between the land<sup>58</sup> and the maritime<sup>59</sup> powers. Being able to maintain a geostrategic equilibrium depends, therefore, on a permanent search to balance these two dimensions. It also partially explains why Slovenia does not have a traditional, dedicated strategic partner in Europe<sup>60</sup>. In concrete terms it means that Slovenia is at the junction of two geostrategic axes; the first being the maritime one, represented by Italy trying to push in the direction of Central and Eastern Europe through Slovenia and Hungary; and the second (the land one), trying to connect Germany (Austria) with Croatia and South-Eastern Europe/the Western Balkans with the Middle East.

<sup>57</sup> »If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.« (Sun Tzu, 2005, p 53)

<sup>58</sup> Germany, Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Turkey.

<sup>59</sup> Italy, France, the UK, the Nordic countries, Benelux, Greece, Spain, Portugal. This group could include Romania, Poland, and potentially Serbia.

<sup>60</sup> Another reason might be the lack of a statehood tradition.

The underlying reasons for such a setting are also internal. The maritime/land dichotomy is enshrined in the very core of the national heartland. In the early Middle Ages, the March of Carniola was seen as an Eastern bulwark or the first line of defence against the invasion of Huns into the East Frankish Kingdom, as well as into Friuli (Churchill, 1915, p 41), and thus the Italian peninsula and the Mediterranean. On the other hand, the late Middle Ages Duchy of Celje had an active geopolitical role in shaping the Balkans, as well as the lands controlled by Hungary in Central Europe and beyond; therefore a very continental orientation. Both territories together form the national heartland, and thus carry the maritime/land dichotomy which is so typical for Slovenia. Geographically speaking, the boundary between the maritime and land-influenced orientation of Slovenia could be drawn along the river Sava, which also divides the national heartland in two. Furthermore, the capital, Ljubljana, lies on the river Sava, which makes it in fact a kind of epicentre of the core. In this geostrategic context, Slovenia represents a true transition territory, which confirms the characterizations by some Slovene authors as being »on the edge« (Bufon), »in between« (Črnčec), and at »a crossroads« (Furlan), and as a »gateway« by foreign authors (Cohen and Cvrtila).

All this said, understanding the foundations is key to assessing Slovenia's potential perspectives or its strategic »*marche de manoeuvre*«, especially in times of geostrategic shifts. Thus, there are four main options or possible strategic perspectives:

1. The first perspective is the current one, where Slovenia forms, together with neighbouring countries, one geostrategic bloc, the European Union. Cohen suggests in »*Maritime Europe & Maghreb*« that its strategic principles<sup>61</sup> are based on the US Containment strategy, even though it contains a mix of classical maritime and land-centred powers and countries. It is strategically reflected in the Franco-German axis. Slovenia has formed part of this perspective since 2004.
2. The second is the »*maritime perspective*«, on account of its strategic alignment with the traditional maritime powers and other partners, such as the US. It is composed of two subdivisions: traditional »*maritime-oriented*« countries, and the »*maritime-aligned*« countries. The first subdivision includes the UK, France, the Netherlands, Greece, and (from the neighbouring countries) Italy. Slovenia or most of its territory was first aligned to this perspective during the Napoleon Illyrian provinces (1809-1813), in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918-1945)<sup>62</sup>, and after independence, from 1996 to 2004, through its closer links to Italy during its association process into the Euro-Atlantic integrations<sup>63</sup>. The second subdivision comprises Poland<sup>64</sup>. From the neighbouring countries,

<sup>61</sup> As is the case with NATO.

<sup>62</sup> Later called the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which officially existed till 1945.

<sup>63</sup> The formal framework was the Trilateral Co-operation (IT, SI, HU) and was in the second half of the 1990s one of the most important dimensions in Slovenia's foreign policy. It extended into military cooperation which still exists.

<sup>64</sup> And the other Višegrad countries: Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary.



this classification could partially include Hungary. Slovenia has tended to approach this dimension in the years 2020-22.

3. The third is the »*land perspective*« and suggests the country's alliance with the land powers. It is composed of two subdivisions: the »*European continental land perspective*« and the »*Eurasian land perspective*«. In the first category falls Germany and (from the neighbouring countries) Austria, Croatia and, up to a point, Hungary. Slovenia (or its territories) was part of this from the times of the Charlemagne at the end of 8th century<sup>65</sup> until 1918<sup>66</sup>, and since its independence in 1991 until the Trilateral Cooperation Agreement in 1996. The second subdivision is composed of Russia and China, both being Eurasian land powers. Among the Balkan countries, Serbia belongs to the second subdivision. Slovenia (as a Yugoslav federal unit) was part of this from 1945 until the 1948 Informbiro<sup>67</sup>.
4. Finally, the fourth perspective is the autonomous or independent one. It includes a combination of the above three perspectives, ad hoc or no alliances. This concept includes the non-aligned position of the Second Yugoslavia (and thus Slovenia), roughly from 1948 till 1991.

**Conclusion** This article paid special attention to the identification of Slovenia's geostrategic foundations while taking into account the global geopolitical context, in general, and that in Europe, in particular. In doing so, it analysed several determinant aspects, such as the national heartland with its focal point, but also the key outside areas. All of this defines the country's very distinctive geostrategic paradigm, and enables the identification of possible perspectives. However, it is not the intention of this article to advocate any of the presented perspectives, but to draw the attention to them all, as Slovenia may be confronted with different options when the new geostrategic constellation leads to a new balance of world powers. When that time comes, it will be crucial to assess and decide, based on historical experiences and analysis, and given the geostrategic setting, which of them guarantees the survival and prosperity of the Slovene state..

<sup>65</sup> Both the principalities of Carantania and Carniola came under Frankish rule, led by Charlemagne.

<sup>66</sup> With the exception of the period of the Illyrian provinces (1809-13).

<sup>67</sup> Informbiro is the short name for the »Communist Information Bureau«, initiated by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, which aimed to reduce divergence between communist governments. In 1948, after the political split between Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito and Stalin, Yugoslavia was expelled from the Informbiro. Although presented by both sides as an ideological dispute, the conflict also had its roots in the geopolitical struggle in the Balkans.

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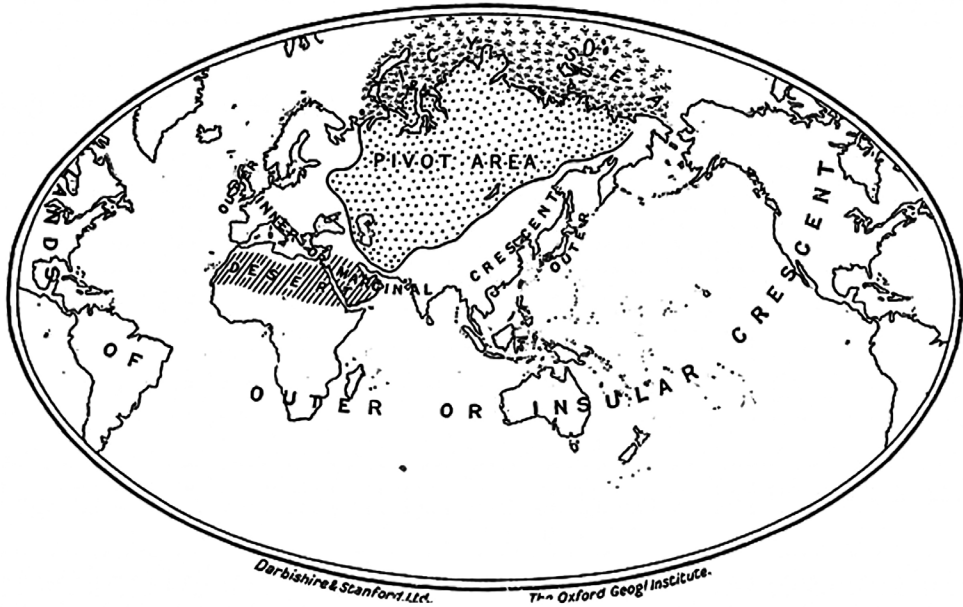
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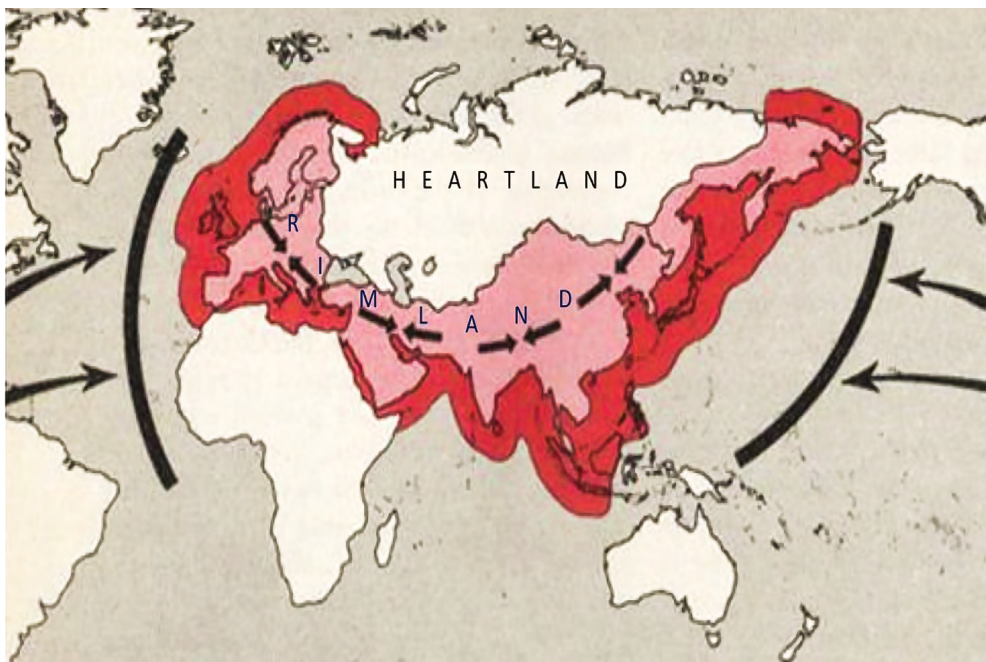
**Slika 1**  
Osrednje  
območje  
ali Osrčje  
(Mackinder,  
1904, str. 435)

Figure 1:  
Pivot area or  
Heartland  
(Mackinder,  
1904, p. 435)



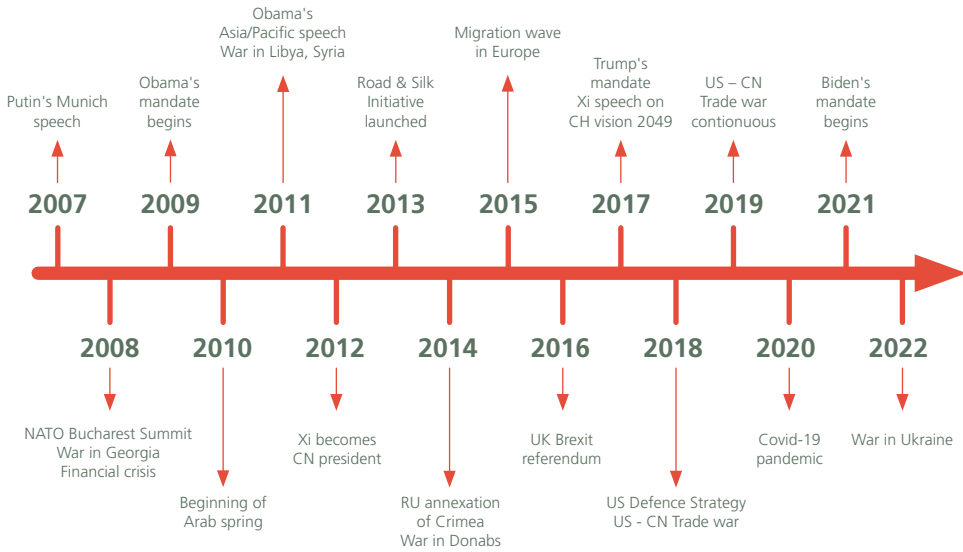
**Slika 2**  
Obrobje in  
območje  
evrazijskega  
konflikta  
(Spykman,  
1944, str. 52)

Figure 2:  
Rimland and  
Eurasian Conflict  
Zones (Spykman,  
1944, p. 52)



**Slika 3**  
Časovnica  
ključnih  
globalnih  
strateških  
dogodkov  
od leta 2007  
(Tovornik,  
2022)

**Figure 3:**  
Timeline of key  
global strategic  
events since  
2007 (Tovornik,  
2022)



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