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*Special Section:
Discussing Geopolitics*



Prologue: The Origins of Geopolitical Thinking

Christian W. Spang

(in cooperation with Naoto Aizawa, Kuanish Beisenov,
Igor Milovanovic, and Nurlan Tussupov)

University of Tsukuba

Editors' note: We are pleased to showcase the work of Dr. Christian W. Spang and four of his graduate students in this issue of the *OTB Forum*.

Many bright and promising ideas are lost because postgraduates have little chance to publish their views. This problem seems to be most significant in the humanities, particularly for Master's students and Ph.D. candidates at Japanese universities. Therefore, we are very pleased that the editors of the *OTB Forum* have accepted this roughly 14,000 word special section and thus given some of the Tsukuba's graduate students a voice.

The following three papers are based on a graduate-level intensive course taught in Spring 2010. "The Origins of Geopolitical Thinking" was part of the Postgraduate General Course (大学院共通科目). It brought together 14 registered postgraduates (11 M.A. students and 3 Ph.D. candidates) from five different graduate schools and eight countries, many of them from (now independent) former Soviet republics. Roughly half of the participants were enrolled in the Master's Program in International Area Studies.

The course followed an intensely discursive approach, i.e., we discussed geopolitics as a field as well as some original geopolitical concepts. At the end of the term, participants handed in short assignments about some of the texts they had read for the class. This special section is based on these term papers. All contributions have been corrected, thoroughly revised, and considerably enlarged by Christian W. Spang. Therefore, it was unanimously decided to consider all articles co-authored. Authors are mentioned in the order of their individual contribution to the article. It should be noted

that the final paper developed by merging two assignments and therefore features three co-authors. Finally, it is our pleasure to thank the unknown reviewers, whose suggestions helped us to improve the three papers to a considerable extent, particularly in the case of the last contribution. All remaining mistakes are naturally ours.

The special section includes the following articles:

1. An Introduction to Early 20th Century Geopolitics by Christian W. Spang and Igor Milovanovic;
2. The Pivot Moves Eastward: Mackinder and the Okinawa Problem by Naoto Aizawa and Christian W. Spang; and
3. Civilizations in International Relations: Huntington's Theory of Conflict by Nurlan Tussupov, Christian W. Spang, and Kuanish Beisenov

Acknowledgments

It should be mentioned here that the Postgraduate General Course has supported this project by granting a substantial subsidy to buy most of the texts used in class.

About the author: Christian W. Spang is an associate professor at the University of Tsukuba. His major research interests are German-Japanese relations, geopolitics, and German as well as Japanese contemporary history.