Uncle Sam draws a line in the sand to deter European meddling in the western hemisphere.

**Geopolitics** is the application of geography to strategic planning, policy-making, and actions, including:

- Projection of military power
- Creating and securing lines of communication
- Promoting access to and development of resources.
- Establishment of trade and military alliances.
- Undermining or limiting the military/economic options of real or potential adversaries.

Geopolitics and geography

Besides the obvious link to political geography (division and control of earth) geopolitics strongly relates to the fields of behavioral geography and environmental perception. That is, it often involves a world view (perception) and means to achieve that end (behavior).

A **stratagem** is a plan or scheme that promotes the planner’s perceived best interests, typically to gain advantage over an existing or potential adversary.

**Geopolitics in U.S. History**

- The Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny
- U.S. involvement in the creation of Panama (out of Colombian territory), and construction of the Panama Canal.
- Purchase of the Virgin Islands from Denmark to counter possible German threat to the Panama Canal.
- Containment, and creation of NATO
- Relations with Cuba, and invasion of Grenada to counter possible Cuban involvement in Angolan war.
- Relations with oil-producing countries
- Various presidential “doctrines”
- Contemporary involvements in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya
- And on ... and on ... and on ...
The Monroe Doctrine — a policy of the United States, first articulated in 1823, that efforts by European countries to further colonize land or interfere with States in the Americas would be viewed as acts of aggression requiring U.S. response.

Named for President James Monroe, authored by John Quincy Adams, his Secretary of State.

Primary objective was to help protect newly independent Latin American countries from meddling by European powers.

Used by subsequent Presidents (e.g., T. Roosevelt, Coolidge, Hoover, Kennedy, and Reagan) to counter foreign intrusion in the affairs of American States.

Uncle Sam draws a line in the sand to deter European meddling in the western hemisphere

U.S. warship intercepts Soviet freighter
Manifest Destiny – the 19th century American belief that the United States was destined by divine Providence to expand across the continent from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific.

Coined in 1846 by John L. O’Sullivan, an influential columnist, to justify acquisition of Texas and the Oregon Territory, among other things.

Concept was also used to justify the Mexican War and displacement of Native Americans.

The Truman Doctrine — a policy set forth by President Harry Truman in March 1947 stating that the United States would provide economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey to help prevent them from falling into the then-growing Soviet sphere of influence.

Subsequently applied throughout Europe, leading to the Cold war policy of containment.

Later, broadly applied to assist “free peoples” from acquisition by totalitarian regimes.

Containment: A Cold-War era U.S. policy that sought to limit (i.e., contain) the spread of the military power of the Soviet Union, as by:

- Controlling access of the Soviet fleet to the high seas.
- Denying it access to strategic resources.
- Developing strategic alliances (e.g., NATO and SEATO).
- Opposing Soviet military deployment in foreign countries.
- Deploying its own forces so as to ring its adversary.
**Domino Theory** – the theory, prevalent in the West during the Cold War, that if one country became communist-controlled, then its neighbors would also become Communist-controlled. (That is, if one country “fell” to the Communists, then in so doing it would lead to the toppling of a neighboring country, whose fall would topple another country, etc., as in the manner of standing dominoes.)

**The Reagan Doctrine** consisted of a series of strategies to oppose the global influence of the Soviet Union during the final years of the Cold War. Included provision of overt and covert aid to anti-communist guerrillas and resistance movements in an effort to “rollback” Soviet-backed communist governments in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The doctrine was designed to serve the dual purposes of diminishing Soviet influence in these regions, while also potentially opening the door for capitalism (and sometimes liberal democracy) in nations that were largely being governed by Soviet-supported socialist governments.

Effectively replaced containment with rollback.

Famous for labeling the Soviet Union as The Evil Empire.

**The Bush Doctrine** refers to various related foreign policy principles of President George W. Bush. First used in June 2001 to describe the Bush Administration's unilateral withdrawals from the ABM treaty and the Kyoto Protocol. Expanded after 9/11. Suggested the United States had the right to secure itself against countries that harbor or give aid to terrorist groups (used to justify the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan).

Came to include the controversial policy of preventive war, which held that the United States should depose foreign regimes that represented a potential or perceived threat to the security of the United States, even if that threat was not immediate; a policy of spreading democracy around the world, especially in the Middle East, as a strategy for combating terrorism; and a willingness to unilaterally pursue U.S. military interests.
Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)

The notion, widely accepted during the Cold War, that peace is promoted by the understanding that launching a nuclear attack on your adversary will result in your own destruction. Accordingly, it makes no sense to start a nuclear war.

Anti-ballistic missiles pose a threat to this theory, hence both sides pledged not to develop ABMs.

The Cold War:

The world divided into two camps, each armed with lots of nuclear warheads and dedicated to the other’s destruction.

(a personal reflection)

Cold War Geography

Distant Early Warning radar site

The Bush Doctrine (continued)

“The Axis of Evil” – term first used by Pres. Bush in his State of the Union Address (1/29/02) to identify states accused of supporting terrorism and seeking WMDs. Specifically identified North Korea, Iran and Iraq as constituting such an axis.

“Beyond the Axis of Evil” – term applied to Cuba, Libya and Syria by John Bolton (Ambassador to the U.N.)

“Outposts of Tyranny” – term applied to Belarus, Zimbabwe and Myanmar by Condoleeza Rice.

The Clinton Doctrine (2/26/99)

“It's easy ... to say that we really have no interests in who lives in this or that valley in Bosnia, or who owns a strip of brush land in the Horn of Africa, or some piece of parched earth by the Jordan River. But the true measure of our interests lies not in how small or distant these places are ... The question we must ask is, what are the consequences to our security of letting conflicts fester and spread. We cannot, indeed, we should not, do everything or be everywhere. But where our values and our interests are at stake, and where we can make a difference, we must be prepared to do so.”
Clinton Doctrine (continued)

"Genocide is in and of itself a national interest where we should act" and "we can say to the people of the world, whether you live in Africa, or Central Europe, or any other place, if somebody comes after innocent civilians and tries to kill them en masse because of their race, their ethnic background or their religion, and it's within our power to stop it, we will stop it."

[Criticized for not intervening in Rwandan genocide, 1994.]

Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904)

- German political geographer.
- "Organic state theory."
- Viewed States as living organisms that need food and resources to grow and prosper.
- Justified colonialism.
- Coined “lebensraum,” used by the Nazi Party to justify expansionism.

Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914)

- U.S. naval admiral and geo-strategist.
- Viewed control of the seas as essential to peacetime commerce and wartime success.
- Importance of straits.
- Proposed containment.
- Ideas sharply contrasted with those of Halford Mackinder.

Halford Mackinder (1861-1947)

- British geographer and major father of geopolitics and geo-strategy.
- Advocate of land power (as opposed to sea power).
- Viewed a strong army and ability to control Eurasia as essential to global domination.
- Proposed “The Heartland Theory.”

[Maps showing Mackinder’s World and Heartland Theory]
“Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland;  
Who rules the Heartland Commands the World Island;  
Who rules the World island controls the world.”

-- H. Mackinder, 1919

Karl Haushofer (1869-1946)

- German general, geographer and geopolitician.
- His interpretation of Ratzel’s theories may have influenced Nazi expansionism.
- Sometimes called “Hitler’s geographer,” probably overstated.
- Important in forging link with Japan.