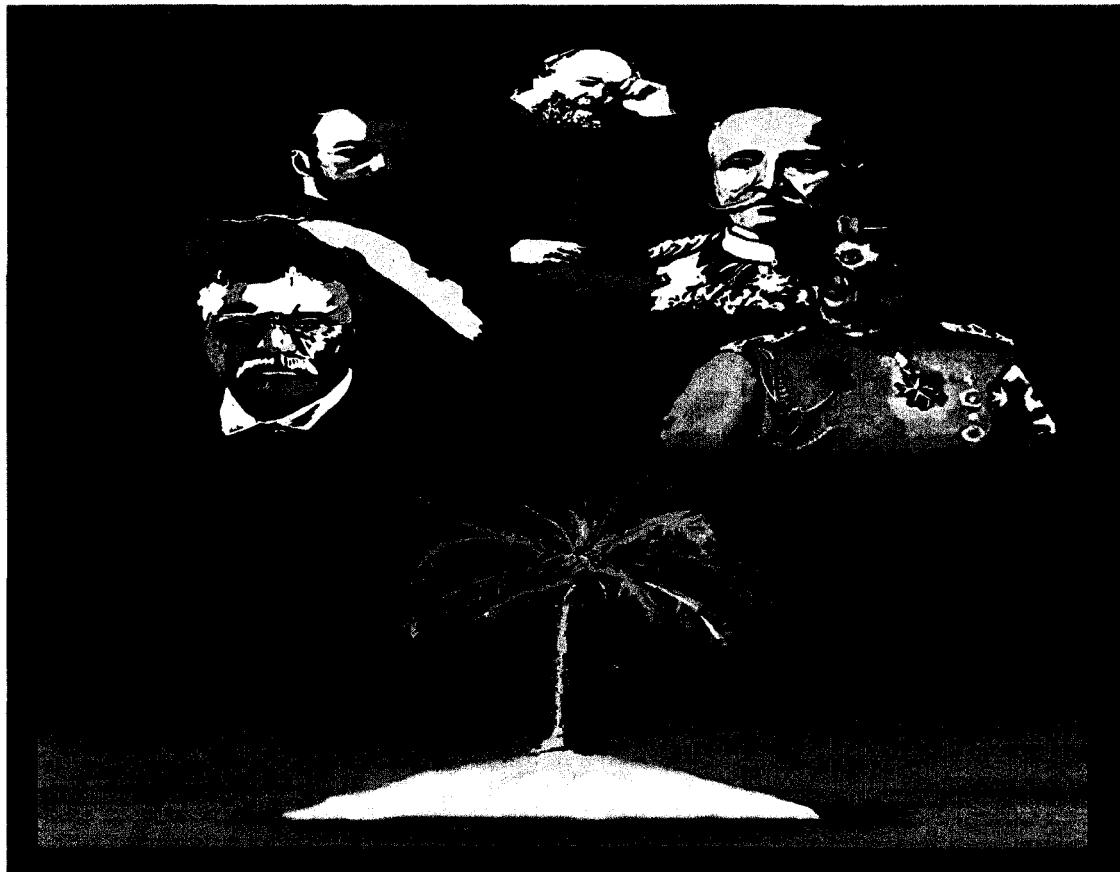


UNDENIABLE ATTRACTION

THE GEOPOLITICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GREAT POWERS AND SMALL ISLANDS

1660 - 2009



JORDAN WALKER



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**Undeniable Attraction: The Geopolitical Relationship between the Great
Powers and Small Islands, 1660-2009**

By

**Masters of Arts in Island Studies Thesis Candidate
Jordan Walker**

**University of Prince Edward Island
March 31, 2009**

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Dedication

To the University of Prince Edward Island—you have given me so much, you are and always will be my second home.

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I would also like to thank Brian Landigan who went to painstaking lengths to create a first-rate cover page. Your artistic skills amaze me, a job well done my friend.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to send my love to my fiancé Shizuko, who has patiently waited for me in Japan while I completed this program. Your love and devotion inspired me and gave me the strength and determination to finish this thesis. Soon we will be together forever.

Thank you and enjoy,

Jordan Blake Walker

Abstract

This paper examines the critical relationship between the great powers and small islands in a geopolitical context. The paper introduces a theory, namely, *Small Island suction effect*, and asserts that this geopolitical theory is a special dynamic that *can* exist between small islands and the great powers. For this suction effect to take place it is necessary for a small island to contain at least one of five identifiable components of interest that are magnetic vis-a-vis great powers. The five components of interest to great powers in relation to small islands are geopolitical position, weakness and small size, great power competition, prized resources, prestige and honour. The overall purpose of this paper is to attempt to prove that small island suction effect does in fact exist in the international system. To help prove this theory's existence we use history as our backdrop and draw on empirical evidence and sound argumentation in conjunction with the political theory of Realism, all to facilitate this process of theory substantiation. We examine five different great power systems that encompass all the different types; small island suction effect is evident in unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar systems. The genesis point in great power systems history is 1660 and the end point is the present day. Many different geopolitical theatres are explored in an effort to demonstrate this theory's near geographic universality. This geopolitical theory is most active in a multipolar system and less active in a unipolar and bipolar system. The component of interest that most often triggers this suction effect is geopolitical position be it for defensive or offensive purposes in relation to the great powers. Furthermore, Sir John Halford Mackinder's *Heartland Theory* is refined placing an emphasis on great powers competing for or being sucked in to small islands rather than just the World-Island.

PREFACE

Geography is the most fundamental factor in foreign policy because it is the most permanent. -- Nicholas Spykman

My central argument in this thesis is simple: Small Islands *can* have a suction-like effect on great powers when certain identifiable components are present in a given geopolitical theatre. There are five identifiable components of interest that are magnetic vis-a-vis great powers; briefly they are geopolitical position, weakness and small size, great power competition, prized resources, as well as prestige and honour. These are treated more in-depth in Chapter Two. Individually, each SISE component can serve to “suck in” great powers to small islands. Collectively they (anywhere from two to all five components of interest) can serve to produce a dangerously strong pull on the great powers sometimes resulting in open-warfare between the competing powers.

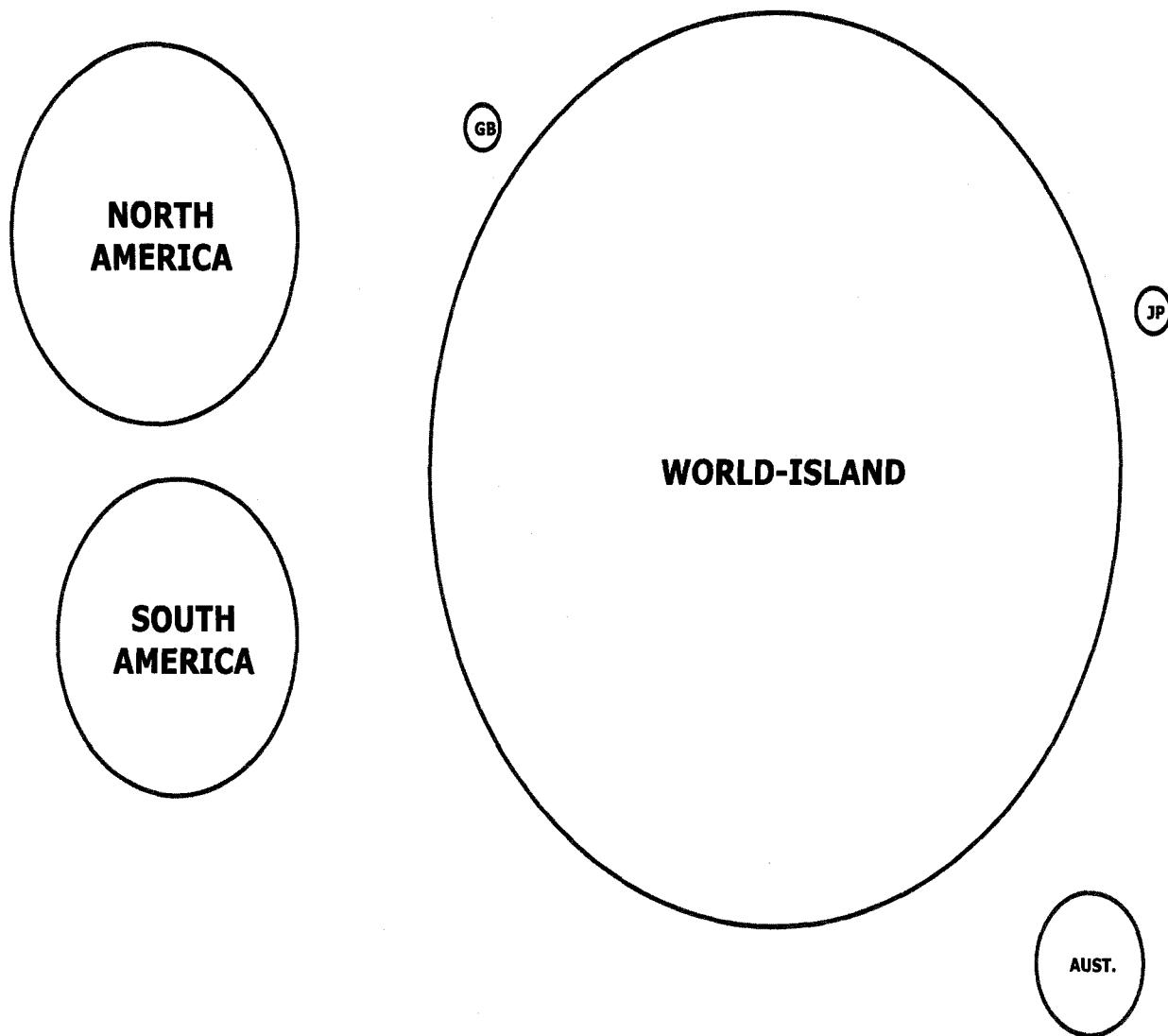
In order to *prove* SISE exists, the paper will rely on history and draw on empirical evidence in association with the political theory of Realism, all in an effort to substantiate this proposed theory’s existence and merit.

This thesis will also take Halford John Mackinder’s view that the Earth is not a world of continents, but instead it is a World of Islands. This exposition will seek to refine the *Heartland Theory* which basically states that great powers will compete for the World-Island i.e. Greater Eurasia (see map below). The refinement places an emphasis on great powers competing or being “sucked into” small islands rather than just the World-Island. This refinement of Mackinder’s theory serves ultimately to reinforce the thesis proposed *Small Island Suction Effect* theory.

To provide context, this study will begin with an explanation into the origin and development of this theory. Key intellectual influences will be acknowledged and it will be specifically pointed out how each of them facilitated in the origin and evolution of SISE. Additionally, historical context is provided, as the year 1660 is used as the starting point by which SISE is examined in many different types of great power systems e.g. unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar. This historical context will culminate with a final analysis of the contemporary international system and SISE's place within it. In total five great power systems are explored in-depth. Finally, geographic context is provided with a global perspective; SISE is vetted and examined in many different geographic theatres all in an effort to strongly suggest this theory's geographic diversity and near universality. Regions such as the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, and the south-western Pacific, which are particularly striking for their cluster areas of small islands, are thoroughly covered and probed.

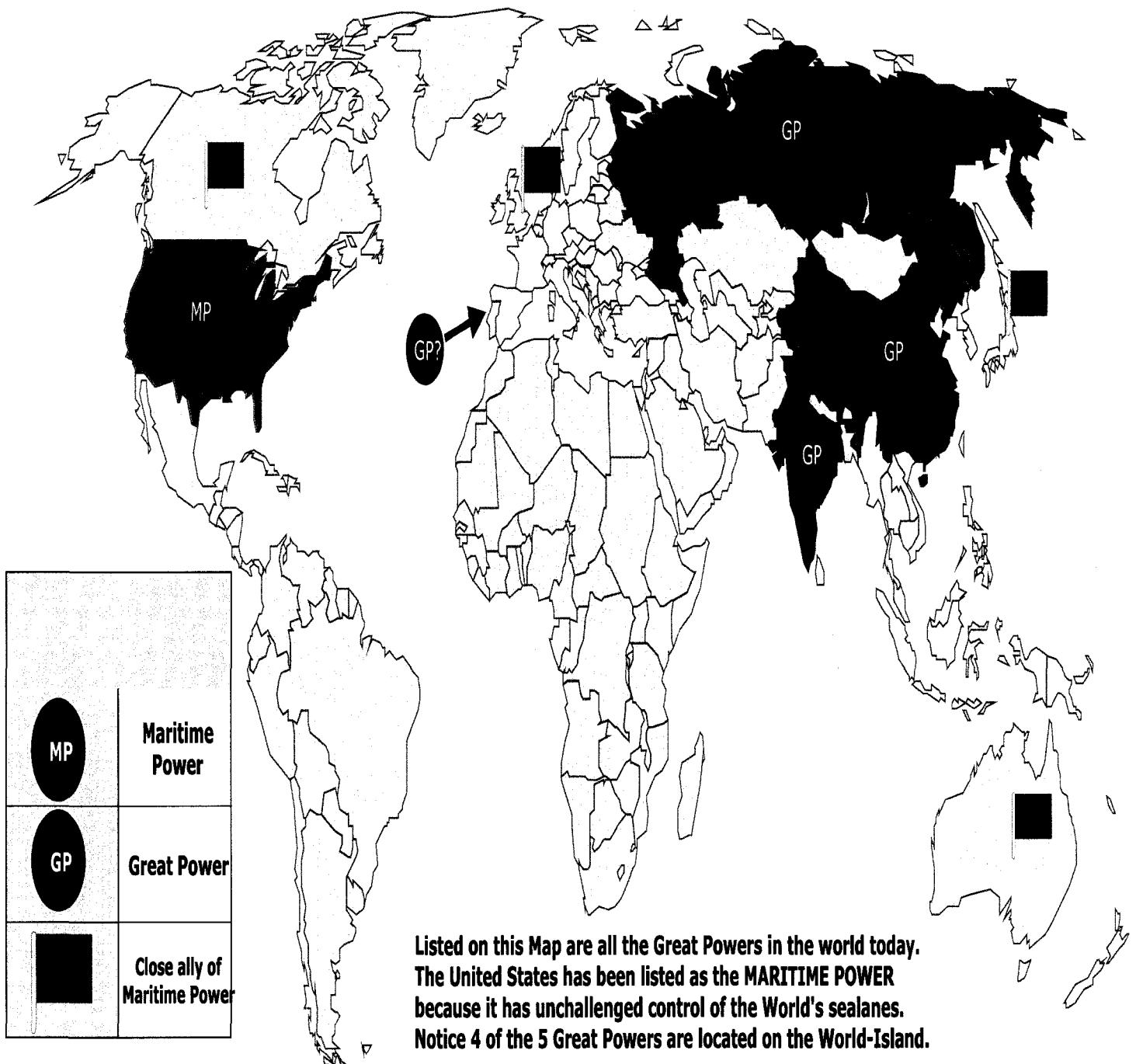
This thesis' academic purpose is to ultimately attempt to *prove* that SISE as a geopolitical theory does in fact exist in the international system.

Jordan Walker
Montague, PE, Canada
April 2009

The World-Island view of the Earth

This is the 'Real Map' (geopolitical sense) of the Earth taken from Sir Halford John Mackinder's book *Democratic Ideals And Reality*. Using this perspective of the World one can see that the World-Island, which organically encompasses Eurasia and Africa, is truly the center of the Earth from both a global affairs and global power point of view.

GREAT POWER COMPOSITION OF THE WORLD: 2009.



1

INTRODUCTION

SISE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE LITERATURE

A focus on very small territories, micro-states and small island states, in particular, is a recent development in the literature of international relations. It emerged as a growing interest largely in the wake of decolonization which brought so many micro-states and very small island states to independence. It is not surprising that a very large group of island micro-states should be a central concern in the burgeoning inter-disciplinary field of island studies. In this thesis certain sources from the literature of both island studies and international relations have been particularly influential.

In the growing literature of Island Studies, Queen's University (Belfast), Professor Stephen Royle has written a particularly useful book entitled *A Geography of Islands: Small Island Insularity*. Overall it is a comprehensive survey of many of the small islands around the world. In relation to SISE, chapters Three and Four of his book, are noteworthy because they focus on the relationship between great powers and small islands. Royle really stresses the notion that small islands often are conquered or dominated by a great power because of their advantageous geostrategic position.¹

Continuing with works from Island Studies, UPEI Professor Barry Bartmann's chapter in the recent book entitled *A World Of Islands* is very useful in relation to SISE. It is a survey of the security threats small islands face in the 21st century. Specifically, his section on conventional security threats is both thought-provoking and concise, and contains some eye-opening statistics in relation to small islands.²

On the geo-economic front, esteemed British historian, D.K. Fieldhouse, has spent much of his academic career detailing the relationship between the imperial great powers and the third world states they colonized, from the 18th century to the decolonization period in the 20th century. Two of Fieldhouse's books are particularly relevant to this thesis. They are *The Theory of Imperialist Capitalism* and *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century*. Both works make the case that colonialism and imperialism were the result of several factors, thus rejecting an overarching theory like SISE. But Fieldhouse does argue that one of the factors that led to imperialism was the ability of the periphery to suck in the great powers to remote places, including small islands. Overall Fieldhouse's works are useful in relation to this thesis because they bring economic credibility to the theory that peripheral regions such as small islands can at times suck in great powers.³

In terms of great works on geopolitical histories and geostrategy there is no better original work than two pieces written by Halford John Mackinder; his 1904 journal article, *The geographical pivot of history*, and his 1919 book, entitled, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. Mackinder's former article was a seminal piece where he argued that geography was a pivotal determinant in shaping global history. Mackinder navigates through almost 2000 years of history showing how geography has had an indelible impact on human civilization. It is where he introduced the geopolitical terms "Heartland" and the "World-Island."⁴

Mackinder's later book was basically a warning to the victorious World War I powers (particularly President Woodrow Wilson) that buffer states were needed to be created between Germany and Russia because both those belligerent powers would once again someday try to conquer the Heartland and possibly the World-Island. Mackinder's two works should be noted as academic works that served as the genesis point for the social science field of geopolitics.

Another important and founding geopolitical work is *The Influence of Seapower Upon History* by Alfred Thayer Mahan. Basically he takes an opposite view of Mackinder by stressing the importance of naval power in great power affairs rather than Mackinder's view that continental power, especially in terms of the World-Island, was the most important kind of geopolitical power. Mahan's work emphasises the importance of geostrategic islands.⁵

Geopolitics has been revived both in the mainstream media and in the scholarly literature of international relations. To facilitate a clear and concise definition of what Geopolitics is the thesis will be making use of two political science textbooks that use the same succinct definition.⁶

On grand geostrategy two works by Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard* and *The Choice*, are the best most erudite and relevant books on this subject. In both works Brzezinski lays out his grand geostrategy that America and its allies should follow in the 21st century. He discusses at length the dangers posed by the World-Island and acknowledges Mackinder as an original theorist in the geostrategic field. Brzezinski also talks at length about the suction effect the World-Island can and is having on the great powers. In short, his two books are essential to understanding on grand geostrategic theory and they were of great assistance in this thesis. Harvard based political scientist Samuel P. Huntington put it best when he credited Brzezinski's work saying it was in keeping with "the grand tradition of Bismarck".⁷

In Walter Russell Mead's latest book *God and Gold*, he offers some incisive reasons on why the Anglo-American powers have been dominant for the last 300 years in the ranks of the great powers. He points largely to the Anglo-American powers advantageous geopolitical position vis-a-vis the World-Island and their prudent geostrategy, i.e. that they would always be

the dominant maritime powers. Mead's book contains strong themes of geostrategy in its grand historical context.⁸

On great power conflict and history certain major comprehensive works should be noted. First, Paul Kennedy's critically acclaimed work *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* is a superb examination of modern great power history in its totality. Kennedy provides a balanced and logical approach to this book. He chronologically maps out the last 500 years of great power history in the international system. Kennedy stresses the importance of economic strength for great power success. Kennedy concludes that nowhere is it written that America will remain the global hegemon, in perpetuity, and that like its predecessors, Great Britain, the United States must realize that there is always an inherent dilemma with being a hegemon: the problem of overstretch and relative decline as others below hurry to catch up.⁹

Important too in the history of the great powers is University of Chicago Professor John J. Mearsheimer's book *The Tragedy Of Great Power Politics*. Mearsheimer uses 1792 as his starting point and ends with the present day great power system. His work is noteworthy because he meticulously analyzes the various great power systems that have occurred over the last 200 years, be it unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar.¹⁰

On the behavioural nature of great powers the political theory of Realism reinforces the central argument of this treatise, namely, that SISE does in fact exist. Hans J. Morgenthau's famous work, *Politics Among Nations*, is an essential source when it comes to explaining realism, especially as it relates to foreign policies of the great powers.¹¹

DEFINING KEY TERMS

Throughout the thesis certain core terms and concepts will often reappear. The three most important terms that warrant proper definitions now at the beginning of the thesis are: Great Power (what is it?), Maritime Power, and this thesis' small island definition.

Great Power definition

This thesis defines a great power as any state in the international system whose interests and hard power projection capabilities are supra-regional or global in reach. Great power states are the most powerful actors in the international system and often are able to impose their will on other states in their immediate locale, region, or in far off theatres, and attain their interests. And ultimately as Paul Kennedy points out a great power is “by definition, a state capable of holding its own against any other nation.”¹²

Great powers actual power is derived from two primary sources as John Mearsheimer explains “States have two kinds of power: latent power and military power,” adding, “Latent power refers to the socio-economic ingredients that go into building military power; it is largely based on a state’s wealth and the overall size of its population. Great powers need money, technology, and personnel to build military forces and to fight wars, and the state’s latent power refers to the raw potential it can draw on when competing with rival states.”¹³ He goes on to state that “Military power is based largely on the size and strength of a state’s army and its supporting air and naval forces. Even in a nuclear world, armies are the core ingredient of military power.”¹⁴ These two sources of power are interdependent of one another as Mearsheimer concludes that “This privileging of military power notwithstanding, states care

greatly about latent power, because abundant wealth and a large population are prerequisites for building formidable military forces.”¹⁵ Kennedy also views great powers latent (or wealth) power and military power as interdependent, “wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth.”¹⁶

Over the course of the thesis the term “Great Power” is used to refer to states which exhibit and possess these aforementioned traits in the realms of international diplomacy and military affairs.

Maritime Power definition

At certain points in the thesis the term maritime power is used, particularly from 1815 onward. This term is used to denote the unique capability that very few great powers have been able to possess since 1660. The unique capability that the maritime power possess’ in a great power system is that it is able to exercise maritime hegemony globally. No other power or combination of powers is able to break the maritime power’s monopoly over the control of the world’s sea lanes.¹⁷

This term is important to any review of great power history because when a power has been able to become the maritime power it has concurrently become the greatest great power. As well, only two great powers in history have been granted this title; first, Britain during the 19th and early 20th centuries, when it according to Brzezinski “exercised global maritime domination,” and second, America, from the latter half of the 20th century all the way to the present day, in which it still controls “all of the world’s oceans and seas.”¹⁸¹⁹

According to Walter Russell Mead these two powers, because of their special capability, saw the world from a unique perspective, as he explains “In Anglo-American strategic thought, there is one world composed of many theatres. The theatres are all linked by the sea, and whoever controls the sea can choose the architecture that shapes the world.”²⁰ Mead reinforces the notion that history has proven that being the maritime power allows for a power to be the strongest and most successful in its given system:

Since the Glorious Revolution of 1688...the Anglo-Americans have been on the winning side in every major international conflict. The War of the League of Ausburg, the War of the Spanish Succession, the War of the Austrian Succession, the Seven Years’ War, the American Revolution (Britain lost but America won), the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, World War I, World War II, and the Cold War: these are the wars that made the modern world, and either the British or the Americans or both of them together have won every one of them. More than three hundred years of unbroken victory in major wars with great power.²¹

Hence, due to the combination of its rarity, uniqueness, and enormous influence on numerous great power systems, this special great power capability, of being the maritime power, is recognized, used, and discussed throughout this work.

Small Island definition

A central theme that is explored throughout this work is an examination of the geopolitical relationship between the great powers and small islands. Thus it is useful and informative to clearly explain how this thesis defines a small island. Throughout most of the thesis the conventional geographical definition of what a small island is applies: a small “piece of land surrounded by water.”²² Thus, typical small islands such as Malta, Iceland, Okinawa, and Diego Garcia are defined and labelled as small islands in this work.

However, this work introduces one provision to that widely accepted geographical definition. This provision is added because this work is one of *geopolitics*, and not *geography*. Hence, the definition of a small island is understandably tweaked. The key provision is *World-Island Absoluteness*.

World-Island Absoluteness simply is adherence to Mackinder’s belief that the World-Island is the *absolute* large island, by which all others are measured as small. Thus, at times in this work islands, which normally are not considered geographically small, such as Britain and Japan, are described as such in certain contexts, because in geopolitical terms they are small *relative* to the World-Island, which is the *absolute* largest island. A clear example of this tweaking of the definition occurs in Chapter Six, when it is stated that Nazi Germany was sucked into Britain in 1940, which the thesis considers as a small island *relative* to Nazi Germany, which was a large continental power located on the *absolute* World-Island.

THE PLAN OF THE THESIS

The rest of the chapters in this work are concerned mainly with substantiating the proposed SISE theory by using and drawing on clear, historical empirical evidence to support this central argument. Chapter Two is a bit different from the succeeding chapters however. The second chapter in this thesis will be devoted to explaining the origin and overall development of this geopolitical theory, SISE. Key intellectual influences will be acknowledged and specifically, the chapter will make crystal clear where and how each source contributed to the creation and evolution of this theory.

The final section in Chapter Two unpacks the critical five components of SISE. The five components that constitute SISE that *can* have a suction-like effect on great powers are: geopolitical position, weakness and small size, great power competition, prized resources, and finally prestige and honour. This chapter explains how each component attracts or “sucks in” great powers to small islands. Concluding in Chapter Two, these five components that comprise SISE will be brought together to highlight that when considered as a whole these five elements serve to create SISE in its totality; and give it a geopolitical “life force” in the international system.

The following chapters follow a chronological path, charting SISE’s effects on the different great power systems from 1660 all the way to the present day, 2009.

Chapter Three will examine SISE from 1660 to the end of the Napoleonic Era in 1815. 1660 is a good historical starting point for looking at this theory because this 155 year period was one where the great power system was highly multipolar, and characterized by intense great power competition including a contest for small islands.²³ This great power time frame is

marked most by France being the dominant land power, both under Louis XIV, and later under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte. Under both rulers France sought hegemony in Europe and also power base in such important geopolitical theatres such as the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. This chapter will also review SISE's influence during the two great power global conflicts of the 18th and first part of the 19th century, the Seven Year's War, and the Napoleonic Wars. Finally, Chapter Three will seek to explain why certain great powers such as Spain, Austria, and Russia seemed to lack, or be strongly influenced by SISE.²⁴

Chapter Four will analyze the affects of SISE during the “Congress System” era of 1815-1914, and finish with the end of World War I in 1918. This chapter will be chronologically split into two main sections: 1815-1870, before the formation of the unified German State, a time when peace and stability generally prevailed in Europe; and 1870-1918, when eventually the great power system became unbalanced culminating in a multiple participant great power war. SISE was relatively quiet and inactive during the first half of the Congress System but great power competition for small islands was heightened during the latter half of the Congress system. Several different geographic theatres will be explored, from the Eastern Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, to the North Atlantic, among other regions. There will be considerable focus on the affects that “rising powers” placed on this great power system, especially in relation to SISE. The most well-known ascendant powers of this period will be covered including the United States, Wilhelmine Germany, and Imperial Japan. Finally, the Great War’s ramifications on the old great power system, and its effects on SISE globally, will be examined.

Chapter Five looks at SISE during the Interwar period of 1919-1939. The power balances during this anarchic era will be explored, with considerable attention given to Europe and other maritime empires (e.g. Japan and America). It will be argued that SISE was primarily

affected by relations between the status quo great powers, Britain and France, and the revisionist powers of the 1930s i.e. Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany, and Fascist Italy. This chapter will provide examples of small islands that had substantial “magnetic pulls” on the revisionist great powers. The second and final section of this chapter will be concerned with the “Offstage” great powers, the United States and the Soviet Union.²⁵ America’s role in the Caribbean region during this time frame will be analyzed. Also, the chapter will review why the Japanese Empire and the American Empire increasingly became mutually hostile during this period. Finally, discussion will be given to the Soviet Union’s role during this time as it applies to SISE, and its long standing security concern for the island of Sakhalin vis-a-vis a belligerent Japan.

Chapter Six reviews SISE’s role during the last global great power war, World War II. Three important maritime theatres will be analyzed: the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Pacific. The North Atlantic section will focus primarily on the greatest SISE probably ever to take place, in terms of its historical importance and subsequent ramifications, when Hitler was “sucked into the biggest small island” i.e. Great Britain. This section will argue that “The Fuehrer’s” greatest geostrategic blunder was to eventually ignore the suction-effect from Britain, and instead, leave the island free to its own devices while erroneously moving his forces east. The section on the Mediterranean region will highlight the importance of geo-pivots in Malta and Cyprus. As well the SISE case of Crete will be analyzed, and it will be argued that this was yet another misunderstanding. The closing section of this chapter will study the Pacific theatre as it relates to SISE. It will be argued that SISE made the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour nearly inevitable. Attention will be given to the small island hopping campaign that was waged by the United States against Japan, and it will be strongly suggested that during this period, SISE was at

its most intense. Finally, the section will end with discussion on the devastating Battle of Okinawa which was the final battle of World War II.

Chapter Seven will be an examination of SISE during the Cold War (1945-1991). Four interesting and pertinent SISE cases will be scrutinized. First, the Cuban Missile Crisis will be reviewed and how this ultimate flashpoint, almost led to World War III, because of an island that was a powerful magnet for the Soviet Union. Second, the SISE element of prestige and honour will be explored at length when the case of the Falklands War is analyzed. The third case will look at Grenada and the great power security concerns the Reagan administration had in regards to this small Caribbean island. The argument will be made that the Grenada case was a clear example of “great power territoriality,” in which the United States reacted as it did, by invading Grenada, in the name of maintaining control over its own home sphere of influence. Fourth, the intriguing case of Diego Garcia will be surveyed. The great power politics at the time of the decision by the British to allow the United States military to build a military base there will be discussed. Finally, the two SISE elements of geopolitical position and prized resources are paramount in Diego Garcia’s case, and it shall be argued that these two components ultimately determined this tiny island’s (and its peoples) destiny.

The eighth and final chronological chapter will examine SISE during the unipolar years (1992-2009), following the precipitous collapse of the Soviet Union. This period culminates with the return of some measure of multipolarity to the international system with the great power resurrection of Russia, over “the near abroad” and the emerging regional great power status of China and India.²⁶

The Taiwan issue, vis-a-vis China, and the United States, will be given attention and presented as one of the most potent geopolitical powder kegs during the unipolar years. A

section will be devoted to the South Pacific island micro-states. It will be analyzed how these states exist while under an American security umbrella. Also, in this micro-state section, discussion will centered on tiny islands in relation to the Pacific regional powers Australia and New Zealand.²⁷ Finally, Chapter Eight will explore the challenges the great powers face in regard to small island failed states. Hence, the SISE element of weakness and small size will be studied at length in this final historical chapter. Case studies such as the Solomon Islands and Haiti will be examined in relation to the small island failed states dilemma faced by the great powers.

Chapter Nine will be the final chapter where in conclusion two interrelated tasks will be completed. First, the thesis main argument that *Small Island Suction Effect* (SISE) does in fact exist in the international system will be reinforced and restated for a final and concluding time. As well a few other conclusions will be made including small island dynamics that seem to refute SISE. And second Halford John Mackinder's *Heartland Theory* will be refined. It will be proposed the great powers are just as likely to contest for small islands as they are for the World-Island.

2

SISE: Origin & Development of the Theory

Small Island Suction Effect, or the acronym SISE, was devised and formulated in the winter of 2007-2008. Originally, the single island of Okinawa was to be the “case study island” of this thesis, with the overarching topic being the relationship between it and the great powers that surround it. However, after much research and musing over the potentially larger direction of this work, it became clear that this SISE was a universal geopolitical force in the international system that transcended the conventional “single case study” structure that is sometimes encouraged at the Graduate level for good reasons. Hence, it was decided that this proposed theory would become the focal point of the thesis, instead of any one island or any one specific region containing certain great powers. By the spring of 2008, the focus of the thesis turned to introducing this new theory, attempting to *prove* it exists, and assessing its importance through historical account.

GEOPOLITICS

The definition of geopolitics this thesis is using comes from John Rourke’s widely used university undergraduate text *International Politics on the World Stage*. Rourke’s simple succinct definition of geopolitics is as follows, “Within the discipline of political geography, the subfield of geopolitics focuses on the interrelationship of geography, power, and international politics.”¹

EXPLANATION OF DEVELOPMENT OF THEORY

This theory, SISE, is grounded in different schools of thought from political science. Salient sub-fields of political science contributed to the development of SISE are, geopolitics/geostrategy, realism, grand political history, and more generally speaking the foundational field of international relations.

Some key intellectual influences must be acknowledged indirectly in assisting in the creation of SISE.² First, in the geopolitical/geostrategic realm Zbigniew Brzezinski's strategic thinking helped in generating SISE. The whole notion of geopolitical "suction effects" in the international system really has been made popular, contemporarily speaking, and given mainstream acceptance, through the efforts of Brzezinski. For well over a decade he has written and spoken of the "suction effect" of greater Central Asia for the great powers. He coined the term the Eurasian Balkans, in 1997, to describe this volatile area because according to Brzezinski, "the word "BALKANS" conjures up images of ethnic conflicts and great-power regional rivalries. Eurasia, too, has its Balkans."³ SISE has come about from taking the suction effect notion Brzezinski forwarded in his works vis-a-vis Eurasia, and applying it to small islands.

Sir Halford John Mackinder was hugely influential in setting up the geopolitical perspective, in terms of how the earth really is just a "World of Islands," and that the center of the world is and has always been the World-Island. Indeed, the geopolitical framework and map cited in this thesis were creations of Mackinder.⁴

Hans J. Morgenthau's canonical work on realism, *Politics Among Nations*, assisted in adding the much needed *Realpolitik* component to this thesis central argument.⁵ Morgenthau's

work, more than any other, helps one to understand the nature of a great power; why it acts as it does, what are its primary interests, and why sometimes it is willing to wage war to attain its interest. Though this work is chiefly concerned with SISE, and the process of understanding it, one will undoubtedly learn a lot about the fundamental nature and character of great powers. The realist train of thought is found throughout this work and much is owed to Morgenthau in terms of adding the philosophical element to SISE in relation to the great powers.

Another realist whose work forms a central theoretical component of this thesis is John Mearsheimer. His “Offensive Realism” theory is also cited in this thesis when explaining why great powers act the way they do.

Thus, this thesis subscribes to a combined realist theory, where Morgenthau’s “Human Nature Realism” and Mearsheimer’s “Offensive Realism” are conflated. Great powers, according to this *fused theory*, will act as they do, sometimes out of a natural lust for power, other times due to the anarchic structure of the system, and on other occasions for reasons that apply to both theories. Both hypotheses are relevant and useful when trying to explain and understand the nature of the great powers.

Table 2.1 The Major Realist Theories			
	*Human Nature Realism	Defensive Realism	*Offensive Realism
What causes states to compete for power?	Lust for power inherent in states	Structure of the system	Structure of the system
How much power do states want?	All they can get. States maximize relative power, with hegemony as their ultimate goal.	Not much more than what they have. States concentrate on maintaining the balance of power.	All the can get. States maximize relative power, with hegemony as their ultimate goal.

* This thesis adheres to both Human Nature Realism and Offensive Realism when seeking to understand why Great Powers act as they do.

6

Walter Russell Mead and Henry Kissinger are important sources for this thesis. Mead has been influential in this theory's development from the vantage point of using grand political history. Many of his own works always seek to tackle big questions or problems, and he answers these questions using grand history, relying on broad natural themes, and giving focus to the larger context. The idea to attempt to substantiate SISE through a grand historical review stems from Mead's own approach to history. Now more than ever, the popular methods for reaching conclusions in much of current scholarship are methods, comparisons, and systems of investigation that stress near micro-scopic specificity and focus on one or two "tight" case studies. Mead bucks that trend; and this work similarly seeks to validate the proposed theory using grand history and the "larger context".⁷

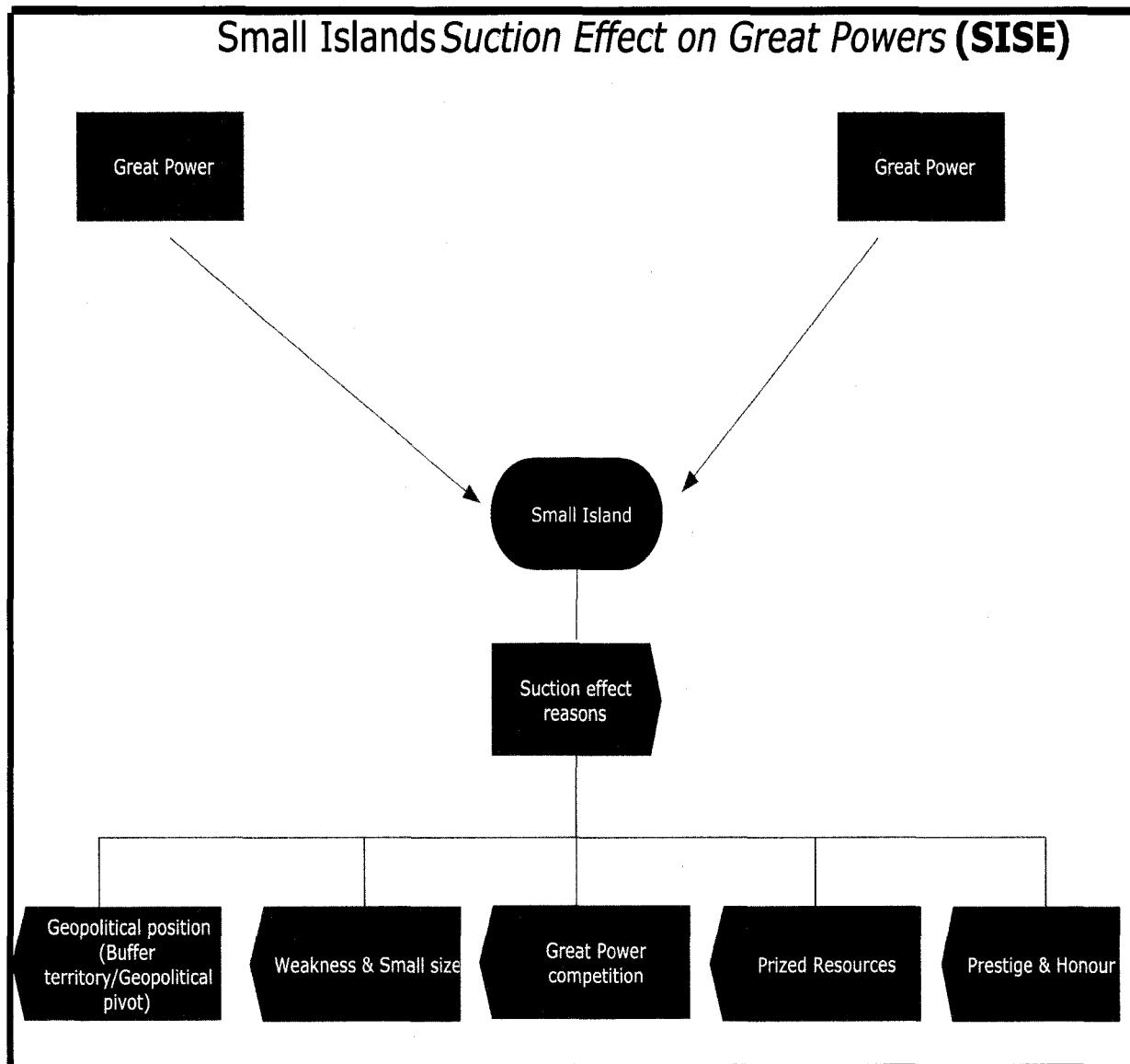
Henry Kissinger has always been a proponent for the importance of taking the "larger context" view. He is probably the only current foreign policy guru who can claim to be in the same elite class as Brzezinski, when it comes to the formulation of prudent great power

diplomacy and geostrategy. Kissinger has influenced this thesis through his own realist stressing of how the larger context matters, and how at times subjective moral principles must take a back seat to pragmatic interest and goals. All these tenets of realism have left an indelible imprint throughout this work.

Kissinger always had to deal with dilemmas where security considerations had to be chosen over moral principles, in the name of keeping the people of his country safe. These decisions are never easy, but this work will likewise support security concerns over moral precepts when cases like that of Diego Garcia are discussed. Forcibly removing indigenous populations from their homelands is not an easy decision to make but sometimes, in view of the larger context, it is the right one. Former Harvard professor, and now Canadian Member of Parliament, Michael Ignatieff, sums up the difficult “lesser evil choices” policy leaders sometimes have to make when he states, “Life’s toughest choices are not between good and bad, but between bad and worse. We call these *choices between lesser evils.*”⁸

Now that key intellectual influences have been acknowledged, and it has been lucidly explained how each erudite academic has assisted indirectly in the crafting of this geopolitical theory, it is now time to turn to the critical five components of SISE. This next section will be entirely devoted to “unpacking” these five elements that together constitute SISE.

FIVE COMPONENTS OF SISE



GEOPOLITICAL POSITION

Geopolitical position is one of the five main components that help comprise SISE as a whole. When one speaks of small islands having a “suction effect” on larger powers this element is usually the most cited, as being the primary reason why stronger powers invade, annex, or fight over small islands.

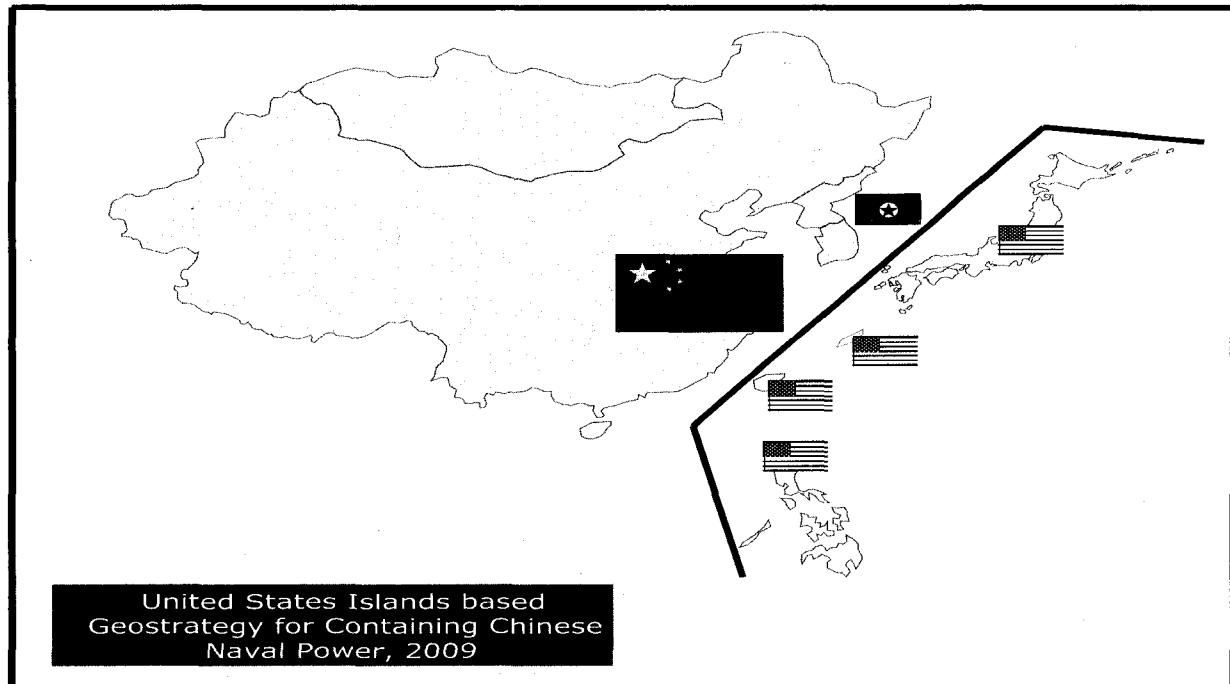
Small islands serving as advantageous strategic bases, is a fairly straightforward, widely accepted concept, in both the social science fields of Islands Studies and International Relations. Often a great power will see that it is in its interest to control, either directly or indirectly, a small island for security reasons.

Geopolitical position as it applies as a component of SISE can be subdivided into two different types. First, a great power may feel the need to gain control of a particular small island because it would serve as a convenient *buffer state* for that great power. By “buffer state,” it is meant that a geographic entity, in this specific case, a small island, can act as a defensive shield or area, protecting that great power’s “homeland” from another belligerent great power.

If a great power uses a small island for this geopolitical defensive reason, often there are two policies of interest a buffer state island can achieve for that great power. One, the buffer island state will act as the front-line for that great power, extending its frontier or “*Sphere of Influence*,” thus, in the process, protecting the great power’s all important homeland areas. Two, the buffer island state can act as an “island of containment” vis-a-vis a rival great power, especially one that is overwhelmingly continental in its own geography. This “island of containment” policy works in such a way that a tiny island’s geopolitical position, relative to a nearby continental great power, allows it to deter and contain that rival great power’s naval

power from projecting out to the sea. Thus, due to this containment, the rival great power's naval power is no longer a threat to the other great power, and by being contained, the rival great power's maritime power becomes coastal by nature not oceanic. Hence, it is non-threatening.

The best example of a small island being used as a buffer territory is the Japanese island of Okinawa; both the Japanese (throughout their history) and the present day American military have used, and do use, Okinawa primarily as a buffer territory. Japan, historically, always worried about Okinawa being conquered by either its Asiatic rival, China, or by a European great power, which would have made the Japanese home island of Kyushu vulnerable to possible invasion. The late Okinawa expert, George Kerr, explains the deep seated and long-standing Japanese paranoia over Okinawa when he comments "In Japanese eyes the south (Okinawa) harboured a growing danger," adding, "By the close of the 16th century the Japanese were keenly alert to the danger coming from the south (Okinawa), and sensitive to the problems of security in the neighbouring islands."⁹



Presently, Okinawa is used as a buffer territory by the United States military in a long standing effort to contain the burgeoning Chinese Navy, and any rogue ships from North Korea.

The second type of geopolitical position a small island can offer a great power, that can serve to have a SISE on that great power, is when the island can act as a *geo-pivot*. Small island geo-pivots are utilized by great powers for offensive purposes. A certain small island, due to its favourable geopolitical position, can act as a launching pad or a “living aircraft carrier,” for a great power. These small islands become highly sought after geo-pivots for great powers, with the clear purpose of projecting their hard power into a nearby theatre. Small islands serving as geo-pivots for great powers is the most common, and most widely understood reason, why great powers seek to control small, seemingly insignificant islands.

Historically, using geo-pivots to project hard power, was always most important for great powers whose hard power was primarily maritime based. For example, the British Empire,

during its zenith in the 19th century, had a number of important geo-pivot small islands for offensive military purposes, be it Malta in the Mediterranean theatre or Bermuda in the Atlantic.

Presently, a clear example of a small island being used by a great power as a geo-pivot is the very small island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. The United States has been using this island as a geo-pivot for over thirty years. And as Klaus Dodds, Professor of Geopolitics at Royal Holloway, University of London, explains, Diego Garcia has been very useful to America in great power terms, when he observes “the base [on Diego Garcia] has proved extremely valuable to the US military in its war on terror. Four thousand US service personnel are still stationed there, and B52 and B2 bombers have flown missions to Afghanistan and Iraq from its airfields.”¹⁰

Geopolitical position is probably this most common component of SISE that causes a great power or a number of great powers to be sucked into a small island.

WEAKNESS AND SMALL SIZE

Weakness and small size is a fundamental component of SISE; small islands are by their nature inherently weak, due in large part to their minuscule size and small populations. Great powers are drawn or sucked into small islands that are weak for a variety of reasons.

To start with, a small and weak island state poses possible security concerns for a nearby great power or great powers. First, a weak island state that has difficulty exercising its own sovereignty throughout its jurisdiction, often can be at risk of facing uprisings and rebellions from its own population. Neighbouring great powers do not like instability or possible anarchy

on their doorsteps, and often the power will move in or be sucked into this weak island state, to restore order, in hopes that these actions will prevent the island from degenerating into an anarchic state.

A classic example of a great power being drawn into a weak small island, due to concerns over its instability, was when in 1988, then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, accepted an invitation for intervention from the President of the Maldives. At the time about 80-100 Tamil mercenaries were attempting to overthrow the elected government of the Maldives. It was in India's interest to see the Maldives remain a stable and friendly country. After Indian soldiers were dispatched to the Maldives, it took less than twenty-four hours to restore order to that country.

Second, rebellions or military coups can often open the door to extremist groups who can gain a foothold of power in a particular small island society. These extremists groups can derive their fanaticism from ideology, religion, or perceived grievances against some other party. The fact that such extremist groups see violence as an option in furthering their cause, will usually be of major concern to a nearby great power. Hence, more often than naught the great power will intervene, in some fashion, to prevent the island from being taken over by either religious or ideological extremists, or autocratic military leaders.

A good example of this is when Australian forces intervened in the Solomon Islands in July 2003, at the request of the Solomon Islands government. Extremist militant forces had forced the government into a type of secretive exile and the country was in a state of anarchy. Australia (a regional great power in the South Pacific) cited security and humanitarian reasons for going into the Solomon Islands to restore order. The *Economist* records, then Prime Minister John Howard, had justified the intervention in the Solomon Islands in a regional security context

when it comments, “And John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister, has justified it in the context of the American-led war on terrorism. He says that a ‘failed state,’ as the Solomon’s have been called, on Australia’s doorstep could become a ‘haven for terrorists, drug-runners and money-launderers’.”¹¹ Great powers never want anarchic small island states on their doorstep that can be breeding grounds for fanaticism and convenient safe-havens for criminals.

A third and final reason a great power may be sucked into a weak small island state is because that great power is concerned that that small island may be inviting to other rival great powers. This type of suction-effect, induced by the element of weakness, has another SISE component naturally associated with it, namely, great power competition. A great power can be pulled into a weak small island in an effort to curb another great power from acquiring this tiny piece of island real estate.

The American annexation of Hawaii is a cogent example of this type of SISE caused by weakness and great power competition. One of the main reasons the United States hurried the annexation of Hawaii was precisely because at the time it was competing with the Japanese Empire for influence, position, and islands in the Pacific; and Hawaii was a key island chain in this rabid great power competition. As one observer notes, from the American point of view, “Hawaii was strategically situated to be a countervailing force against the interests of Japan.”¹²

This second component of SISE, weakness and small size, is an element that is innately found in *nearly* every small island in the international system *relative* to the great powers or regional powers. Hence, it can be stated that this component of SISE has *near* permanence in relation to the aforementioned theory.

GREAT POWER COMPETITION

Great power competition is an important component of SISE. It is inherent in states to compete with one another for a litany of reasons; be it for power, prestige, security, resources, or deep-seated historical rivalries; history shows us that great powers have always played off one another in a seemingly unending competition to gain hegemony.

A great power naturally feel forced to compete against other powers, quite simply because in the international system there is no referee or all powerful judge who presides over the affairs of the world to settle disputes; in short, great powers compete with each other because the world is and has *always* been anarchic.

Due to this perpetual state of anarchy in the international system, great powers are all usually beset with a high degree of paranoia, in relation to the other powers they are competing against. University of Chicago Professor, John Mearsheimer, describes this permanent and ubiquitous sense of fear and paranoia great powers feel when he states:

Great powers fear each other. They regard each other with suspicion, and they worry that war might be in the offing. They anticipate danger. There is little room for trust among states. For sure the level of fear varies across time and space, but it cannot be reduced to a trivial level. From the perspective of any one great power, all great powers are potential enemies. This point is illustrated by the reaction of the United Kingdom and France to German reunification at the end of the Cold War. Despite the fact that these three states had been close allies for almost forty-five years, both the United

Kingdom and France immediately began worrying about the potential dangers of a united Germany.¹³

With an understanding of great power behaviour than, it becomes illuminatingly clear why, on occasion, great powers can find themselves being drawn into competition over small islands.

Take, for example the case, of St. Lucia, a tiny island in the south eastern Caribbean. From the 17th century, to the early 19th century, Britain and France fought back and forth with one another for control of this small island. The competition between these two powers for resources, and Caribbean hegemony, was so intense that this aforementioned island swapped hands a seemingly ridiculous amount of times. According to Stephen Royle, St. Lucia was “seven times French and seven times British before independence.”¹⁴

The island of Mauritius, found in the Indian Ocean, was first colonized by the Dutch, then the French, and finally the British gained control of the island for good, until it became independent in 1968.¹⁵ Small islands, because of their weakness, can often become pawns in a great power competition, one in which ownership of the island changes many times.

This innate competition between great powers often can have long-term self-damaging effects for both competitors. For example, from the start of the 20th century, until war broke out between the United States and Imperial Japan, following the attacks on Pearl Harbour, those two great powers had been involved in an almost half-century’s great power competition for hegemony in the western Pacific. The United States and Japan were sucked into a number of small islands over this period in the western pacific, and eventually this competition would lead to a major war between them.

Great powers always must look over their shoulder and worry about what another power is up too. A lot of times these competitions can lead to conflict, as was the case between America and Japan. “What made war inevitable,” Thucydides wrote in *The Peloponnesian War*, “was the growth of Athenian power and fear which this caused Sparta.”¹⁶

Great power competition then, is an important component of SISE; and one, in terms of causing a suction effect, that has more to do with the natural behaviour of great powers than with small islands themselves.

PRIZED RESOURCES

Prized resources is one of the five main components of SISE and like geopolitical position, it is a clear and comprehensible element. Great powers have always fought one another over cherished resources, be it water, fertile soil, gold, or today oil; this is a competition that has a long and natural history, one that will *never* completely fade away from the international system. And just like continental areas, small islands, very often, contain highly attractive resources vis-a-vis great powers.

A small island can suck in great powers, due to that island having a highly sought after resource, or a favourable climate to grow a highly lucrative resource. When speaking of great powers being drawn into small islands, due to its favourable climate for growing something deemed important, the Caribbean region comes to mind and its use as a sugarcane growing operation by many great powers, especially in the 18th century.

The first important resource to be grown on Caribbean islands by Europeans was tobacco, but eventually sugar would come to dominate that region's agricultural agenda. The economy of the Caribbean during the 18th century "especially the sugar industry-grew rapidly." As Jan Rogozinski explains "Today, the islands supply only a small fraction of Europe's sugar. During the 18th century, however, the islands produced 80 to 90 percent of the sugar consumed by western Europeans."¹⁷

Initially, the Europeans were drawn to the Caribbean for its gold ore, but all that was mined out by the 1520s.¹⁸ Thus, this region became important for 17th-18th century great powers like the Dutch, Spanish, British, and French Empires, for its propitious climate when it came to growing crops that were very popular back in their respective homelands.

A good modern day example of a great power being sucked into a chain of islands for their advantageous resources is the World War II case, when Japan was enticed into the Dutch East Indies for its resources. Esteemed British Historian, Niall Ferguson, touches on the Japanese attraction to the Dutch East Indies resources when he writes the "Dutch colonies, in particular, looked like easy quarry; they had the added allure of being oil-rich." As well, "Malaya, meanwhile, was the world's biggest producer of rubber," and according to Ferguson like all great powers who have to "feed" their military-industrial complexes, especially in times of war, "the Japanese Empire needed strategic raw materials."¹⁹

Great powers can often feel a suction-effect from an island due to prized resources because, unlike an average mid-tier state, a major power is highly dependent upon resources to sustain its elite power status in the power hierarchy. To remain a great power a state must ensure it has sufficient resources to sustain both its economy and its military-industrial complex. Paul Kennedy sums up this latter point succinctly when explaining the great power relationship

between resources and its military-industrial complex when he comments, “wealth (resources) is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth.”²⁰

Presently, oil is the most sought after resource, to feed a great power’s economy and military industrial complex. Though most small islands are not richly endowed with this “black gold,” one of the key reasons an island like Diego Garcia was commandeered by the Anglo-American powers, was for the purpose to watch over the oil resources in the Arab states. Chalmers Johnson, notes just how expensive it can get for a great power, like America, to maintain a military presence in that region when he observes “maintaining access to Persian Gulf oil requires about \$50 billion of the annual U.S. defense budget, including maintenance of one or more carrier task forces there, protecting the sea lanes, and keeping large air forces in readiness in the area.”²¹

Hence, when and if a small island has a resource that a great power needs, especially to sustain its military-industrial complex, it can be expected that that great power will feel a strong pull towards that small island.

Prized resources, as a crucial component of SISE, is arguably a more easily understood element of the theory than any other proposed element, save perhaps geopolitical position.

PRESTIGE AND HONOUR

The intangibles of prestige and honour serve to comprise a critical component of SISE. All great powers care very deeply about how they are perceived by other powers, especially in terms of respect, dignity, and being viewed as an equal great power. Hans J. Morgenthau devotes an entire chapter to this subject in his book *Politics Among Nations*, to highlight just how important an element of great power relations prestige is. Morgenthau states:

The policy of prestige, however exaggerated and absurd its uses may have been at times, is an intrinsic element of the relations between nations as the desire for prestige is of the relations between individuals.²²

Many of the main conflicts, that have taken place in the modern historical period, have come about because one or more new powers were, in essence, seeking acceptance or acknowledgement from other established great powers. The cases of 19th century Wilhelmine Germany and Imperial Japan, clearly illustrate “rising powers” need for approval from other great powers.

In the German case, Kaiser Wilhelm II felt Germany, early on in his reign, did not receive the kind of respect it should have from other more established great powers, especially Great Britain. Thus, to gain that much desired great power recognition and prestige, Germany embarked on an ambitious plan for expansion that “not only sought to dominate Europe, but also wanted to become a world power. This ambitious scheme, known as *Weltpolitik*, included the acquisition of a large colonial empire in Africa.”²³

Imperial Japan was literally obsessed with being recognized as a great power, and gaining as much prestige and honour as possible. Acclaimed western scholar on Japanese affairs, Kenneth Pyle, notes Japan's obsession with prestige and rank when he explains a "recurrent characteristic of the Japanese response to the international system is a persistent obsession with status and prestige."²⁴

In both cases, Imperial Japan and Wilhelmine Germany, their fanatical searches for prestige and status, among more established powers, eventually caused them to come into conflict with the more seasoned powers. These conflicts are known conventionally as World War II in Japan's case and World War I in Germany's case.

On other occasions a great power can find itself trying to "save face," by defending a seemingly insignificant tiny island that might not even have real importance to that power's overall strategic interests. Take, for example, the case of the Falklands War in 1982, when Argentina invaded and occupied the British Falkland Islands. There you had a situation where both aforementioned powers were sucked into a small island for reasons of prestige and honour. Britain sought to retain its honour and rank among nations by showing the rest of the world it could still muster enough hard power to defend its far flung possessions. Argentina had hopes of gaining a tremendous amount of prestige from acquiring the Falkland Islands. Also, the leadership of that country hoped that this attainment of prestige would cause its citizens to forget about its nation's failing economy.

Small islands are excellent sources of prestige for a great power, particularly a nascent great power, looking to be recognized by the more veteran, more established powers. By acquiring a small island through treaty, outright annexation, or war, a great power will feel

instilled with prestige, for any number of reasons including: because it has attained an interest or goal, and/or due to its assertive actions it has caused other great power to take notice of it.

As has been stated in the weakness and small size section, small islands are very easy targets for expansion by predatory great powers. Hence, in a situation where a power is looking to prop itself up in the eyes of other powers, it is usually very enticing and convenient (due to its relative ease) for a power to invade or take over a small island. The suction effect a great power feels, due to reasons of prestige and honour, are very real, and at times, intense.

CONCLUSION

The five components of SISE, namely, geopolitical position, weakness and small size, great power competition, prized resources, prestige and honour all can serve individually to “suck in” great powers to small islands. When all five elements are combined as a whole, SISE becomes a lethal and unavoidable geopolitical force in the international system. In most cases where SISE is present, it will be found that more than one element is acting and causing a great power to be magnetically attracted to a small island.

With thorough explanations of each fundamental component of SISE, and how each one can cause a suction effect in relation to a great power or powers, it is time to turn to the chronological part of this work. In the succeeding chapters, SISE will be looked at and assessed in different historical periods, and different great power systems, all in an effort to substantiate this geopolitical theory. The genesis point for this empirical exercise is 1660.

SISE: 1660-1815

3

SISE OPERATES IN A MULTIPOLAR SYSTEM

The signing of the Treaty of the Pyrenees, in Great Power terms, marked the end of the Austro-Spanish Hapsburgs coalition's bid for hegemony in Continental Europe. With the Hapsburgs on the decline, following a generation of perpetual war, the time was ripe for a new ascendant power to emerge to make a bid to become the master of the European great power system.

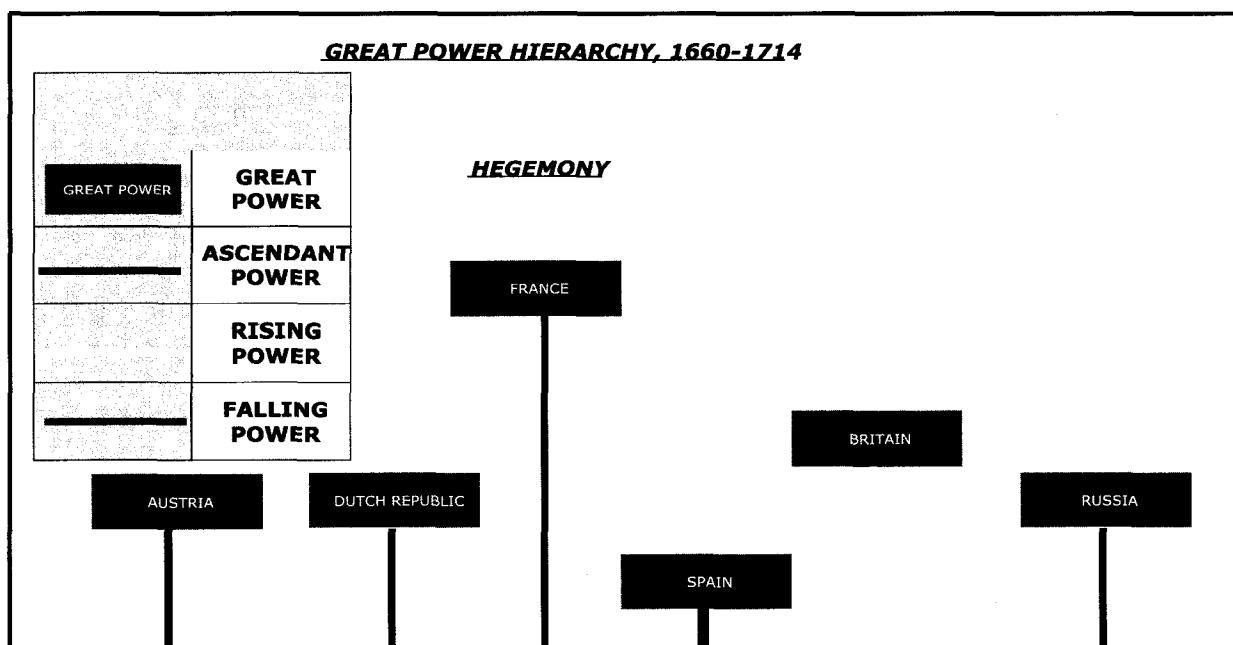
France, under "The Sun King," Louis XIV, began that country's quest for mastery of Europe, and the entire known western world. Louis XIV personally wanted France to become, and stay, the preeminent power in Europe, and in the new world. By the 1670s it was quite clear that France was the preponderant power in Europe:

This French ascendancy, which only a union of almost all Europe could eventually destroy, was built on a mixture of France's inherent strength and Louis's own personality. France's abundant resources had always made her a great power, potentially the leading one. But it was only in the 1660s and 1670s, when these resources were fully mobilised and the system of absolutism reached its height, strengthening the monarchy at home and abroad, that France quickly became the *undoubted dominant European Power.*¹

Another important feature of this new great power system was that the system became vibrantly multipolar. As Kennedy puts it "The most significant feature of the great power scene

after 1660 was the maturing of a genuinely *multipolar* system of European states, each one of which increasingly tended to make decisions about war and peace on the basis of ‘national interests’ rather than for transnational, religious causes.”²

Other notable powers that helped constitute this new multipolarity in the European great power system were the Dutch Republic, Austria, Tsarist Russia, Britain, and Spain; though as noted already, Spain, by the late 17th century, had become a tired great power, one that was in significant decline, more concerned with “holding on” and maintaining the *status quo*, than challenging for hegemony, or small islands for that matter, with the other powers.



France, the Dutch Republic, and Austria were the established powers, while Spain was the tired and decaying power. Russia at this point was the great enigma of the great powers because, while it obviously belonged among the great powers of west/central Europe, it still was at a point in its development where it was more concerned with building, strengthening, and expanding its hold and influence over the lands that are now conventionally known as “European Russia.” In short, Russia was a “developing great power.” By the late 18th century, however,

Russia had matured, and especially, under the reign of Peter I, had become a full-fledged great power in Europe.

Britain was the formidable game-changing rising power during the late 17th- early 18th century. Britain would come to lead a coalition of powers against France in its bid for European hegemony, as Mackay and Scott explain, “This coalition (anti-French) was to be increasingly led by Britain, and it is the rise of Britain as a great power which was the key development in these years.”³

Britain was not only the great “Offshore balancer” in continental affairs, thwarting France’s attempts at hegemony at every turn, but Britain would also turn out to be the great power best suited for competing against France and the Dutch Republic for islands and territories overseas.⁴ Due to Britain’s advantageous geopolitical position as an island, it did not have to commit a lot of its resources to land defence, instead it could commit a huge and disproportionate amount of its resources to maritime defence; and thus, to become an equal of France and the Dutch at sea, and eventually, by the middle of the 18th century, to be the dominant maritime power.

During this century and a half (1660-1815) as it relates to SISE, the only powers that mattered in the race for islands, and/or being sucked into islands, were France, the Dutch Republic, and Britain. These three powers were the preeminent naval powers and all the other great powers were largely continental in design and in outlook. Austria, Russia, and others on the continent, simply, were more concerned with guarding their borders and expanding them in Europe, and did not have the time, resources, or opportunities to establish blue water navies and distant bases including small islands. And as stated already, though Spain still had large and

substantial colonial holdings in the New World, it was still a status quo power, and could not compete with the three maritime powers for small island territories.

This then is the kind of multipolar great power system SISE operated in from 1660-1815, with France being the perpetual ascendant power and potential hegemon of the great power system; and Britain being the most dynamic maritime power followed by the Dutch. The continental great powers Austria, Russia, Spain, and later on Prussia, would not be very involved in the quest for small islands, nor would they experience SISE to any important degree.

SISE was a pervasive force in the Caribbean and Mediterranean theatres throughout this period. SISE would explode, in terms of its intensity and scope, when France and Britain battled one another for overseas territories, and new world hegemony, during the Seven Years' War, and once again when these bitter rivals entered into a generational conflict, the Napoleonic Wars.

The next section will analyze SISE in the Caribbean during the late 17th- early 18th century, and provide some interesting examples of small islands having striking suction effects on certain great powers.

CARIBBEAN: TRIPOLAR SISE & THE CONTINUED “PULL” OF SUGAR

SISE operated in a tripolar great power system in the Caribbean for the first 40 years after 1660. The Dutch, French, and British all contested each other for rights and ownership of small islands.

From the 1660s, until the early 1700s, it can be said that the Dutch Republic was a coequal great power to Britain and France in the Caribbean. However, three wars with Britain, largely over who would be the dominant trading nation and preeminent maritime power, took its toll on the Republic.⁵ The final nail in the coffin for the Dutch Republic, as a great power, was the Nine Years War (1688-1697). After that conflict, due to its poor financial situation and the need to commit most resources to the land defence of Holland, for all intents and purposes, the Dutch Republic ceased to be a great power; and ceased to be able to compete openly with Britain and France in the struggle for these lucrative Caribbean islands.

As the Dutch were knocked off the Great Power hierarchy, and would go into significant decline over the 18th century, never once again becoming a great power, the regional great power system in the Caribbean increasingly, and clearly, became bipolar. With the Dutch demoted from their great power status and the Spanish Empire, by 1700, “terminally weakened,”⁶ Britain and France would battle one another over the entire span of the 18th century to control as many of these small, but resource-rich islands, as each one of them could.⁶

The biggest reason the Caribbean region was having such a strong suction effect on so many European powers was because of the resources that could be grown there, most notably sugar. A favourable climate provided ample opportunity for growing sugarcane and there was a

real impetus behind this “rush for sugar,” because Europe’s sugar consumption in the 18th century increased exponentially.

Table 3.1 Sugar Production In The Americas, 1741-1824 (Annual Averages in Tons)			
	1741-1745	1766-1770	1820-1824
French West Indies	64, 675	77, 923	47, 658
British West Indies	41, 043	74, 452	147, 733

7

As Helmut Blume points out, “The great conflicts between Great Britain and France, during the eighteenth century (1697-1814), were caused mainly by the enormous economic boom experienced by their island colonies. They had developed into ‘sugar islands.’”⁸ This “sugar boom” was big for many great powers, but none more so than Britain. Some commentators have gone as far to say “the shift towards sugar *transformed* England’s relations both with its Caribbean colonies and with its colonial settlements as a whole.”⁹

Prized resources then were the primary reason for certain great powers, with maritime capabilities, to be attracted to the Caribbean. The SISE components of inherent great power competition and issues of prestige and honour, between Britain and France were also significant. From a grand historical perspective, in great power terms, the 18th century is marked by Britain contesting France for maritime hegemony globally, and France attempting to gain hegemony over the European continent, with Britain constantly and consistently tried to thwart that attempt

at continental dominance. Britain and France were competing with one another to see which would become the unquestioned ascendant power.

St. Lucia really reflects just how powerful this prized resource driven SISE was for Britain and France. This small island in the south eastern Caribbean was fought over by the two powers an astonishing fourteen times. Britain would eventually gain permanent control of the island following the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

Martinique is another small Caribbean island that was a highly valuable “sugar island.” This island, located geographically in near proximity to St. Lucia, became a relatively stable French possession during the majority of the 18th century. However, on several occasions, once during the Seven Year’s War, and again during the Napoleonic Wars, Britain captured the island. Amazingly, in the case of the Seven Years’ War, France conceded basically all of French Canada in exchange for the return of Martinique and the neighbouring island of Guadeloupe.

The fact that France was willing to give up its enormous possessions in North America, for two small islands in the Caribbean, is indicative of just how economically important its government viewed the production on sugar in the 18th century. “Sugar Production on Martinique and Guadeloupe dwarfed the English islands,” and for the French, having a steady secure supply of sugar was more important than holding onto large tracts of land in North America that were very difficult to defend, and would likely once again bring its empire into conflict with the British.¹⁰ The Seven Years’ War, as it pertains to SISE, will be covered more in the next section.

Once the first sugar crops were successfully planted, and subsequently harvested in the 1640s on the island of Barbados, a great “sugar boom” was under way, that would make the

Caribbean region the primary producer of sugar and Europe the primary market of sugar for the next two hundred years.

Great power politics and competition has its inherent dark side as well, and it should be remembered as Rogozinski notes that “it was the combination of sugar and tropical disease that made the Caribbean islands into colonies populated almost entirely by African slaves.”¹¹

SISE then, in the 18th century Caribbean context, was primarily fuelled by the “sugar boom” and Europe’s insatiable appetite for it. This prized resource induced suction effect affected France and Britain, and they in turn competed fervently with one another for superior control over this highly sought after resource.

France’s and Britain’s maritime great power competition would absolutely explode, as would SISE, as for the first time SISE would be felt globally; as these two powers would vie for control of colonies overseas. And many key small islands would be gained and lost. The question was, who would be the winner and who would be the loser in this quest for small islands and maritime hegemony.

THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR: FRANCE AND BRITAIN EXPERIENCE SISE ON A GLOBAL SCALE

The Seven Years' War, by most accounts, is considered the first truly “global conflict” or first real World War.¹² This view holds true especially in terms of its geographic scope, its participation level, and its ramifications worldwide. Geographically, the Seven Years' War literally encompassed the entire globe from Europe to North America and all the way to India. In terms of participation, virtually all of the great powers at one point were actively engaged in this drawn out military campaign. And its consequences were felt globally, most notably within the great power system itself. The end of the Seven Years' War left France severely weakened at home and abroad, and left its arch-nemesis, Britain, very strong at home and preeminent in the colonial world. For the next thirty years France would be in search of itself, as a great power, while Britain would strengthen its claim as the greatest of the powers.

As this conflict relates to SISE the colonial theatre is of paramount interest. France and Britain were, in the new world context, battling for maritime and North American hegemony. This however was going to be a conflict that would prove to be almost impossible for France to win. For France's long-standing problem in relation to maritime competition with Britain had always been that France was a hybrid power; always having to divide its resources and attention between continental affairs and overseas affairs. Whereas Britain was an island nation fully able to commit the lion's share of its resources to maritime affairs and only had to be concerned about home defence and continental affairs to a marginal degree.

As history would have it, Britain won the Seven Years' War due to its naval prowess, superior financing of the war compared to France, and because of its advantageous geopolitical position in comparison to France.¹³ Britain did not *have* to fight in the European theatre; instead it could pick and choose its battles there, all the while, committing the majority of its resources to winning the struggle for North America, control of the seas, and supreme influence in India. France did *not have* that choice of which theatre to fight in because it was a land power, and had to worry about defending the homeland in Europe, as much if not more than worrying about holding onto its peripheral territories in the new world.

The Seven Year's War, in terms of its main cause or causes, was all about great power competition, which of course is a key component of SISE. Coming out of this conflict, Britain would gain some key small islands that would further consolidate its position as the hegemonic power in North America. The islands of Cape Breton (named Ile Royale while under French rule), Prince Edward Island, Dominica, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Tobago were all acquired by Britain following the end of the war, conceded by France in the Treaty of Paris (1763).

Cape Breton is an excellent example of a great power being sucked into a small island because of that island's advantageous geopolitical position. Cape Breton had been a major thorn in the British Empire's side ever since it had established colonies in the new world. After acquiring mainland Nova Scotia from France in Queen Anne's War—which was confirmed in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713)—Cape Breton stood in the way of Britain being able to have full maritime control of the North American east coast.

“To counter French power on Cape Breton Island,” William Fowler notes, the British ordered its military to “lay out a settlement and naval base at Chebucto on the Atlantic shore of

Nova Scotia. Christened Halifax.” And this base, Fowler continues, was “barely a two-day sail from Cape Breton Island, Halifax provided the Royal Navy with a powerful base from which it could monitor French activities and prowl the approaches to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.”¹⁴

“Louisbourg was an impressive adversary,” comments the author Fred Anderson, and so the British knew if they were to decisively win the Seven Year’s War they had to capture Cape Breton. And they did just that. The British captured Cape Breton in 1758, not because of their naval superiority off that island’s coast, but because of “the growing ability of the Royal Navy to dominate the French in European waters.”¹⁵ Meaning, in essence, the French couldn’t get out of their home ports back in France to supply and reinforce their North American possessions, like Cape Breton, thus the British were “choking off” France’s naval power and suffocating their colonial holdings as was the case with Cape Breton.

Cape Breton is a clear example of the kind of pull an island, that is geostrategically placed, can have on a great power, especially when that power is engaged in a major competition or war with a rival power as was the case here.

SISE also was felt in the Caribbean, as mentioned earlier Britain acquired many small islands in that region from France. Again, the SISE component of great power competition was paramount here in the minds of the British, not the attraction to these islands resources such as sugar. The very fact Britain gave back to France the sugar rich islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, illustrates clearly enough that their pull to these other Caribbean islands was primarily competition based and not resource based.

This notion of great power competition is highlighted when one takes into account that Britain’s main strategic objective in the Seven Years’ War was to remove France from the North American continent. The British also sought to sink French naval power, so that it could no

longer be a threat to British maritime hegemony. William Pitt the Elder, the man largely in charge of British foreign policy during the Seven Years' War, had "been obsessed with destroying French naval power."¹⁶ Great power competition then was fierce between Britain and France during this first modern global conflict. The stakes were high, grand strategy and the larger context were at this struggle's forefront, and small islands were centrally involved in this great power conflict. Britain could have never won the Seven Year's War and achieved North American maritime hegemony without first taking the important French fortress island of Cape Breton, and this island would become a key small island geo-pivot for the British Empire.

France could have not continued on as a great power, especially, in the financial sense, had it not regained the sugar islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. SISE as a geopolitical force had proven to be a globally pervasive and powerful, one that compelled the two preeminent great powers, by the 1750s, to clash thousands of miles away and combat each other to the death over certain key small islands.

The Seven Years' War left France badly weakened financially, and for the next generation, France would be in no position to pursue hegemony in Europe. Britain's position in the great power hierarchy was greatly increased, as now Britain was the clear maritime hegemon of the world, and asserted hegemonic influence over North America, and gained the strongest position in India among the great powers.

From the World-Island viewpoint, North America is one of three exceptionally large islands, and from the British vantage point it was crucially important to consolidate its hold over this "continental island." Also, from the World-Island viewpoint, having great influence in an area like India was beneficial to the British because it allowed them to have a rich and large

foothold on the World-Island, one that they would cultivate and make the most of over the next one hundred and ninety years.

By 1792 potent political forces and dynamics in France were stirring, and once again that country would make a bid for great power hegemony, and SISE was present in this generational conflict, the Napoleonic Wars.

SISE DURING THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

In the 1790s France was undergoing a social revolution mainly caused by its worrisome economic situation precipitated by years of war with Britain. By the late 1790s however, France had once again reconstituted itself as potential hegemonic great power; and with a strong sense of national pride and purpose it marched towards becoming the greatest of the powers.

The only power that could thwart France both in Europe and overseas was Britain. And, in relation to SISE, it was the British who time after time would check France's territorial ambitions in the maritime theatres.

SISE was largely felt in the Mediterranean theatre, as Napoleon's armies were early on active in that theatre, both in Italy and in Egypt. The island of Malta would become Britain's greatest small island geo-pivot acquisition of the 19th century.

Napoleon himself experienced SISE when he decided to try and reconquer Saint-Domingue (now Haiti). This expedition would prove to be costly and disastrous for the “Little Emperor.”

The SISE components of geopolitical position, great power competition, and prestige and honour can be found during the Napoleonic Wars.

Onward to Egypt: Napoleon and Malta

France, as the author Michal Glover observes “could only achieve her aim of dominating Europe by defeating Britain and this could be done either by outbuilding the Royal Navy or by ruining British trade.” Due to French reservations about trying to out build the Royal Navy, especially in the short term, “it was decided therefore that the most damaging blow against Britain could be struck in the Mediterranean. The occupation of Egypt would close the Levant to British trade and would threaten Britain’s most profitable market, India.”¹⁷

Napoleon raised the stakes in the Mediterranean when he made the decision to invade Egypt, in an attempt to cut off Britain’s vital land trade route to India, in hopes this would seriously damage the British economy, and perhaps force peace between the two powers.

To place his 30,000 plus man army in Egypt, Napoleon needed a geostrategically convenient stopover, for resupplying his ships with water and other resources. Malta would fit the bill nicely; also, it was safer for the French to land in Malta because the British Navy was expecting the French Navy to be docking at traditional resupply points, be it Corsica, Sardinia, or

Sicily. Thus, for reasons of geopolitical position and great power competition Napoleon was sucked in to Malta.

When Napoleon arrived in Malta it did not take him long to seize the island, which happened on June 12, 1798. The Maltese detested the French presence and eventually asked the British for assistance in freeing Malta from the hands of the French. The British accepted, and by 1800, the French garrison on Malta had surrendered to the Royal Navy.

The British understood that having a presence on Malta would be in their interest, in terms of being better able to wage war against Napoleon, and in terms of securing an important transit point for the British Royal Navy, as it policed the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to the Ottoman coasts. It is interesting to note that initially Britain pondered giving Malta to the Knights of St. John, but by the end of the Napoleonic Wars decided Malta was too important to lose, it would remain a British holding. Hence, Britain was pulled into Malta for the SISE reasons of geopolitical position and great power competition. Having Malta would, and did give Britain a “vital strategic base” in the Mediterranean, which at that point was the most important sea in the world, in terms of both commercial trade and security.¹⁸

Malta was the most important small island geo-pivot acquisition by the British Empire in the 19th century. It would evolve over time to serve as the lynchpin for British naval power, and British hegemony, in the Mediterranean region, tying Gibraltar naturally to the eastern end of the sea, and binding British interests in Egypt, and eventually, the trade route to India, via the Suez Canal after 1869, all to the same maritime system.

Empire for Empire's Sake: Napoleon and Saint Domingue

As Rogozinski notes “Napoleon became determined in 1801 to re-establish the French Empire in the Caribbean,” and the SISE component of prestige and honour was the main factor behind Bonaparte’s decision to try and reconquer the former French colony of Saint Domingue (contemporarily known as Haiti). For Napoleon “*dreamed* of a great western empire,” and regaining “a prosperous Saint Domingue was crucial to his plans.”¹⁹

The Corsican general dreamed, rather unrealistically, of restoring France’s colonial empire, for the simple reason, that in his view (and in the view of most of his countrymen) France as a great power was entitled to and deserved an overseas empire. Prestige and honour were central to Napoleon’s decision to divert resources to the Caribbean theatre in hopes of restoring French glory in the new world.

The great power intangible of prestige is often misunderstood by many, in terms of how much clout or influential force it has when decisions by great powers are being made. It is common, for example, that decisions made for reasons of prestige, honour, or rank often are at odds with strategic and practical considerations. This was the case when it came to the French invasion of Saint Domingue in February 1802.

Admittedly, if Napoleon was determined to recapture lost former small island colonies in the Caribbean region, his best time to do so would have been when France was at peace with Britain, which it was under the Treaty of Amiens. However, the problem with the Treaty of Amiens was that almost everyone at that time knew it was nothing more than a “time out treaty,”

not a permanent peace treaty. Pragmatically and strategically speaking, Napoleon still had continental rivals in Prussia, Austria, and Russia, who if united, could possibly undermine France's bid for great power hegemony in Europe. And it was quite obvious that France's historical nemesis, that wretched *Perfidious Albion* Great Britain, would side with any of those great powers should they either attack France or defend themselves against Napoleonic aggression.

With all those practical considerations clearly understood it was really quite preposterous and foolhardy for Bonaparte to be even contemplating an invasion of Saint Domingue in the winter of 1801. Strategically, it was a bad move because it would divert much needed French resources away from the central European theatre, to a peripheral unimportant theatre in the Caribbean. Pragmatically, as well it was a myopic and unrealistic manoeuvre because once this "time out" peace treaty expired; Britain would surely blockade and take control of any gains the French had briefly made in the Caribbean.

All of this of course happened. Napoleon was sucked in to Saint Domingue in February 1802, and over the course of his attempt to take back the island, he would send and lose 40,000 of his best men, mostly to yellow fever. In May 1803, Britain again declared war on France, and British forces quickly retook the Caribbean islands of St. Lucia, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. Britain also blockaded Saint Domingue, helping to ensure the slave rebellion there would be victorious over French forces.

This nonsensical mission by Napoleon was very costly, and after this dreadful experience never again would he try or be interested in an overseas empire, rather he focused France's resources on the domination of Europe. In fact, Napoleon completely washed his hands of an empire in North America, and sold the huge French territory of Louisiana to America, in hopes

of gaining a friend and just ridding himself of overseas concerns. The main reason Napoleon gave up his dream of empire in North America was by and large due to the losses suffered during the Saint Domingue campaign, as the highly regarded author Robert Kagan comments:

When Napoleon ultimately decided to abandon his plans for North American empire and to sell Louisiana to the United States, part of the reason was the disastrous conquest of the island of Saint Domingue, where thousands of French soldiers fell to yellow fever.²⁰²¹

In the end, Napoleon experienced SISE in Saint Domingue. The SISE element of prestige and honour attracted him so much so that he was willing to divert much needed resources from Europe, to a far flung small island, of nominal value in great power competition terms. Saint Domingue, serves as a perfect example, and clear reminder, that SISE induced by the component of prestige can at times cause brilliant and pragmatic strategists to become irrational fools.

REASONS FOR OTHER GREAT POWERS' LACK OF SISE

As stated, Britain and France were the two preponderant maritime powers, thus SISE had a profound effect on both of them. But there were other powers in the great power system during the 18th and early 19th centuries, but they all seemed to lack the influence or pull of this geopolitical force to any major degree.

Spain

Spain, by the time of the French Revolution, was a great power that had been in decline since Phillip II's Grand Armada had met defeat at the hands of the English Navy in 1588. One should add though, that being sucked in to England was being sucked in to an island.

Spain's empire, in what is now Latin America had long been established by the 1790s yet again Spanish power was dissipating all throughout this region. By 1825, virtually all of Spain's former Latin American colonies had declared and/or achieved independence. However, Spain held on to the island of Cuba and the island archipelago of the Philippines for the duration of the 19th century. SISE would eventually be experienced in these two areas as will be shown in the succeeding chapter.

In the end, Spain did not experience SISE because it was a weak and decaying power; one that could not hope to compete with Britain or France for small islands overseas. As it turned out Spain had more worries on the continent, as throughout the 18th century Paris sought to place Madrid within its hegemonic orbit.

Russia

Russia during this time period (1660-1815) was primarily a land power and thus its concerns were continental in size and scope. Under Tsar Peter the Great, who reigned from 1682-1725, Russia sought a warm water port along the Baltic coast. But even after this was achieved after the Great Northern War (1700-1721), Russia was more interested in gaining lands from the Ottomans in the south, the Poles in the west, or the Swedes in the northwest. Again, Russia by the end of the Napoleonic Wars had become a first rate great power, but it was the quintessential land power, because its territory sprawled all across the northern half of the World-Island. Hence, Russia lacked the influence or pull of SISE during this time frame because its interests were completely continental and not maritime.

Austria

Similar to Russia, the Austrian empire did not experience SISE to any real degree because it was a continental power with continental concerns. All throughout this period Austria was either defending against French aggression in the west or Ottoman aggression in the east or revolution or secessionist movements within its own borders; succinctly put, Austria was an insular and continental great power more concerned with holding on to what it already had rather than expanding and gaining new territories. Finally, it was a near impossibility for Austria to experience SISE because it's only outlet to the sea was along the Adriatic coast, which of course eventually merges with the Mediterranean. During this time period Britain and France ruled this body of water, Austria had no hope and no real desire to become a blue water great power with overseas holdings.

Dutch Republic

The Dutch were the preeminent maritime power for most of the 17th century, but as France rose to great power ascendancy, late in the 17th century, the Dutch were forced to concentrate more of their resources on land based defence. The Dutch lost their rank as the preponderant maritime power because, all the while they were allocating huge resources to their army to deter France from invading, the British had no such worry, and could spend the majority of their resources on their navy. Over time, the Dutch ceased to be a naval equal to Britain or to France for that matter. Hence, the Dutch did not experience SISE in any major way during most of this era, because like the Spanish, they simply could not compete with Britain and France for small islands. The Dutch had to retreat from the sea to focus on land power in the face of an ascendant and belligerent France. As Walter Russell Mead puts it, for the Dutch “the problem was France,” and it was France which was primarily responsible for the Dutch not experiencing SISE to any major degree during the 18th century.²²

Prussia

Prussia’s resistance to SISE is very straightforward and comprehensible. Prussia did not really rise to prominence in the great power hierarchy until the culmination of the Napoleonic Wars when it gained a seat at the Congress of Vienna, and became an accepted and legitimate member of the “European Pentarchy.” Before that Prussia had been a rising power, especially under Frederick the Great, who was King of Prussia from 1740-1786.

Prussia was a continental power in the middle of Europe, with other powers all around it, be it France in the west, Austria in the south, Russia in the east, or Sweden in the north. Prussia

did not experience SISE during this period, for all intents and purposes, because Prussia was a nascent rising power that was continental in mindset and in reality. Its concerns lay with security on the continent and expanding and gaining more power there. Prussia at this time had no interest in being a maritime power; hence, SISE never influenced it during this time.

THE NAPOLEONIC WARS REVIEWED

SISE was active primarily in the Caribbean and Mediterranean during the Napoleonic Wars. The case studies of Malta and Haiti caused the maritime great powers, Britain and France, to be pulled in to these small islands for the SISE reasons of great power competition, geopolitical position, and prestige. Other islands attracted the attention and hard power of these maritime states, including Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean, and most of the British and French colonial possessions in the Caribbean were fought over to some degree. Of note as well was Napoleon's desire to eventually invade Britain itself, and before that was seriously considered in 1796, the Revolutionary leadership in France tried to invade Ireland in hopes of supporting Irish rebels to weaken Britain's rule there.

SISE then was a ubiquitous geopolitical force during the Napoleonic era, but it was not a decisive force in terms of swaying the great power struggle for hegemony between Britain and France markedly in anyone's favour. Which state would reign supreme among the powers

would have to be decided on continental territory not on small islands. Being that Britain was primarily a maritime power, while France was primarily a land power, resulted in long periods of stalemate because neither side could hurt the other's homeland. Paul Kennedy calls this latter point of a great power impasse that existed between France and Britain as the "fundamental strategical dilemma" which these two powers were faced with for two decades:

Like the whale and the elephant, each was by far the largest creature in its own domain. But British control of the sea routes could not by itself destroy the French hegemony in Europe, nor could Napoleon's military mastery reduce the islanders to surrender.²³

Britain at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in 1815, would emerge victorious over France and became the unquestioned and unchallenged global maritime hegemon. Ultimately, as Mackinder notes, Napoleon was brought down "mainly because his realm of West Europe was enveloped by British sea-power."²⁴

Britain's position as global maritime hegemon would be unchallenged for the rest of the 19th century, until its last decade, when Imperial Germany was on the rise as a great power and both its Kaiser, Wilhelm II, and its leading naval commander Admiral Von Tirpitz, decided to build their own grand fleet, in hopes of contesting Britain for maritime hegemony and hegemony of the great power system going into the 20th century.

For SISE, what Britain as the global maritime hegemon meant was that it, as a geopolitical force, noticeably died off; and, one could say, even went dormant throughout the 50 years following the Congress of Vienna, mainly because to have a strong suction effect SISE

really needs to have a number of great powers who can compete and contest for small islands.

During the years of true *Pax Britannica* (1815-1871), this simply wasn't the case; Britannia ruled the waves unabated, so no other powers could realistically attempt or be sucked in to a small island. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, SISE came to life once more in the 1870s and 1880s, as rising powers, in the great power system, caused naval power to once again exert real and powerful influence throughout the international system.

CONCLUSION

SISE during the time period 1660-1815, was primarily evident in the Caribbean and Mediterranean regions. The major reason for its intense and frequent presence in these regions was because these areas possessed some key components of SISE. Be it prized resources like sugar in the Caribbean, or inherent great power competition in the Mediterranean, or the powers jockeying for superior geopolitical position, or even for reasons of prestige, SISE as it has been shown, was very active in these regions.

This suction effect primarily over this era affected France and Britain, as they were the primary and preeminent maritime powers. After over a century of struggle between Britain and France, a contest some historians refer to as the "Second Hundred Years War," by 1815 it was quite clear who stood atop the great power mountain: Britain was at its summit.²⁵

While the continental powers battled over tiny swathes of land in Europe, Britain, experiencing SISE, gained key islands that in turn helped it consolidate its empire and establish

the Britannic maritime system that would last over a century. Walter Russell Mead nicely encapsulates this latter point when he notes:

The Britons who laid the foundation of the most powerful global empire ever created saw the rivalries of Europe less as a game to play than as a strategic asset. Let France and Prussia duke it out on the Rhine; let Austria and Prussia batter one another bloody over Silesia, an irregular, slightly sausage-shaped territory now part of Poland that is roughly equal to the combined area of Connecticut and Massachusetts. While they were busy with one another, England would build a global economic system that would leave all rivals in the dust.²⁶

At the end of this great power age Britain became the dominant power; and due to its superlative maritime primacy, SISE would become relatively inactive for the first fifty years after the Congress of Vienna.

SISE: 1815-1918

4

SISE FROM VIENNA TO THE KAISERREICH

In the political science field of international relations the term polarity is used to describe the distribution of power within the international system. It denotes the type and nature of the international system at any given period. Generally there are three types of recognized polarities: unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar. The type of polarity is dependent upon the distribution of power and influence of states in the system. In Chapter 4 the first half of the era (1815-1871) is described as having two distinct sub-polarities. In the maritime realm (excluding the Mediterranean) due to the enormous influence and power Britain exercised globally on the High Seas, the oceans and seas are recognized as a unipolar environment. Conversely and concurrently during this period the European Continent was populated by four great powers which on land could more than match Britain. Thus, this specific European environment was multipolar in its composition. Hence with a unipolar maritime environment dominated by Britain and simultaneously multipolar environment on the European Continent it created a situation whereby SISE would operate from 1815-1871 in two distinct sub-polarities and very little small island competition would ensue. After 1871 however all this would change as the entire international system (including the maritime realms) would become vibrantly multipolar.

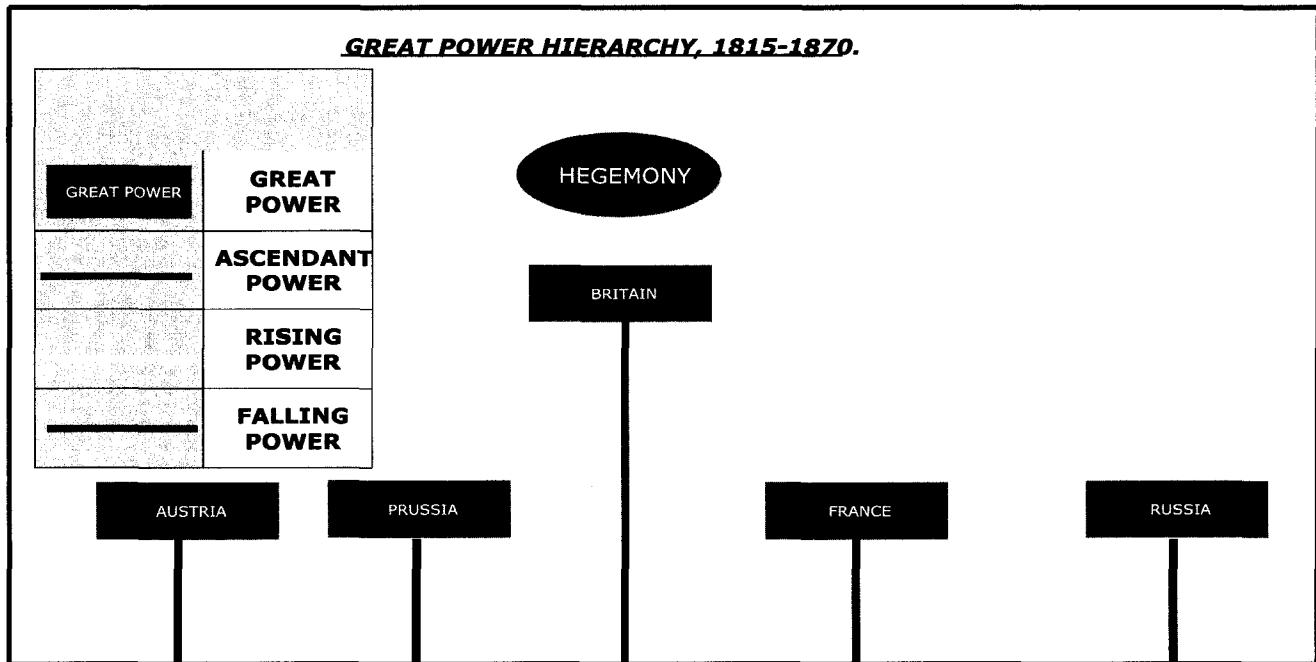
After Bonaparte

With the fall of Napoleon and the establishment of the Congress System in June of 1815, it became clear to all that a new great power system had taken form. What was most intriguing, and for some hard to grasp, or come to terms with, was that the new great power system that had taken hold was a most unique and peculiar one.

1815-1871 is often referred to as the age of true *Pax Britannica* in which Britain was the dominant power, and some even state that Britain was the global hegemon. This interpretation of the Concert of Europe great power system is in fact incorrect and misleading. Britain was not the global hegemon or ‘world power’ during this time frame, instead it and SISE operated in two distinct great power sub-polarities:

The term ‘world power’ is itself ambiguous. Britain was a world power, in the sense of having world-wide interests, from the eighteenth century onwards, while some of the other European Great Powers were much more purely continental powers, but the term ‘world power’ easily slides into the modern meaning of ‘superpower’. Britain was *never* that in her relations with the other Great Powers.¹

Britain was, after 1815, by far the wealthiest of the European powers that comprised the European Pentarchy, namely, Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and eventually a recovered France. As Kennedy notes, “around 1860, which was probably when the country [Britain] reached its zenith in relative terms, the United Kingdom produced 53 percent of the world’s iron and 50 percent of its coal.”² Adding, “with just 2 percent of the world’s population and 10 percent of Europe’s, the United Kingdom would seem to have had a capacity in modern industries equal to 40-45 percent of the world’s potential and 55-60 percent of that in Europe.”³



Britain also possessed the most latent power out of the great powers during this era; yet, Britain never realized or actualized its latent power, largely because Britannia was a satiated power. Britain was satisfied with being the maritime hegemon, setting up a global economic system in which it was the prime beneficiary. Some historians have even gone so far to call this British driven maritime system the “Anglobalization” of the world economy.⁴

Britain was not interested in trying to dominate the European continent; where many formidable great powers lay and where the costs of attempting hegemony would be immense in both blood and treasure.

Let it be made clear than that during this age SISE operated in two distinct polarities; one, in which Britain was the maritime global hegemon, thus meaning over all the world in the blue water sense, but excluding continental Europe; and two, SISE operated in the multipolar great power system in Europe where there were five great powers competing with one another for power, prestige, and as will be shown, small islands.

The main reason for these two distinct sub-polarities that existed from 1815-1871 was because Britannia ruled the waves unquestionably, and it was also the strongest industrial power. The other great powers were all continental in design and outlook and simply could not contest Britain for maritime dominance nor the rights to small islands. The other important reason why there were two different concurrently operating polarities was that Britain frankly, did not have enough power to dominate the continental powers. Though Britain was never interested in subjugating the European continent anyway, even though it had the world's largest navy and had the largest economy it still could have never asserted hegemony over the four other land based great powers. This would have proved to be futile and Britannia would have quickly found itself trapped and bogged down in "hegemonic quicksand." Mearsheimer explains that Britain was never a true hegemon when he states:

The United Kingdom in the mid-nineteenth century is sometimes called a hegemon. But it was not a hegemon, because there were four other great powers in Europe at the time – Austria, France, Prussia, and Russia- and the United Kingdom did not dominate them in any meaningful way. In fact, during that period, the United Kingdom considered France to be a serious threat to the balance of power. Europe in the nineteenth century was multipolar, not unipolar.⁵

This then is the unique and complex great power system in place from the fall of Napoleonic France to the birth of the German Kaiserreich. Britain was the global maritime hegemon, but not the complete hegemon of the international system.

Due to Britain's global maritime supremacy, SISE, by and large, would remain dormant or inactive for the length of this *Pax Britannica* era. Other powers could not compete with Britain for overseas small islands.

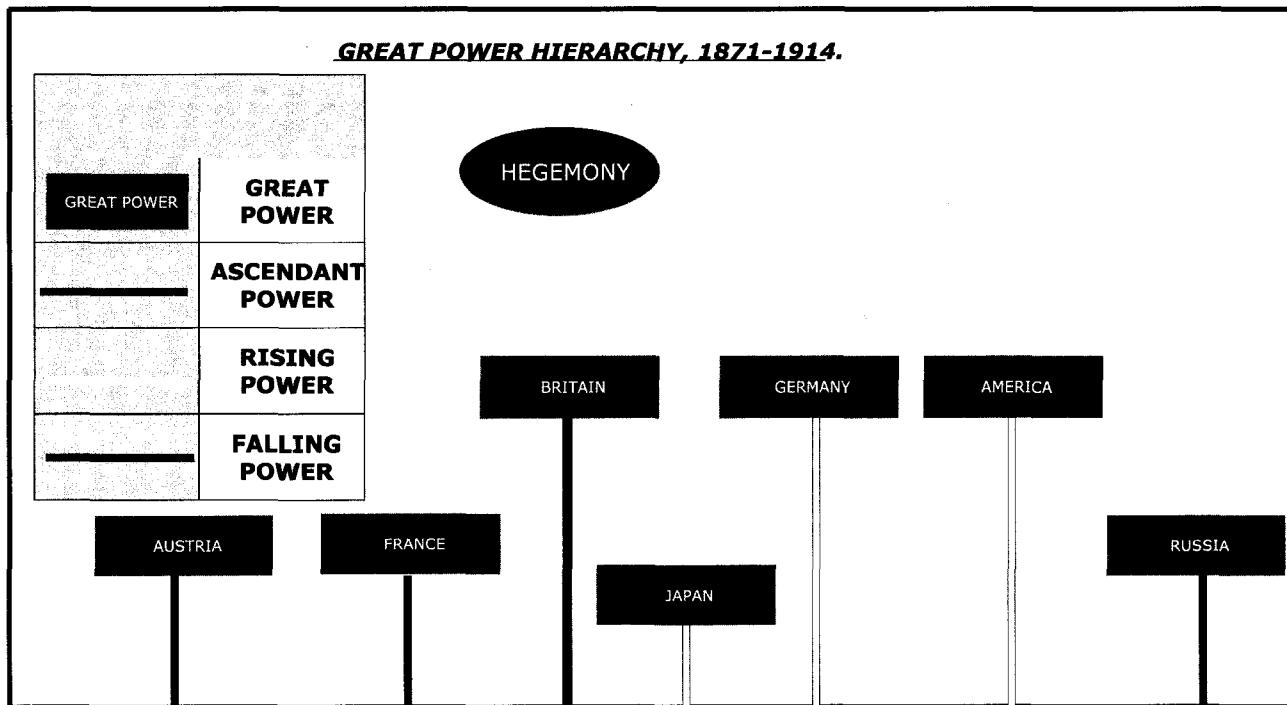
However this era of relative great power stability and unipolar maritime hegemony under the aegis of Britain would all come to a decided end in 1871 with the creation of Imperial Germany.⁶ Other powers would begin rising as well such as Japan, the United States, and to a much lesser degree Italy. These rising powers would put a great strain on Britain's position as the alpha great power and on their peerless naval power. From all this instability and competition among the great powers, SISE, would awaken from its half-century slumber, and again become a geopolitical force to be reckoned with in the international system.

SISE 1871-1918: SISE IS AGAIN RELEVANT AS BRITISH MARITIME HEGEMONY IS CHALLENGED

With the formation of Imperial Germany in 1871 the great power system experienced an overnight change in terms of the order of its hierarchy. This unified German state located in the heart of Europe instantly became the second largest economy in Europe, displacing France from the coveted “runner-up” position. Imperial Germany also had deep and immense latent power, which would begin to be realized under Emperor Wilhelm II, through his grandiose policy of *Weltpolitik*.

Germany more than any other new rising power would have the most adverse affect on the 19th century’s great power system, especially in relation to the greatest power, Britain. Following Prussia’s victory over France in 1871, which led to the formation of the Second Reich, the British politician Benjamin Disraeli recognized the shift:

This war represents the German revolution, a greater political event than the French Revolution of the last century....Not a single principle in the management of our foreign affairs, accepted by all statesmen for guidance up to six months ago, any longer exists. There is not a diplomatic tradition which has not been swept away. You have a *new world, new influences at work, new unknown objects and dangers cope*....The *balance of power* has been entirely destroyed, and the country which suffers the most, and feels the effect of this great change the most, is England.⁷



By the 1870s, there were new powers on the scene causing the system to become more and more multipolar, and competitive. A unified Italian state had been formed in 1861, and its leaders, in the long-term, establish Italy's great power status and develop a sphere of influence throughout the Mediterranean.

The United States, by 1871, was fresh off a civil war in which the Union and the country had been preserved by victorious Federal government forces. For a few years after the end of the American Civil War the United States possessed that world's greatest military-industrial complex on earth; eventually though America would lose this distinction as it would embark on a path of demobilizing its "Total War" economy and would return to a civilian consumer based economy. With that said, the United States was still a rising power from 1871 onwards, and by 1880 had the second largest economy in the world in terms of global manufacturing output.⁸

Japan by the 1890s had become a rising power within the great power system, due to its overnight success of modernizing its economy and preparing its society for competition with the established great powers, in the race for colonies, resources, prestige, and small islands.

All these rising powers eventually sought to build their own formidable navies in their own quests for great power rank and overseas territories, including small islands.

These new rising powers would put a lot of strain on Britain as the maritime hegemon, from the 1870s they would openly compete with Britain, for control of the world's sea lanes, and contest Britain, and others, for the control of many highly valuable small islands.

It was under these fluid multipolar circumstances, that SISE was once more relevant, and became a geopolitical force that would suck in many great powers to tiny islands for a variety of reasons.

SISE is most evident in a multipolar great power system, particularly a multipolar system that has more than one rising power. All of these factors serve to make the system more competitive and anarchic, thus making SISE a more prevalent factor.

This section will explore SISE during this time frame of 1871-1918 when British maritime hegemony was contested and new growing powers would be sucked into small islands for various reasons.

In the succeeding section, SISE as it pertains to Britain will be analyzed, as the island cases of Cyprus and Zanzibar are surveyed. Following that, individual sections will be given to each rising power during this era i.e. Imperial Germany, Italy, the United States, and Imperial Japan. Examples will be given as to how SISE affected each of these rising powers.

The Lion gains a piece of property from the “Sick Man” of Europe: The British acquisition of Cyprus

Russia and the Ottoman Empire had gone to war with one another in the spring of 1877. The Russians hoped to take advantage of the decaying and declining power of its perennial Turkish antagonist, by gaining lands in the Balkans, reasserting itself in the Black Sea region, and bringing the nominally Ottoman controlled Slavic states (Serbia, Romania, Montenegro and particularly Bulgaria) under its hegemony. By early 1878, it was clear Russia was going to win the conflict; the question was how much power it would gain from this victory.

Britain, the maritime hegemon, became extremely nervous of Russian intentions in the Balkans and its growing influence in the Near East. What Britain was most apprehensive about was Russia's paternal relationship with the *de facto* autonomous Principality of Bulgaria. Thus Britain convinced the other powers to intervene with her in this conflict and force Russia to accept a negotiated settlement.

The initial settlement, the Treaty of San Stefano, recognized Bulgaria as an autonomous principality. Thus, allowing for Russia to have immense influence over the country, with the potential danger of Russian land or naval forces there. This scenario was completely unacceptable to the British because this newly recognized Bulgaria had access to the Aegean Sea, thus in essence, giving Russia access to the Mediterranean.

These prospects sent alarm bells off in London, because since the reordering of the great power system, following the defeat of Napoleonic France, one of the primary objectives of British foreign policy had been to contain the Russian Bear and keep it out of the Balkans. Moreover, Britain regarded the Mediterranean as a British lake, no different and just as important as the English Channel was in the 19th century. The British viewed the possible incursion of

Russian naval power into the Mediterranean as a threat to their own national security particularly the Suez Canal, and a threat to trade with their crown jewel, India. The “Great Game” was being extended all the way to the Mediterranean, and the SISE components of great power competition and geopolitical position were at the forefront of this Anglo-Russian struggle for one-upmanship in the Near East region.

The diplomatic meeting of powers to reorganize the Balkans in the wake of the Russo-Turkish war was dubbed the Berlin Congress (June 13 – July 13, 1878). It was at this conference where Britain felt the strong pull of SISE. Again, Britain was compelled to make the demands it made because the great power competition with Russia was so intense. Ultimately, Britain was sucked into the Ottoman held island of Cyprus, at the Congress of Berlin, for the SISE reasons of great power competition and geopolitical position.

What followed was some interesting great power diplomacy. Two weeks before the Berlin Congress, Russia went looking for a great power ally. The Tsar wanted to keep the majority of his gains and was looking for a great power to support this. First, they asked the Austrians to support them, but Vienna refused, not trusting the Russians, and they did not want St. Petersburg gaining any new lands in their own backyard. Ironically, then Russia turned to Britain in hopes that it would support Russia’s claim to new territories in the Balkans, and allow the new Bulgaria to be a tacit satellite of the Tsar. Britain supported Russia’s claim to keeping most of the territories it gained in its victory over the Ottomans in exchange for the Russians agreeing to split Bulgaria up into three parts. The south-western part of Bulgaria would remain under Turkish suzerainty, thus ensuring that Russia would not have access to the Aegean Sea (a huge relief to Britain). This agreement was reached on May 30th, 1878.

Britain entered into this mutually acceptable agreement with Russia, which up until this point had been her fierce rival. While British diplomats were negotiating with Russia over Bulgaria and access to the Aegean, other British diplomats were at the same time convincing the Ottomans to cede the small island of Cyprus to Britain in exchange for British security guarantees should Russia attack them again. The Ottomans agreed in secret to cede the island of Cyprus to the British on June 4th, 1878.

Britain then experienced SISE during the Berlin Congress process, and the two main components of interest in Cyprus for London were geopolitical position and great power competition. Geopolitically, Cyprus would serve as a strategically important island that could host British troops and ships. In fact, as early as 1870, the British Foreign Offices had targeted Cyprus as an important geo-pivot, one that would be in the interest of Britain to attain.⁹ Cyprus was situated close enough to both Asia Minor and the all important Suez Canal, so that if British interests were ever in danger, in either area, the Royal Navy could be summoned at a moment's notice from Cyprus and be called upon to defend British interests in the eastern Mediterranean. Norman Rich, an expert on great power diplomacy, writes about the advantageous geostrategic location of Cyprus in relation to British interests when he comments, "the British pressured Turkey into giving them the island of Cyprus and that with that they acquired a splendid-and strategic-naval base in the eastern Mediterranean, one within striking distance of Constantinople, Asiatic Turkey, the Balkans, and the Suez Canal."¹⁰

In terms of great power competition, by controlling Cyprus, Britain could protect the declining Ottoman Empire from a bellicose and resurgent Russian Bear, and deter Austria from trying to force its will on the "Sick man of Europe." Britain after the Congress of Berlin favoured the status quo in the Balkans/eastern Mediterranean. This meant propping up the

Ottomans and preventing the Austrians or the Russians from making any more gains at Constantinople's expense. By gaining Cyprus, Britain could watch over Turkey, and this small island would serve as a remainder to those in Vienna and St. Petersburg, who dreamed of more Balkan territories, that Britain was offshore; watching, waiting, and guarding Turkey from its new small island geo-pivot.

The British acquisition of Cyprus then was a process that contained two critical facets of SISE. Britain's attraction to this small island was very much, geopolitically speaking, SISE induced.

Zanzibar: The intangible element of Prestige

SISE's role in the British acquisition of Zanzibar is an interesting one to say the least. What makes it so intriguing is that the SISE element of prestige is clearly present in this case and at its core. As well, great power competition was another component of interest that was part of the overall suction effect that drew Britain into this small island off the eastern coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean.

By the 1880s both Germany and Britain had developed economic interests in Zanzibar with the spice trade. But more important, in respect to the larger context, the great "Scramble for Africa" meant that Britain and Germany were competing to secure territory in Africa.

Certain segments of German society were particularly keen on acquiring overseas colonies for the Fatherland, in hopes these territorial acquisitions would boost Germany's prestige on the world stage. In large part then, Imperial Germany by the 1880s was sucked into Zanzibar for the SISE reason of prestige.

Similarly, Britain was drawn to Zanzibar mainly for reasons of prestige and honour. By the 1880s, Britain had long been championing for the end of the slave trade throughout the world. And Zanzibar was one of the main hubs and trading centres for slaves in eastern Africa. Britain became very committed to stamping out the slave trade in Zanzibar because by doing so they would gain respect in much of the world.

By the late 1880s both Britain and Germany, arguably the two greatest powers, were entangled with one another in an awkward and somewhat covert contest to see which power would dominate this small island off the eastern coast of Africa. Both had been pulled into Zanzibar due to the SISE component of prestige, and to a much lesser extent, prized resources, commercial trading in the spice trade.

Otto Von Bismarck, who by the late 1880s, was in his last days as Iron Chancellor of Imperial Germany, was always of the view that for the Fatherland the “less of Africa the better.” Bismarck, a widely recognized great power strategist, simply thought African ventures were not in Germany’s interest, or to pursue overseas colonies at all, for that matter.

When Lord Salisbury became Prime Minister in 1885, Bismarck quipped to his colleagues, “I value Lord Salisbury’s friendship more than twenty swamps in Africa.” For Bismarck, Germany’s precarious geopolitical position in Europe, was always the most pressing *Realpolitik* concern. As he explained to a German explorer “Here is Russia and here is France, with Germany in the middle. This is my map of Africa.”¹¹

However, Germany and Britain, by 1890, were feeling the suction effect of Zanzibar to an even higher degree than a few years before, because in March of 1890, Bismarck resigned as Chancellor of Germany at Kaiser Wilhelm’s insistence; thus allowing for Germany to pursue overseas colonies unabated.

It appeared as though Britain and Germany could end up locking horns over the control of Zanzibar, but fortunately for both great powers cooler heads prevailed. What followed was a diplomatic treaty that in essence (though there were other terms included) saw the two powers exchange the hegemony of two islands with one another. Britain offered the North Sea island of Heligoland to Germany in exchange for Germany recognizing Britain's preeminence in Zanzibar. This agreement is known as the Heligoland-Zanzibar treaty which was signed in July of 1890.

Author Michael Sturmer conveys the mutually beneficial nature of this agreement when writing about then Chancellor Leo Von Caprivi: states "He exchanged the island of Zanzibar, off the east coast of Africa, much desired by the British, for the island of Heligoland, in the middle of the Elbe estuary-a red rock of considerable strategic importance for Germany."¹²

The island of Heligoland was of critical importance to Germany "because of the strategic location it possessed relative to the Kiel Canal."¹³ As well, Germany found this island highly attractive for the SIESE reason of prestige. It was on this small island that a popular song which would later become Germany's national anthem was composed by August Heinrich Hoffman, in 1841.¹⁴ Acquiring this island proved to be very appealing to increasingly nationalist everyday Germans.

For Britain, gaining control over Zanzibar allowed them to move ahead and eliminate the slave trade completely on this island, which they did in 1897. During the course of the 19th century Britain had made it its mission to eradicate the slave trade largely for moralistic reasons and a prevailing liberal sentiment in Britain. Britain also benefited from this endeavour by gaining immense prestige throughout the world; and they liked to think of themselves as the compassionate Liberal Empire.

The island of Zanzibar had sucked in the two most formidable great powers and this SISE was largely in response to the appeal of prestige. For Britain prestige was a moral question of liberal principle, while for Germany it was an issue of national pride, all about gaining overseas territories and their rightful places under the sun.

Finally, the larger context and great power competition needs to be mentioned here. In the early days of Kaiser Wilhelm's reign, Berlin had hoped that in the near future there could be an Anglo-German entente. This was in Germany's interest because at this time Russia and France were becoming friendlier with one another, which was a concern to the Germans. To counter this possible dual alliance, Germany saw it necessary to befriend Britain, which if successful, would negate the power and influence of a Paris-St. Petersburg axis. Hence, Germany was willing to accommodate Britain because being on good terms with the British would ensure German ascendancy on the continent.

Robert Massie succinctly describes Germany's strategy in relation to Britain and the larger context when he observes "Accommodation with Britain assured German predominance in Europe, but also required moderation of German ambitions overseas. Germany must not alarm and provoke Britain by an aggressive colonial policy."¹⁵ As Henry Kissinger would say with all decisions—such as the one of Germany to recognize Britain's hegemony over Zanzibar—one must always consider the larger context.

RISING POWERS JOIN THE GREAT POWER SYSTEM AND ARE SUBJECTED TO SISE

By the 1880s new rising powers were emerging and putting increasing strain on the great power equilibrium; Britain, the ascendant power, was also feeling challenged by these “young turk” powers and would find it more and more difficult to continue to assert its global maritime hegemony. It is under this dynamic that SISE flourished once more and would suck in many great powers to small and sometimes far-flung islands.

In this section SISE will be explored as it relates to the late 19th century rising powers, the United States, Imperial Germany, Italy, and Imperial Japan.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Hawaii

The late 19th century in the Pacific theatre was a time of acute great power competition; all great powers were vying for markets and secure outposts all in hopes to establish a permanent political and economic presence in East Asia. All great powers were jockeying for position in

the Pacific, looking for those key small islands to use as geo-pivots and “island bridges” to Asia, or in Japan’s case, a geo-pivot to use as a buffer vis-a-vis the west.

Hawaii attracted the attention of three great powers during the 1880s, the United States, Britain, and Imperial Japan. All three powers were drawn to Hawaii for two main reasons: geopolitical position and great power competition.

Britain was the least interested of the three powers in acquiring Hawaii, but many influential politicians in Washington believed that London did indeed have its sights on controlling this central Pacific small island chain. This hysteria in America’s halls of power helped Hawaii’s suction effect on the United States to become a more pressing issue.

David Healy explains why America was worried about the British controlling the Hawaiian Islands when he comments “In numerous unsupported rumours, the British were charged with having designs on Hawaii, possession of which would give them a naval control of the Pacific comparable to that which they already held in the Atlantic.”¹⁶ The SISE component of great power competition was clearly driving the United States to absorb Hawaii.

Eventually America would become more concerned with Japanese designs in Hawaii and this competitive concern fuelled the SISE Hawaii was having on America even more.

More than anything else, America was sucked into Hawaii, in the 1890s, because this small island chain served as a convenient geo-pivot. It was the perfect island outpost for America to project its hard power into the western Pacific. Many influential politicians in Washington subscribed to this view of Hawaii as a crucial geo-pivot for America. According to Senator Henry Lodge of Massachusetts “They [Hawaii] are the key to the Pacific,” Lodge then concluded that “there in the one place where the hand of England has not yet been reached out, to throw away those islands is madness.”¹⁷

By 1893, a pro-American Republic had emerged in Hawaii following a *coup d'etat* which saw the indigenous monarchy overthrown. America now really felt the compelling pull of SISE. The first and only President of the Republic of Hawaii, Sanford Dole, appealed to geopolitical and great power logic when he lobbied for annexation in Washington. Dole explained to the American government that Hawaii could become “the western outpost of Anglo-Saxon civilization and a vantage ground of American commerce in the Pacific.” And scholar Rob Wilson describes Dole’s own thinking on the island chains usefulness in relation to America when he explains “Hawaii was strategically situated to be a countervailing force against the interests of Japan, Germany, Russia, and England in the treacherous Pacific.”¹⁸

In 1900, Hawaii was annexed by the United States as an unincorporated territory of the Union.

Hawaii serves as yet another crystal clear example of how enticing the SISE components of great power competition and geopolitical position can be to a great power, especially under the umbrella of a multipolar system. The United States could not resist the SISE of Hawaii, because this island chain was just too attractive and advantageous in great power terms to ignore.

The Spanish-American War

SISE would loom large in the conflict many political scientists dubbed America’s “coming out party” as a great power. This conflict, which legitimized America as a full-fledged great power, was the Spanish-American War of 1898. The main SISE components of interest that induced the United States to be sucked in to numerous islands, including Cuba, and the Philippine Archipelago, were great power competition and prestige and honour.

By the 1890s, Spain was no longer a great power; in fact, it was clearly the runner up to the Ottoman Empire for the infamous title “the Sick man of Europe.” Spain was a status quo power throughout the Congress system era which sought to avoid unnecessary conflict with actual great powers at every turn.

America by the 1890s was a quite different story. The United States had become the largest and most dynamic industrialized nation on earth. By 1898 it had surpassed Britain as the leading state, in terms of world manufacturing output, and it had also eclipsed Britain in the crucial economic sectors of both iron/steel production and energy (coal) consumption.¹⁹ In Short, the United States was on the rise, and with this realization of its great power status, it naturally sought to continue to expand its hemispheric hegemony.

The United States easily and decisively won the Spanish-American War and took many islands as prizes. For many, America’s victory over Spain signified to all that the United States was now a great power and one that would become an active participant in the great power system. Speaking to this common train of thought Mearsheimer wisely notes “it is usually said that the United States achieved great-power status in about 1898, when it won the Spanish-American War, which gave it control over the fate of Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico.”²⁰

The United States was sucked into the islands of Cuba and the Philippines (as well as other small islands) because the SISE elements of great power competition and prestige were present on these islands during the late 1890s. The United States was attracted to Cuba for the reason that all the other Spanish island holdings were acquired by the Americans, because Washington worried that if Cuba broke free from the antiquated Spanish imperial yoke, that other rival great powers might try and make Cuba their own satellite. Going back all the way to

1823, when the famous Monroe Doctrine was proclaimed by its namesake, President James Monroe, America had always sought to keep the European powers out of the western hemisphere to the best of their ability. By 1898, the United States was in a position to fully implement this decades old foreign policy, and as Cuba teetered on the brink of anarchy, and the Cuban rebellion continued to grow in strength, the United States became more attracted to this neighbouring island, only 90 miles off the coast of Florida. Commenting on how the Cuban rebellion convinced many Americans that Cuba would break away from the Spanish Empire, Robert Kagan writes “the surprising success of the rebellion seemed to offer proof that the backward Spanish Empire was tottering and could no longer hold Cuba.”²¹

The catalyst for this conflict was the SISE component of prestige and honour. The United States in the 1890s still possessed a strong moral core that exhibited beliefs in American Exceptionalism, and the universal rights of man to live in a free and democratic society. Many Americans, especially those in the Republican controlled Congress during this time, continued to follow in the footsteps of former President Lincoln, preaching the need to encourage freedom seeking peoples everywhere, especially in their “own back yard.” Hence, many citizens of the United States believed they were doing the right thing and the prestigious thing by advocating Cuba’s independence and morally supporting the rebels there.

Also, regarding honour, many Americans still had a sour taste left in their mouths from the “Virginius Incident” of 1873, when an American ship was commandeered by the Spanish navy. The largely American crew (there were some Englishmen among them) were convicted in a Spanish military court of being “pirates” and subsequently over 50 members of the crew were executed. This event, which by 1898 was over twenty-five years old, was still fresh in the minds

of many Americans because they viewed this act as a huge insult to the United States and a blow to its prestige.

Finally, the United States viewed Spain as an inferior country and civilization. Author Joseph Smith sums up this American feeling of superiority over the Spanish when he states:

The people of the United States generally displayed a dislike and lack of respect for Spain. This was partly the consequence of an Anglo-Saxon Protestant heritage which conditioned Americans to regard the Spaniards as the enemy agents of monarchical aggression, political and religious oppression and moral decay. It also reflected the rivalry and animosity arising from quarrels over territory dating back to the colonial period.²²

Thus, combining the factors of the humiliating Virginius experience, with America's strong moralistic tendencies at that time, and the fact that due to the USS Maine incident, in which a U.S. naval ship was mysteriously damaged many placing the blame of Spain, most Americans believed this inferior nation had unlawfully attacked them, you had a situation where the SISE component of prestige and honour was amplified to an almost incalculable level.

The USS Maine incident was the final perceived slap in the face for America by Spain. After that, the United States decided for reasons of great power competition and prestige, that Spain must be punished, and Cuba and other Spanish small island holdings had to be "freed" from Madrid's despotic grasp.

Following the end of the Spanish-American War, the United States found itself with many small islands in the Caribbean and now had become an active great power player in the

western Pacific, in relation to its acquisition of the Philippine archipelago. In time, SISE would assist in drawing in America to conflict with another rising power, the island great power, Imperial Japan.

Near Total Hegemony in the Caribbean

By the early 20th century the United States had become the unquestioned regional hegemon of the Caribbean. The eagle had spread its wings and finally the Monroe Doctrine had been realized. As early as the 1880s there had been a tacit understanding between Britain and America that the Caribbean was within Washington's sphere of influence. After the United States impressive success in its war with Spain, this tacit understanding became even more clear and overt.

The final act, which verified to all onlookers that the United States was the supreme great power in the Caribbean, and the western hemisphere more generally, was when the British conceded somewhat to American pressure during the Venezuelan-British Guiana boundary dispute. Britain accommodated America in the Venezuelan border dispute, and in essence, recognized the Monroe Doctrine, because London had many more pressing concerns and priorities. As Lester Langley explains, "the British government drew up a list of priorities: a menacing Germany on the European continent, setbacks in South Africa, and Russian pressure in India," adding, "public opinion in Britain condemned Anglo-American conflict over Venezuela as fratricidal war."²³ Hence, from 1898 onward, America would bestride the western hemisphere as a juggernaut.

Even if most Americans did not see themselves as imperial, there was a basic consensus that the Caribbean was their own backyard or within their sphere of influence. Commenting on this Lester writes “if in 1900 the United States did not consider itself an imperial power in the European tradition, it looked upon the Caribbean as the new ‘American Mediterranean,’ and American policy expressed beliefs about the Caribbean that reflected an imperial outlook.”²⁴

What American hegemony over the Caribbean meant for SISE was that, from the dawn of the 20th century all the way to the present, this geopolitical force would subside immensely in the multipolar sense. Now no other great power could possibly hope to compete with a robust United States in this region; Hercules had grown up and had long left his cradle.

However, it should be noted, that the United States was sucked into two small Caribbean countries during World War I. America intervened in both Haiti in 1915 and the Dominican Republic in 1916, and in these two situations, the SISE component of great power competition was present. Each time the United States feared, for various reasons, that European powers might invade these small island states, thus Washington acted and occupied these islands. Of note as well in 1917 the United States purchased the Virgin Islands from Denmark.

With complete Caribbean hegemony achieved by the United States by the early 20th century, America would become both an imperial and paternal power in the region. And SISE would weaken in this area, only to be powerfully reigned during the Cuban missile crisis.

The Building of the Modern American Navy and its effects on SISE

The United States in the 1880s made the decision to build a blue water navy, and by the early 1900s, under President Theodore Roosevelt, this navy grew to become the “Great White Fleet.” The United States decided to build this navy largely for three SISE reasons, geopolitical position, great power competition, and prestige.

Regarding superior geopolitical position, many great naval thinkers and strategists, including Alfred Thayer Mahan, believed that to wield impressive sea power a great power must possess islands. In his seminal treatise, published in 1890, *The Influence of Seapower upon History 1660-1783*, Mahan advocated that America to attain small island colonies as the first step in building a dominant navy:

Having therefore no foreign establishments, either colonial or military, the ships of war of the United States, in war, will be like land birds, unable to fly far from their own shores. To provide resting-places for them, where they can coal and repair, would be one of the first duties of a government proposing to itself the development of the power of the nation at sea.”²⁵

In terms of great power competition providing impetus for the building of the modern American navy, it was the multipolarity of the great power system at that time that forced America down this path of naval expansion. As Langley explains, “The United States in 1898 was not considered, nor did it consider itself, an imperial power, but the nation lived in a world of competing dynamic empires.”²⁶

Finally, on the point of prestige, being one of the three primary reasons the United States pursued a blue water fleet, Robert Kagan accurately observes:

Americans in the 1880s and '90s were exhibiting a common attribute of rising powers. Growing power produced an expanding sense of interest and entitlement. Some of these interests included such intangible and often elusive matters as *honour, prestige, and respect in the international arena*.

These are not so easily measured as commercial and other material interests, but in human affairs they are often more potent motives for action. They played a significant part in the naval buildup of the 1880s and early 1890s. Americans wanted to be accorded the respect due to a great nation.”²⁷

Building a grand American fleet had direct effects on SISE, in terms of it being a powerful and attractive force for the United States. As mentioned in the preceding section, the building of the modern American navy meant that in the Caribbean, the United States was the ascendant and unchallenged power. SISE in this realm would operate in a unipolar environment in sharp contrast to the multipolar environment of Asia and the Pacific Where SISE was also present.

By building a large navy America was amplifying SISE in the Pacific because it was there that there was another rising power with great hegemonic aspirations that included acquiring key small islands. This other rising power was Imperial Japan. The Japanese were very nervous of America’s growing naval power and its desire to be a player in the Pacific

theatre. When Hawaii effectively became an American protectorate after 1893, Japan became even more anxious as to the United States' own designs for the Asia-Pacific region.

When Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet" made a stop in Tokyo in 1907, the Japanese did all they could to convey to America that Japan desired peace between the two powers. But the increase in the size of the American fleet compelled Japan to continue to expand its own naval power. From the Japanese point of view, America by the early 20th century, had strategically situated small island bases in the Pacific that appeared to be aimed at Japan in terms of containing her rise as a great power. The United States had naval bases in Hawaii, the Philippines archipelago, and Guam. The Japanese feeling vulnerable, and experiencing intense great power competition from America, would in the future look for their own geostrategic small islands to use as imperial demarcation points.

Ultimately, the most important effect the building of a great American fleet had on SISE was that it exacerbated the great power competition between American and Japan in the Asia-Pacific region. This exacerbation of competition did not mean that war between the two great powers was inevitable, but that it was a lot more likely than before this fleet was built. A little over thirty years after the American fleet sailed into Tokyo promoting itself as a friend, America would be at war with Japan.

WILHELMINE GERMANY

The Kaiser's Dream of Challenging British Maritime Preponderance fuels SISE

With the coronation of Kaiser Wilhelm II in June 1888—who also happened to be the eldest grandchild of Queen Victoria—the Second Reich embarked on a bold and brazen new foreign policy path. In the spring of 1890, Otto Von Bismarck was forced to resign by the Kaiser. Ever since the Second Reich's inception in 1871, Bismarck had been in charge of the country's foreign policy. Under the Iron Chancellor, Germany practiced a *Realpolitik* foreign policy, one that sought to preserve the status quo in Europe and in the great power system. One of Bismarck's absolute precepts in his foreign policy approach was a deep-seated belief that it was not in Germany's national interest to attain overseas colonies or to challenge Britain's maritime hegemony. Unfortunately for Bismarck, after his dismissal by the twenty-nine year old narcissistic Kaiser, this is the exact foreign policy path Germany pursued.

The young Kaiser had a passionate love-hate relationship with his British royal cousins, and with Britain itself. As a child he had always been fascinated by the history and prestige associated with the Royal Navy, and thus when he became Kaiser he dreamed of having a navy like Britain's for himself.

Kaiser Wilhelm II, vision for Germany possessing a grand fleet and for Germany to become the hegemonic power of the world was a vision shared by most of his countrymen by the dawn of the 20th century. Robert Massie accurately describes the Germans peoples vision for their country during this time, when he claims “With surging strength came a sense of national identity. Young self-confident, ambitious, the German Empire set out to follow the path taken

by other powerful states. Expansion became a matter of prestige and a measure of prosperity.”²⁸

The Second Reich was surging in two key great power areas, namely, population and economic strength.

Germany’s population exploded over twenty years; in 1891, Germany’s population was 49 million and by 1911 it had reached 65 million. By comparison, Britain population during that period had only incrementally increased from 38 million to 45 million by 1911.²⁹ Economically, Germany’s great power rise was equally as dramatic as its population boom. In the late 19th century the two most important industries, in terms of assessing a great powers economic strength thus latent power, were steel and coal production, which were key components of heavy industry and war. In 1890, Britain had sizeable leads in both industries over Germany, but by 1913 Germany had surpassed Britain in both coal and steel production.³⁰

Overwhelmingly then, the German people believed that their state should become the greatest of the powers and that the other powers should not impede this process of great power ascendancy. Germans knew the only power that could hamper the Kaiserreich’s hegemonic rise was Britain, but many were convinced that if push came to shove that Germany had the strength to deal with their Anglo-Saxon cousin. A professor from the University of Berlin encapsulates this latter view, when he wrote in 1897 that “England is still the state which has least adjusted to the fact that Germany is the strongest power on the continent and that she is prepared, if necessary, to compel this recognition.”³¹

With the majority of the German people supporting a policy of *Weltpolitik*, or making Germany a world power, the Kaiser moved ahead with his ambitious naval building plans which were overseen by Admiral von Tirpitz. From 1896-1914, Germany would embark on a formidable naval building project, one that was squarely aimed at Britain. And Admiral von

Tirpitz knew, key small islands, just like the recently acquired Heligoland islands, would play an important part in Germany's great power strategy against the Maritime hegemon:

For Germany, the most dangerous naval enemy at the present time is England. Our fleet must be constructed so that it can unfold its greatest military potential between Heligoland and the Thames.³²

Another German admiral, Georg von Muller, agreed with Von Tirpitz's view that Britain was Germany's main naval rival. But he took this hostile view a step further. Muller believed deeply in a kind of Anglo-German fatalism; that predicted Germany and Britain would eventually go to war with one another. Muller prophesied that these "two Germanic world empires would... with *absolute inevitability* have to go to war to determine which of the two should dominate."³³ The SISE component of great power competition was building and growing stronger, more undeniable, as Germany marched toward building a first class fleet and a world power.

Germany's determination to build a grand fleet to rival Britain's caused SISE to become amplified. As Germany grew stronger so did its appetite for small islands, as has been already demonstrated in the previous section on the Zanzibar-Heligoland deal. For any great power, including Wilhelmine Germany in this case, an increase in maritime power will cause an increased SISE. Once a great power has a blue water fleet, usually much more often than not, its uses are to showcase to the other powers that it has impressive maritime power projection. Also, the great power will use the fleet to attain small islands for any of the five main SISE reasons/components. The Kaiserreich was no exception to this rule, as the High Seas Fleet grew

in size and scope, so did its search for small island colonies. An ascendant Germany would experience SISE with particular force in the western Pacific.

The Samoa Islands

In the small island case of Samoa all five components of SISE were exhibited. Germany was sucked into the Samoa Islands archipelago because this small island chain, in the south western Pacific, contained all of the main components of SISE, albeit to differing degrees. Of course weakness and small size goes without saying, when discussing a great power being attracted to an island or islands whose inhabitants lived in a pre-industrial society.

Decades before the various German principalities united and became the united nation-state of Germany in 1871 many German companies had been doing business in Samoa. German traders began gaining control of the lucrative copra trade and over time other resources such as cotton, coffee, and cocoa became important commodities for trading. By the 1890s with German business interests well entrenched (over forty years) in Samoa, the German government was determined to either acquire this small island archipelago or maintain strong economic *de facto* control of it. Germany's long standing economic relationship with Samoa helps explain how the SISE component of prized resources helped to attract this great power to these islands. However, this component was the weakest of the five in terms of enticing Germany to absorb these islands into its empire.

The main causes for Germany being irresistibly pulled into Samoa were the SISE factors of geopolitical position, great power competition, and prestige; and these components worked in synergy with one another.

By 1899 the grand German Fleet was under construction and if Germany were to continue its policy of *Weltpolitik* and great power ascendancy, than it needed naval bases for its battleships. Explaining how important Samoa was in German eyes to continuing its world power policy one author notes “Samoa was normally regarded as an element of Germany’s *Weltpolitik* securing general German interests in the Pacific.”³⁴ Foreign policy planners in Berlin determined that Samoa would be a geostrategically advantageous naval base to have. From Samoa, Germany could project its hard power into the Pacific Ocean from any direction. Also, geopolitically speaking, Samoa was close to the German colony of German New Guinea (now Papua New Guinea), hence should that colony ever experience rebellion or attack, German forces stationed nearby in Samoa could be dispatched quickly to quell the unrest.

The main reason Germany was sucked into Samoa, was that by 1899, an unsustainable tripolar great power situation had developed, whereby Britain, the United States, and Germany were competing with one another for dominance in this island archipelago. Along with great power competition, prestige was at stake for Germany, because it, unlike Britain, or now America, did not have substantial overseas holdings and wanted some dearly to buoy its claim as one of the elite great powers.

This tripolar situation became untenable because the King of Samoa had died that year, and tribal infighting had ensued between different clans contesting the right of succession. The three powers decided to carve out a deal.

In the end the Samoa Island chain was divided up between Germany and the United States. Germany gained control of Western Samoa, while the United States took control of Eastern Samoa. Britain bowed out of the Samoan Islands mainly because it sought to placate Germany in this deal. Until this agreement was reached in December 1899, Germany had become very belligerent and obsessed with gaining a favourable settlement in Samoa. As Massie explains “German eyes were fixed on Samoa; to the Kaiser it had become a matter of personal honour,” adding, “German national pride had become involved.”³⁵ Also for the maritime hegemon, the larger context applied here, because at that time it was involved in the Boer War in South Africa. This war was consuming the majority of London’s focus and so it just wanted to satiate Germany and be rid of this trivial crisis.

Germany had hoped for more of the Samoan Islands and since it was unable to attain them it further convinced the Kaiser and his advisors of the need to grow their naval power. Speaking to the Kaiser over the frustration to be unable to attain all of Germany’s goals in Samoa one advisor commented “The Samoan incident is renewed proof that overseas policy can only be conducted with an adequate fleet,” the Kaiser replied, “what I have preached everyday for the last ten years to those blockheads in the Reichstag.”³⁶

The Samoa Islands illustrate all the major factors of SISE in relation to Imperial Germany. More than anything else this three way great power crisis over Samoa reminded the Kaiserreich of the importance of sea power, and the need to continue to challenge Britain for Neptune’s trident.

Germany's other Pacific Islands

Besides Samoa, Germany over the course of the late 19th century, was sucked into many other small islands in the south western Pacific. Though many different facets of SISE can be seen in these cases, the overarching most important component that was present in this region in relation to the Kaiserreich was prestige.

Once more Germany was a rising power that was interested in becoming the greatest of the great powers. Thus it pursued its policy of *Weltpolitik*, trying to make Germany the dominant power in the great power system. From 1884-1900, Germany gained many small islands in the south western Pacific, most of these islands were of nominal economic value. By the time Wilhelmine Germany had become a player in the great power race for colonies in the 1880s, the more established maritime powers such as Britain, France, and surprisingly the Dutch, had claimed all the resource rich colonies.

Geopolitically speaking, one could make the argument that Germany experienced SISE in a number of these islands (like in the case of Samoa) due to their perceived geostrategic locations. But further scrutiny does not support this premise. By 1900, Germany's overseas colonies were located in two places. All of Germany's continental colonies were located in Sub-Saharan Africa. And all of the Kaiser's maritime holdings were located in the south-western Pacific. In short, geopolitically, the German Empire was one that was far-flung and awkwardly put together. If war came with Britain (which it did in August 1914) these small island colonies surely would be cut off from Germany proper by the Royal Navy (which happened early in World War I). Hence, Germany was not primarily attracted to these other Pacific Islands for

geostrategic reasons; instead once again the Kaiserreich was sucked into these obscure tiny islands for reasons of prestige and honour.

The drive for German overseas colonies began at home with the establishment of various right-wing groups like the Pan-German League, which openly lobbied the German government to establish colonies in regions like the southern Pacific. Writing on these conservative groups one observer comments “the Conservative party and most of the radical right had been committed for some time to supporting the colonial empire.”³⁷ These groups argued that the great Fatherland deserved to have colonial territories, including small islands, just like the other older more established powers had. Thus, from the 1880s until the early 1900s, Germany was pulled into many small islands in the south western Pacific. On the eve of World War I, Germany’s small island colonial holdings in the Pacific were: German New Guinea (which consisted of the north-eastern part of present day New Guinea), the Bismarck Archipelago, the Northern Solomon Islands, Bougainville, Nauru and various micro-island chains such as the Marshall Islands, Mariana Islands, Caroline Islands, Palau, and Western Samoa.

The majority of these islands were economically worthless, not worth the trouble Germany had gone to attain them, and the costs to administer them were high. But for reasons of prestige and honour, Germany felt it important to have small island colonies like the other powers, and hence, Germany found itself irresistibly drawn into many microscopic islands in the Pacific.

Naval Arms race brings British Maritime Hegemony to the breaking point

By 1905 almost all of the small islands of the world had been claimed by the great powers, either directly as colonies or indirectly, in the sense that all players knew which small islands fell into each powers sphere of influence. This was certainly the case for Britain, which by now was clearly a declining power struggling to meet the demands of administering such a vast empire. It was also the case for the Kaiserreich, which by 1905, had attained numerous small islands in the Pacific, there were not many islands left for the taking.

Over these nine years (1905-1914) Germany would increase the size of its fleet and force Britain into the modern world's first arms race. Britain, already a falling power, was compelled to allocate more and more resources to the building of huge battleships, like the Dreadnought-class, or as Churchill would refer to them as "Castles of Steel."³⁸ This arms race would create major Anglo-German tensions, and eventually help convince Britain, that it needed to join France and Russia, in an alliance, to contain a belligerent Germany with hegemonic intentions.

This contest for naval superiority between Britain and Germany was partly fuelled by SISE, because to have overseas colonies, especially small islands, a great power needed a great fleet. Furthermore, if a power had a grand fleet, it would naturally want to have overseas territories to support that fleet. Naval politics and interests went hand in hand with colonial aspirations; this is how SISE and the Anglo-German naval arms race sustained one another in a sort of symbiotic relationship. In Germany, for example, "colonialism had been related to naval politics for many years before 1898."³⁹

Author Woodruff Smith clearly explains the symbiotic relationship that existed between naval build up and SISE (through the acquisition of overseas colonies) when he comments "the navy had a vested interest in the colonial acquisitions, since colonies could be used to justify a

more powerful fleet in order to protect them. It was possible to *reverse* the argument once the navy had started to expand by claiming that more colonies were needed as naval bases.”⁴⁰

During the years leading up to World War I (and before that), SISE, and the Anglo-German naval arms race were interlinked. Britain, understanding Germany’s desire for small island colonies, practiced a diplomacy of conciliation (in the case of Samoa) and compromise (in the case of the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty), because it did not want a conflict with the Kaiserreich. While Germany, during this time frame, exhibited a policy of bellicosity and brinksmanship, traits which are common in a new rising power, that is seeking status recognition from more established powers.

On the eve of the Great War, Britain’s maritime hegemony was brought, economically to the breaking point. In fact, as late as 1912, this Anglo-German naval rivalry had become so intense and globally pervasive that, in the view of one Austrian official, it was “the dominant element of the international situation.”⁴¹

Germany would continue its naval build up right up until the beginning of the Great War. Germany wanted to become the ascendant power in the international system; and to do that it had to break Britain’s monopoly over control of the seas. Admiral von Tirpitz’s strategy was quite clear:

Tirpitz’s objective was to create a battle fleet of sixty capital ships over a period of twenty years for use as a ‘power political instrument’ against England. Through the possession of this fleet Germany would attain ‘world political freedom,’ enabling Berlin to pursue a ‘great overseas policy,’ using the fleet as a ‘lever’ to extract concessions from Britain or, if need be, as a

weapon of war against the British. Tirpitz may even have been secretly aiming at parity with the Royal Navy.⁴²

And if conflict did come (which it did), whatever power controlled the seas after Armageddon, would undoubtedly feel SISE to a high degree because a former naval rival would have been wiped out.

LIBERAL ITALY

The Least of the Great Powers

The unification of Italy in 1861 brought a major change—second in scope only to the unification of Germany in 1871—to the European dominated great power system. Italian unification most affected established great powers, France and Austria, because they shared a border with the nascent Italian state.

By 1882 it seemed as if the long-standing Italo-Austrian rivalry had been taken care of, or greatly subsided with Rome's entry into the Triple Alliance, much to the delight of German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.

Italy's position as a great power during the late 19th century, all the way up to the outbreak of World War I, is somewhat deceiving. Rome's great power status has long been a moot point for historians because of Italy's economic underdevelopment during this period. Yet

due to its large population (very close to that of France), and the Italian people's own historical self-image, helped to make Italy *be* a great power, at least in terms of actions on the international stage. Writing about Italy's perplexing situation as to whether or not it should or should not be labelled a great power, Richard Bosworth explains:

Two factors alone defended Italy's title as a Great Power: her numbers, a population which had reached 35 million by 1912, and her history, or, at least, the history of that 'geographical expression', Italy. By any other criteria, Italy's role from 1860 to 1914 had more in common with that of a small Balkan State or a colony than a Great Power. Even after a decade of considerable economic expansion from 1896-1907, Italy's economic indices cannot bear comparison with those genuine Great Powers.⁴³

Italy, was most concerned in the pre-World War I era with domestic stability, economic development, and peace along its borders with France and Austria. Rome, by the late 19th century, had no real intentions of going to war with either France or Austria for tiny slivers of territory on the continent, largely because its leaders had absolutely no confidence in Italy's ability to win a great power war. Italy's military incompetence was well known throughout Europe, especially after an Italian Army was decisively defeated in 1896 at Adwa, Ethiopia. Bismarck, when describing Italy's lack of military prowess, used to quip that "Italy had a large appetite but rotten teeth."⁴⁴ In fact, Italy was considered, by the other great powers, to be so weak and inept that most preferred not to have Italy as an ally, worrying Rome would be more of a burden than a helpful stalwart ally. For example, if it ever came to war, as Kennedy points out,

“successive Mediterranean commander in chiefs of the Royal Navy always hoped that the Italian fleet would be neutral, not allied.”⁴⁵ Furthermore a British diplomat once famously said in 1909, “We have no desire to seduce Italy from the Triple Alliance, since she would rather be a thorn in the side than any assistance to France, and ourselves.”⁴⁶

Yet again, because most Italians viewed their country as a great power, albeit the weakest one. Italy continued to act as a great power looking to maritime expansion and territorial acquisition in North Africa. Mearsheimer speaks to this later point of Italy being a pseudo-great power, yet acting like a full-fledged great power, when he observes “there is much agreement among students of Italian foreign policy that although Italy was the weakest of the great powers between 1861 and 1943, it constantly sought opportunities to expand and gain more power.”⁴⁷

In terms of maritime gains, Italy eyed such small islands as Corfu—which is located in the Ionian Sea—and the Dodecanese Islands located in the Aegean Sea off the south-western coast of Turkey. Italy’s elites, driven by Romanic nostalgia, increasingly came to see the Mediterranean as their sea, and so the acquisition of some key small island geo-pivots would facilitate the actualization of their dream for a greater Italia.

However, the acquisition of Corfu was mostly an unrealistic pipe dream, because though held by Greece, whom Italy did not fear; it was given to Athens by London in 1864, and Rome worried that an attempt to attain Corfu might upset the British. Though Italy dreamed of retaking their “Mediterranean Lake” in actuality it was, and had long been, a British lake. Italy could not contest Britain’s superior naval power; thus it would have to look elsewhere for key small island geo-pivots, preferably ones that were controlled by weak non-great powers. By 1911, Rome had found such a group of islands, the Dodecanese, and their patron was the Ottoman Empire, the infamous “Sick Man of Europe.” In classic opportunistic Italian fashion,

the government decided to pick a fight with a non-great power, in hopes of territorial aggrandizement, that included a highly attractive group of small islands.

The Weak Man of Europe takes on the Sick Man of Europe: the Italian Acquisition of the Dodecanese Islands

On September 29th, 1911, Italy declared war on Turkey. Rome's war aims were straightforward: it was interested in taking the Ottoman province of Libya into its own hands, gaining some key small islands in the Aegean, and proving to the rest of the great powers that Italy was a competent and respectable member of the Concert of Europe.

In the end, Italy defeated Turkey and gained control over Libya, but that is not important in relation to this thesis. What is more important is to analyze why Italy experienced SISE in the Dodecanese Islands.

During the fall of 1911, it became clear that Italy would win the military conflict over the "Sick Man of Europe," even though both the Italian army and navy made many blunders during the campaign. In the spring of 1912 with the war still raging, Italian military planners made the tactical decision to invade the Dodecanese Islands because these small islands, particularly the largest island in the chain, Rhodes, was serving as an important island link between Turkey and Libya, in terms of communication and supply lines. By the end of May, Italy controlled most of the Dodecanese Islands.

Italy was attracted to these Aegean islands because they contained three critical components of SISE. These were geopolitical position, great power competition, and prestige.

First, geopolitically, the Dodecanese Islands could serve as key small island geo-pivots for Italy. Rome wanted to have closer geostrategic proximity to the decaying Ottoman Empire, so that when it finally did collapse, Italy would be in an advantageous position to join in the great power dismemberment of Asia Minor. Also, Italy was interested, long-term, in establishing itself as a major player in the southern Balkans. Having possession of these islands would ensure Italy would be offshore, but present, in the grand scheme of things in relation to the future of the Balkans. And if need be Italy could use these islands for offensive purposes and launch an attack on rival Greece, or Turkey, if it were to rise again.

Second, Italy was sucked in to these islands because of great power competition. As stated, Italy was looking for a convenient foothold in the southern Balkans/Eastern Mediterranean region, one of the reasons being that Italy sought to gain an upper-hand over nemesis Greece, and keep a watchful eye over Austria.

Greece was far from a great power in 1912, but Italy being the least of the great powers legitimately worried about the possibility of Greece rising and/or competing with Italy for primacy in Albania and the Aegean. Hence, Italy decided to take these islands before either Greece would or before the Dodecanese Islands—which ethnically were Greek—would declare independence or some sort of paternal union with Athens.

During this pre-1914 period, Italy's greatest rival was Austria, which ironically and awkwardly enough, also had been Rome's formal ally since the creation of the Triple Alliance in 1882. Italy was determined to halt any Austrian advances into the seemingly crumbling Balkans; and it was thought that the Dodecanese Islands were far enough away from Vienna's sphere of influence to forestall an angry Austrian reaction, but conveniently close enough to the Balkans to

keep Franz Joseph at bay and deter him from moving into this tumultuous region. Great power competition in relation to the Dodecanese Islands was intense and multipolar.

R.J.B. Bosworth writes authoritatively about the geopolitical and great power competition reasons why Italy decided to invade the Dodecanese. He states “The Dodecanese were chosen because, of the myriad of Aegean Islands, they were farthest away from the Balkans, and therefore least likely to provoke the Balkan nations to war, or allow Austria to move further south-east.”⁴⁸

Third, Italy was drawn into this Aegean archipelagic chain because the Italian elites sought to garner more prestige and honour for their country. The leadership in Rome concluded that these islands, which were easily attainable and had historic importance for many Italians, could help feed the Italian public’s growing desire for territorial aggrandizement and recognition as a true great power. Once more, this theme of Italy being determined to act as a great power, because she felt the other powers did not view her as such, was a pervasive force in the formulation of Italian foreign policy:

Above all, Italian policy was decided, in the sense of being set in context, by the assumption of the majority of her ruling class after the Risorgimento that *Italy was a Great Power and needed to act, distinct from lesser states, as a Great Power.*⁴⁹

The Dodecanese Islands contained three enticing elements of SISE and together they pulled Italy in, during the Italo-Turkish war of 1911-1912. Italy would control the majority of these islands until the end of World War II.

IMPERIAL JAPAN

Another Island State experiences SISE as it becomes a Great Power

Japan was forcibly thrust into the Western dominated global system in 1853 when an American naval expedition, led by Commodore Matthew Perry, compelled Tokyo to end its centuries old policy of self-isolation from the rest of the world. That incident, which for many Japanese demonstrated to them that their country was weak, was a catalyst for dramatic social and political change in Japan. In 1868, the Tokugawa Shogunate came to an end and Pro-Emperor forces took over power in Tokyo. This latter process is known as the Meiji Restoration.

For Japan's new Meiji leaders what was most important to them, in this new international environment, was that Japan be independent, strong, secure and a highly respected state. Its leadership concluded that the best way to ensure Japan achieved those goals would be for this homogeneous island state to become a great power. In short, this East Asian island nation was driven by a combined sense of honour, the need for sovereignty, and to achieve recognition as great power:

There was, however, Japan's burning determination to join the company of the 'Great Powers' that had encircled it and restricted its sovereignty. The powers' haughty—as the Japanese saw it—condescension and disdain served as spurs to Japanese response quite as effectively as direct confrontation might have.⁵⁰

Over the next generation Japan would undergo a transformation process that took the country from being a medieval hermit kingdom, to a modern great power, by the start of the 20th century. The rapidity by which Japan transformed itself from a non-great power to a great power still today amazes most great power scholars and historians. As Norman Rich points out “In just over a decade, they (Meiji Leaders) transformed Japan from a feudal, predominantly agricultural society into one of the world’s most formidable industrial and military powers.”⁵¹

One of the main keys to Japan’s “overnight success” at becoming a great power was its ability to emulate, adopt, and adjust to the norms and changes in the great power system. Japan subscribed to the mantra of “If you can’t beat them then join them,” and thus during Japan’s rise to great power status, the Meiji leadership borrowed extensively from other great powers, in terms of how to properly organize a modern society and economy. Japan would emulate the leading powers notably Britain, America, and Germany in many ways from its new legal system, and new political structure, to its economy.

This comprehensive emulation included Tokyo becoming an assertive, even in some cases, a predatory power. Hence, when Japan’s leaders deemed that their country had become powerful enough to acquire colonies and to impose their will on other countries they did so.

The first sign of Japan becoming an imperial great power occurred during the 1870s, when its leadership decided to challenge China’s claim as the sole suzerain over Okinawa. Japan, many years later, feeling confident about its own capabilities as a rising power, actually went to war with China over control of Korea, and ultimately to destroy the millennial old Sino-centric order in East Asia.

Japan’s rise to great power status would culminate with a defensive alliance with Britain, and a war with Tsarist Russia. Japan’s conclusive victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-

1905) confirmed Japan's status as a great power in the eyes of the other great powers. From 1905 to 1914 Japan would continue to seek all opportunities to expand its influence and power on the international stage in hopes of becoming one of the premier great powers.

On the journey to becoming a great power, Japan, would experience the pull of SISE on numerous occasions. All of Japan's small island gains would be found in the western Pacific. First, Japan would be sucked in to the Ryukyu Islands, largely for the SISE reasons of geopolitical position and great power competition, and to a lesser extent prestige. Second, Tokyo would be drawn into Taiwan (then called Formosa) because in relation to Japan, this island contained SISE elements of great power competition and prestige. Third, Japan would find itself at war with Russia in 1904, and by the end of that seminal conflict, the Japanese would find themselves in control of the southern half of Sakhalin Island, and having unquestioned authority over the Kuril Islands.

Okinawa

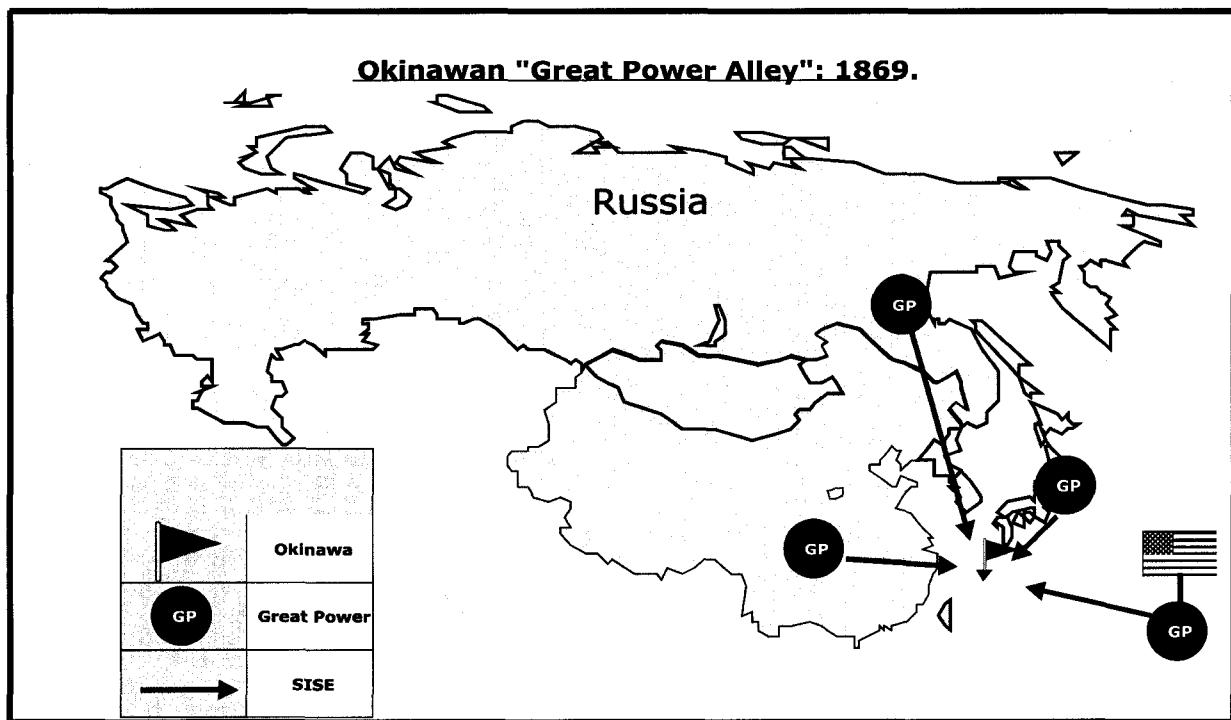
The Ryukyu Islands (presently called Okinawa) by the late 19th century had found themselves in the unenviable position of being essentially torn between two competing powers, Qing China and Imperial Japan. However, it should be noted that before Japan experienced the Meiji Restoration, which in turn ushered in unprecedented levels of industrialization in that country, both Tokyo and Peking had accepted a tacit agreement that they would exercise dual hegemony over Okinawa. Neither power ever officially recognized the other's hegemony over this small island chain, located in the south western Pacific. Instead, from 1609-1879, Okinawa was subjected to a situation of tacit "Dual Subordination" in relation to China and Japan.⁵²

What caused Japan to seek to control and annex Okinawa—which ended the two centuries old policy of tacit Dual Subordination—was that by the late 1870s, Japan had become a much more powerful and confident state in the East Asian context. Meiji leaders thought it was time to overthrow the increasingly anachronistic Sino-centric order that had dominated most of East Asia for hundreds of years.

In relation to SISE, Okinawa clearly contained two components that were of intense interest to a rising Japan. They were geopolitical position and great power competition.

In terms of geopolitical position, Japan sought to gain Okinawa to use it as a small island buffer territory that would in effect be Japan’s southern bulwark against intrusive powers, and protect the southern most home island of Kyushu. By the 1860s following Admiral Perry’s visit to Japan—where due to his “Black Ships” overwhelming modern naval power he forced Japanese leaders to open up their country—Tokyo became acutely aware of their own geopolitical security problems. As George Kerr points out “Perry had promptly concluded a separate compact with the Ryukyuan government. This was a hint that if Japan did not define and assert her claim in the off-lying islands, they would soon be lost and in the hands of aggressive foreign powers.”⁵³ Hence, the Meiji leaders were determined to “plug” any holes or breaches in Japan’s geostrategic line of defence. By the 1870s there arose a consensus among the leadership that Okinawa had become such a breach and thus it needed to be plugged.

Japan was also sucked into Okinawa due to an amplification of great power competition. Broadly speaking, by the late 1860s, Okinawa found itself in a “Great Power Alley,” that is to say it was surrounded by predatory great powers. Be it China or Japan on its doorstep, Russia to the north, or America perpetually floating off the horizon, Okinawa was like a gazelle encircled by hungry lions.



What served as the specific catalyst for this increasing competition between the powers was again, American intervention in East Asia. In 1878 the Japanese had learned that former President Grant would be touring China in the coming months and the Chinese would raise the issue of Okinawan sovereignty to him. Upon learning this, Japan became convinced that China, or even possibly the United States, would try to annex Okinawa for themselves. One Japanese dissident's remarks regarding the possibility that Japan might lose Okinawa to another power really conveys up how real the great power competition was in East Asia at this time:

Loochoo [old spelling of Ryukyu] constitutes a *Japanese han*. Our troops are garrisoned there, the post-office and a branch of the Naimusho [Home Ministry] have been established there; but both the King and the people of Loochoo are endeavouring to free themselves from the authority of Japan.

China is endeavouring to do the same with Loo-choo as Russia has done with Saghalin (Sakhalin). If China succeeds, our territory will gradually decrease, and with it our power.⁵⁴

For the Japanese this possibility was unacceptable. Feeling the great power competition from China and to a lesser degree, America, leaders in Tokyo made the decision to end decisively, the question of Okinawan sovereignty, and which power truly owned this small island chain.

Finally, and to a lesser degree, the Okinawan case also has the SISE element of prestige. Japan was also attracted to Okinawa because by annexing this small island chain it signalled to East Asia and the world that the old Sino-centric system was over. Kenneth Pyle comments concisely on this latter point when he states “In 1879, the incorporation into Meiji Japan of the Ryukyu Islands, which had once had tributary relations with both Japan and China, was another nail in the coffin of the old Sinocentric order.”⁵⁵ This annexation also made clear that Japan was on the rise, and that the great powers along with the East Asian kingdoms could expect to see this now defunct order replaced with a Nippon-Centric one. All these things would accrue Japan a huge amount of prestige and increased rank among the powers.

In 1879, Okinawa pulled Japan in because this small island chain contained three components of SISE that were of interest to Japan: geopolitical position (as a buffer territory), great power competition, and prestige. However, Japan’s acquisition of Okinawa did not put an end to the fact that it was located in a “Great Power Alley.” As will be shown in Chapter Six, Okinawa would suck in the United States near the end of World War II.

Taiwan

The island of Taiwan by the early 1890s had long been of interest to imperialist planners in Tokyo. After the successful acquisition of the Ryukyu Islands in 1879, it seemed like a logical next step to acquire Taiwan.

Over twenty years before Japan and China would go to war with one another over Korea, an incident occurred on Taiwan that caused great diplomatic tension between the two Asian powers. The event known as the Mudan incident occurred in 1871. What took place was that the crew of an Okinawan vessel, which had become shipwrecked on Taiwan, were captured by local Taiwanese aborigines and subsequently beheaded by them. This act greatly outraged the Japanese government and they demanded that the Chinese government punish the aborigines. Beijing refused on the grounds that they did not exercise effective control over Taiwan. By admitting they did not exercise sovereignty over Taiwan, China was unknowingly enticing Japan to acquire it for itself.

Thus, ever since the Mudan incident, and China's admission that it did not effectively control Taiwan, imperial planners had always viewed Taiwan as an attractive option in regards to hegemonic expansion.

Japan's victory in the First Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895), was closely observed by the other great powers. This victory signalled too many that Japan was growing more powerful. The British minister in Tokyo, in awe of Japan's recent achievement, worried that a rising Japan would, over the course of the next century, seek "to become the greatest power in the world, just as she now undoubtedly is the greatest in Asia."⁵⁶

This victory also provided a propitious opportunity for Japan to acquire Taiwan. Tokyo was sucked in to Taiwan because it was attracted to three components of SISE that were found on that island in 1895. Those three components were weakness and small size, geopolitical position, and great power competition.

As stated earlier, all small islands are inherently weak, especially vis-a-vis the great power; and Taiwan in that sense was no different. However, it must be noted, that this island was uniquely weak, thus inviting to a nearby great power, like Imperial Japan. It was uniquely weak because it was not officially governed by any power. China, long thought to be the suzerain power there, had basically ceded its claim, when in 1874, it admitted to the Japanese that it did not exercise sovereign control over the island. Finally, Taiwan was abnormally feeble because it was insufficiently developed, hence easily conquerable for a predatory and industrialized power like Japan.

In this case the SISE components of geopolitical position and great power competition are strongly interlinked. Geopolitically, Japan was pulled into Taiwan because both the navy and the civilian leadership deemed Taiwan as a useful buffer island against European expansion that would also extend the empire's southern boundary further away from the home islands. Tokyo also believed that Taiwan could be used as an offensive geo-pivot for future expansion into south-east Asia.

In terms of great power competition, Japan experienced an irresistible pull to Taiwan, following the end of the First Sino-Japanese war, because its leaders worried that if they did not obtain Taiwan another great power would.

The SISE elements of geopolitical position and great power competition are interlinked in this case because if both had not been present, it is highly likely that Japan might not have sought

to acquire Taiwan. During the negotiations, which followed the end of the First Sino-Japanese war, Japan made it quite clear that it was much more interested in gaining land and obtaining recognized hegemony over parts of the Asian mainland. When Tokyo realized China and the great powers would not accept Japan gaining land on the Asian continent, Taiwan became an attractive second option. And due to this island's favourable geopolitical position, in conjunction with the possibility that another power might grab it if Japan did not, the Meiji leaders felt compelled to acquire this island. Author, W.G. Beasley, accurately notes the interconnection between the elements of geopolitical position and great power competition, when he writes:

The Navy, by contrast, developed an interest in Taiwan. It was true that the islands had not been involved in military operations so far undertaken, but Japan had had cause to intervene in the territory twenty years earlier, which provided a pretext of sorts for taking it. More immediately, there was a risk that in the confusion of war France or Britain might seize Taiwan as a means of ensuring the safety of their China coast trade. Such action would pose a threat to Ryukyu and southern Japan. It would also block any future Japanese move towards south China or the Philippines.⁵⁷

Japan officially acquired Taiwan in the Treaty of Shimonoski, signed between Qing China and Japan in 1895. In this small island case study three elements of SISE can be seen, namely, weakness and small size, geopolitical position, and great power competition. The latter

two formed a compelling synergy that induced Imperial Japan to be sucked into Taiwan. Japan's appetite for small islands had just begun, for now Tokyo would turn north.

Sakhalin, the Kurils, and the War with Tsarist Russia

Ownership of the northern Islands of Sakhalin and the small island chain of the Kurils, was never quite clear between Russia and Japan. Ownership over these islands had swapped hands a few times between the two powers by the dawn of the 20th century. The most recent treaty, which adjudicated ownership of these islands, the Treaty of Saint Petersburg (1875), promulgated that Japan would cede all of Sakhalin to Russia in exchange for the Tsar recognizing Japanese sovereignty over all of the Kurils.

During the 1880s and 1890s, as Japan continued its rise to great power status, more and more Japanese viewed Sakhalin as an island that should be owned and administered by Tokyo. All the while domestic calls for Sakhalin grew in Japan, so did Russia's own internal problems.

The Russian government became increasingly focused on combating and pacifying domestic terrorist threats in European Russia. The Russian economic situation continued to deteriorate into the 1890s, and many predicted Russia was on the brink of complete anarchy.

Japan, like the other great powers, was well aware of the domestic challenges and turmoil the Russians faced. As Japan grew more confident, especially following its decisive defeat of China in the First Sino-Japanese War, by the beginning of the 20th century, it appeared that Japan was on the path towards asserting its preponderance over Korea and northern China.

By 1904, it was clear that due to inherent great power competition between Japan and Russia over Korea and control over the resource rich area of Manchuria, these nations were on the precipice of war.

War did erupt between Japan and Russia, and history chronicles it as the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). Japan won this war in decisive and devastating fashion, and its victory allowed it to press its terms on the beleaguered Russians.

The primary cause of this conflict was due to continental concerns, but SISE would be felt, as Japan was drawn into Sakhalin near the end of this war. Japan was sucked into this large island located in the Northern Pacific because it contained the SISE elements of prestige, geopolitical position, and as a by product, great power competition.

Going back almost 300 years, Japanese leaders had always felt Sakhalin was naturally and justifiably Japanese; certainly not Russian:

Sakhalin had always been regarded by the Japanese as theirs. From early history it had been occupied by the Ainu tribe, but because of its northern aspect and inhospitable weather it was never settled by the people from the south.⁵⁸

Hence, by regaining this island (or at least part of it, as would be the case) Japan could hope to instil a high amount of prestige and satisfaction among its citizens, for most of them hungered to solidify their claim to Sakhalin.

As to geopolitical position, Japan felt compelled to move into Sakhalin because it could be used as a buffer against further Russian influence from the north. Previous to acquiring

southern Sakhalin in the Treaty of Portsmouth (1905), Japanese leaders long worried that, while in Russian hands, Sakhalin posed a security threat to Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, and the small island chain of the Kurils. To buttress Japan's northern defensive front, its leaders deemed it geopolitically advantageous to control Sakhalin, hence they invaded it.

Finally, the war with Tsarist Russia, induced by these two powers' competition over hegemony in North East Asia, provided the impetus and the adversarial environment Japan needed to retake Sakhalin. With Russia soundly beaten by the summer of 1905, Japan was sucked into Sakhalin because Tokyo rightly assessed that a power vacuum had developed there and it was ripe for the taking. Japan knew by regaining a foothold back on Sakhalin it would further hinder Russian efforts to establish its naval power in the Far East. Great power competition was apparent in Japan's decision to move back into Sakhalin.

The Treaty of Portsmouth officially ended the Russo-Japanese war; Japan clearly was the victor. However, Japan was not able to gain the entire island of Sakhalin instead it was forced to accept only the southern two-fifths of the island. This decision angered most Japanese, and this sore point would linger for quite some time. Many saw America's refusal to support Japan's claim to all of Sakhalin as an affront to their country's national prestige and dignity.

In the end, Japan was sucked into Sakhalin due to the SISE components of prestige, geopolitical position, and to a lesser extent, great power competition being present on that island. Control over Sakhalin would continue to serve as a sore point in Russo-Japanese relations even after the Tsarist regime in Russia collapsed, only to be replaced by a more nefarious entity, in the Soviet Union. This ongoing tension between the two great powers over this island will be discussed in the next chapter.

THE STATUS QUO POWERS DURING THE LATE VICTORIAN PERIOD

The established status quo powers of the Late Victorian period, the Third French Republic, Tsarist Russia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, all by and large lacked any measurable degree of SISE. The chief reason for this absence was that the three powers were all continental in their outlook and capabilities. Britain throughout this epoch would remain the preeminent naval power with its American cousin and Germany as rivals increasingly on its tail.

France

France came into the late Victorian era as a wounded great power. Following its humiliating and debilitating loss, at the hands of Prussia in the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1871), Paris was forced to cede the eastern areas of Alsace-Lorraine to Prussia. French *revanchism* would be a primary focus of Paris' foreign policy for the rest of this period, culminating in open warfare with Germany in 1914.

France, being the quintessential hybrid power, once more had to decide how to allocate its resources best in relation to naval power and land power. Due to this constant debate over the allocation of its resources, ensured that France would be a strong, but second-rate naval power, though a formidable land power, yet still no match alone against the well trained and larger army of the Kaiserreich. Hence, because Paris found itself perpetually in a Janus type situation in relation to the allocation of its military resources, it never had a great enough amount of naval power to really focus on acquiring more islands for its empire. Its paramount worry was Germany; and it was Germany who had what France wanted most dearly during this era: the

return of Alsace-Lorraine. Thus, since France's primary foreign policy goal during this time was purely continental, it should be no surprise that it did not experience SISE on a large scale.

Of note, however, is that France in 1895 was pulled into Madagascar (the French had already established a foothold on the island in 1883), largely due to reasons of great power competition. As the scramble for Africa was taking place, France and Britain agreed to delineate their spheres of influence more clearly off the shores of eastern Africa. Britain recognized French hegemony in Madagascar while France reciprocated by recognizing British hegemony over Zanzibar.

Russia

Like France during this time frame, Russia's concerns were primarily continental, and domestic for that matter, as threats of instability and revolution began to loom large all across the Tsar's vast lands. The unification of Germany was an absolute game changer; that event compelled Russia to make the defence of its western borders, and the containment of a rising Germany, its main foreign policy aim during this period.

With great instability domestically, and by the 1890s, a Germany that was growing more powerful and brazen by the day, St. Petersburg gave little attention to conquering islands. Russia's very geopolitical position and scope, being located right in the heart of the World-Island with great powers located both on its western and eastern peripheries, meant that all foreign policy objectives and strategies were devised with the understanding that Russia's continental security was paramount, and maritime adventures always took second priority.

Russia's only notable SISE experience during this time was its continued attraction to Sakhalin, which was an incremental process that had been going on for over one hundred fifty years that in turn facilitated war with Imperial Japan in 1904.⁵⁹

Russia like the other status quo great powers was first and foremost a land power with continental concerns. Hence, it only felt the pull and was enticed by SISE to a nominal degree.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire

Austro-Hungary's indifference to SISE is probably the easiest to understand because it is so obvious. To begin, this empire was completely continental in outlook and goals. It did have maritime ports that would have allowed it to pursue small islands in the Mediterranean if it so desired. But Vienna knew the Mediterranean was a British lake and sought to avoid provoking its neighbour and rival, Italy.

From the 1870s, until the outbreak of World War I, Austria-Hungary was fixated on expanding its influence and imperial holdings in the Balkans not at sea. Moreover, Franz Joseph, since the 1880s had always viewed Russia as being the greatest threat to his domain's security; with all resources and effort devoted to land power. Austria's naval power never amounted to anything of significance.

By the early 1900s it became increasingly apparent that Berlin had a tremendous amount of influence over Vienna's foreign policy decisions. Indeed, some have even argued that by the end of the first decade of the 20th century, Austria-Hungary had become a sort of quasi-vassal of Germany's.⁶⁰

All these elements: Austria-Hungary's focus on the Balkans, its continental security concerns in relation to Russia, the futility of trying to become a naval power, and its increasingly questionable status as a great power, combined to ensure that SISE would not be a luring force for the Hapsburg Empire.

THE GREAT WAR AND THE BREAKDOWN OF THE OLD GREAT POWER

The end of the First World War brought an end to the vibrantly multipolar great power system that had existed since the creation of the Congress of Vienna system in 1815, following Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo.

Imperial Germany was no more; its overseas colonies taken away, and its great power status gone. Germany had completely exhausted its industrial and manpower might, thus for the foreseeable future it would not be a great power player, especially, on the world stage. However, Germany expended its resources in battles that took place outside its own borders. It was obvious to all at the time that the nascent Weimar Republic still possessed tremendous latent power, and should be watched closely by the victorious great powers.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire was arbitrarily dissolved through the Treaty of St. Germain (1919), meaning that with the stroke of a pen, a long time great power disappeared from the great system forever.

Tsarist Russia, having been defeated by Germany in World War I, was by 1919, in the midst of a brutal and fierce civil war between the Whites (monarchists) and the Reds

(communists). For the majority of the interwar period, Russia would be inward looking, licking its wounds from World War I, and trying to rebuild its strength to become a true great power again.

Italy was on the winning side of this great conflict and expected great territorial prizes following the end of the war. However, it did not receive many territories, and because of this perceived injustice, strong nationalist sentiments would foment throughout the country. Eventually these dynamics would lead to the rise of Fascism and Benito Mussolini. For Italy three things remained true going into the interwar period: 1) it was still a great power 2) it was still the least of the great powers 3) it would continue to act as if it was an elite great power when in fact it was not.

Japan, though a member of the Allied bloc, and having been permitted by the allies to retain possession of the former German-held Pacific islands north of the equator, increasingly felt ostracized, abused, and disrespected by Britain and America. Similar to the United States, Japan emerged from World War I as an even stronger great power, which was now poised to assert its hegemony over China and the entire south western Pacific. Tokyo began to eye many islands to add to its growing empire.

The allies—Britain, France, and America—all still remained fully fledged powers, but even among this triad of power a distinction is to be made. Britain and France were devastated by the Great War (France especially) and though “winners,” this victory was a pyrrhic one for both of them. Whereas America, untouched physically by the blemishes of war, and only being involved for roughly eighteen months, came out of the conflict as unquestionably the strongest great power. However, the United States refused to become an active participant in the emerging

great power system in the interwar period; this would have damaging effects for this new system's stability.⁶¹

What all this meant for SISE was that there was a great amount of uncertainty surrounding the new emerging great power system. Many former great powers, including formidable ones such as Germany and Russia, were currently down and out and undergoing tremendous domestic social upheaval. Other established powers, like Britain and France, were drained and much too scarred by the Great War to be interested in acquiring more islands for empire. And America, the greatest power, was committed to disassociating itself from any new great power system. Hence, the new great power system that was taking shape by the early 1920s was an anarchic, ambiguous, and a dangerous one.

Due to this uncertainty in the great power system, by the early 1920s, SISE would cool once more, as the powers would take time to assess this emerging system and see where opportunities for small island territorial acquisition lay.

CONCLUSION

SISE during the Greater Congress of Vienna era (1815-1918) functioned in two distinct polarities during the first half this period; during the latter half of this era this geopolitical force became amplified and ubiquitous due to the rise of new great powers and the relative decline of Britain.

From 1815-1871, SISE was relatively dormant and inactive simply because Britain had no maritime rivals to compete with, and exercised naval hegemony over the entire world. On the European continent the other four great powers were more inward looking and did not have the capacities to challenge Britain for islands overseas.

This dormancy came to an end with the creation of a unified Germany in 1871, and the rise of the United States, along with the precipitous great power ascendancy of Japan. These new hungry powers allowed for the great power system, which up until that point had been multipolar only on the European continent while unipolar in the maritime sense, to become genuinely multipolar in the global context.

This vibrant global multipolarity caused SISE to be felt and experienced by many of the great powers, until this order came to an end after World War I.

This force was most active in the western Pacific, by and large, due to the natural power vacuum that existed in that region. Once Japan came on the great power scene, and Germany and the United States expanded their maritime influence and interests, the region with its plethora of small islands became the primary breeding ground for SISE.

The familiar regions of the Mediterranean and the Caribbean also, with their clusters of small islands, were able to suck in different great powers at different times.

Over this century all components of SISE have been discussed. However it is important to note that from these case studies the component of prized resources was the least important factor in the geopolitics of this period. While the most pervasive component was the intangible one, prestige and honour as has been demonstrated throughout this chapter.

The reason for the SISE element of prestige being so dominant during this great power system is because, after 1871, a great shock to this order was felt by way of new ambitious and aspiring powers joining the fray. New powers entering a system they did not create are typically unsatisfied with distribution of power and prestige in the established system and inclined to revisionist policies. All of this is done in the name of acquiring more prestige and honour for these “great states.”

Be it Germany, ready and willing to go to war over Samoa, Japan being sucked into Okinawa, or the United States being drawn in to Cuba, these were all instances where the main component of SISE pulling these powers to these islands was prestige.

SISE was experienced by many of the powers, and this again speaks to the robust multipolarity of this great power system. Again, it was the rising powers that seemed to experience it the most. The established powers, save Britain, did not feel this suction effect to any major and sustained degree.

At the end of this great power age some traditional great powers either were severely weakened or no longer existed. The hegemonic torch would be passed from Britain to the United States. The problem with this, however, was that America became an ascendant great power in denial and refused to become involved in the new emerging post World War I great power system.

The United States' absence from this fragile and evolving system would cause this interwar order to become very anarchic and eventually unmanageable. It was under these chaotic conditions that SISE would operate from 1919-1939.

SISE: 1919-1939

5 POWER BALANCES DURING THE INTERWAR YEARS: SISE COOLS ONCE MORE

The First World War—known to those who lived through it as the ‘Great War’—brought about the destruction of many things including the great power system. From the ashes of this old and destroyed system rose another one in its place that was characterized by revisionism and, eventually, by the late 1930s, instability.

There was noticeable change in this emerging system: one great power—a mainstay of the former great power systems—had disappeared, and another had changed its clothes from a white garb to a red one. Yet there were some things that stayed the same; the great power system was still multipolar. There were seven great powers in the system between the two world wars: Germany, Britain, France, the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan, and Italy.

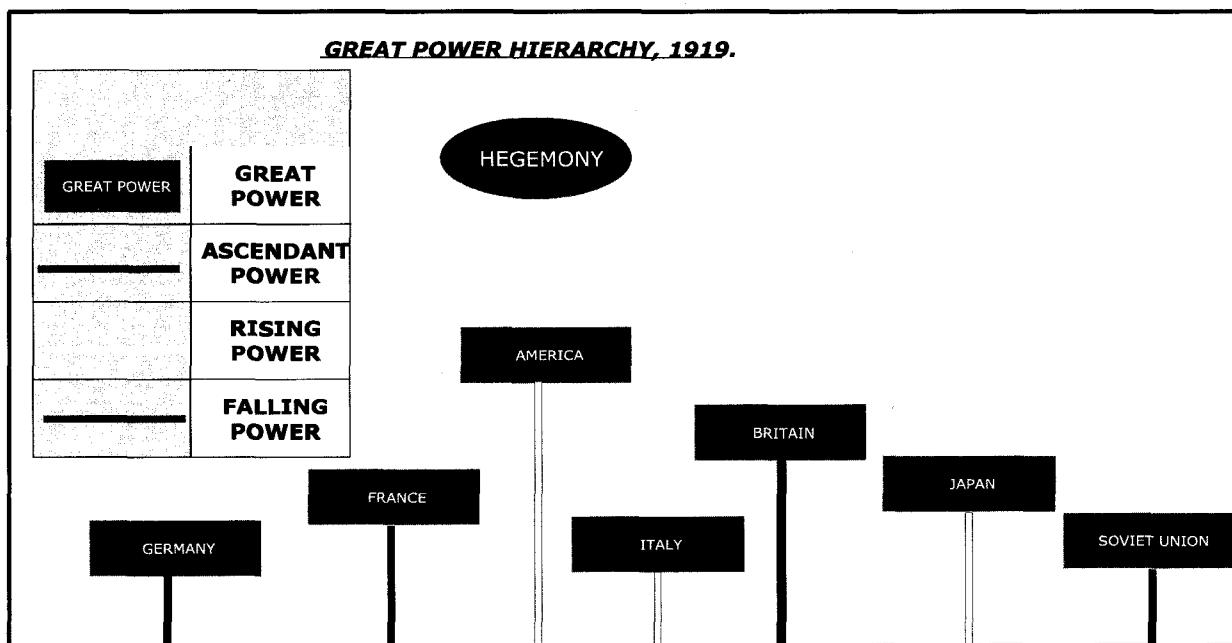
The United States was by far the greatest of the powers, possessing both the largest industrial base and second largest population, behind only the Soviet Union. But Washington refused to participate actively in the new emerging system, and so it must be considered an offstage power, because it was uninvolved and away from the great power hub of Europe. America not being involved in the system would facilitate the increasing instability of the interwar order.

The Soviet Union as well must be considered an offstage power, because it too until the later stages of this era was largely uninvolved and inward looking.

These two powers, America and the Soviet Union, each possessed the greatest latent power among the great powers. Yet again because they were offstage during most of this period,

and did not join the League of Nations from the beginning, it meant that the other powers were left to their own devices.¹

It would be up to France and Britain to hold the new system together through the international body the League of Nations as Martin Kitchen explains, “The League had to function without either the United States or the Soviet Union and could therefore only guarantee the *status quo* as long as Britain and France were strong enough to resist those who were bent on revision.”²



All the other powers Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan were relatively speaking “equal powers,” equal, in that during most of this time frame none of them were individually powerful enough to dominate another power. This relative equality among active and involved powers meant that for most of the interwar years (especially the first half), the powers were not so much competing with one another as they were rebuilding their strength, assessing the emerging order, and plotting grand strategies that would hopefully allow for the attainment of their national interests.

This non-competitive, rebuilding, interregnum order induced SISE to cool once more as it had during the Pax Britannia period (1815-1870). However, SISE did not subside due to one power exercising maritime hegemony; instead it was largely dormant because, once more, two out of the seven powers were basically uninvolved and insular, while the other five were in no position to challenge one another until the end of this great power period in 1939.

SISE performs best and is most active in a multipolar great power system that is competitive with most of the powers being capable enough of contesting other ones for control of small islands. The interwar system was a dormant system that can really be seen as one long rebuilding and re-strategizing phase for the powers. Under these sorts of conditions SISE understandably was less relevant.

This chapter examines SISE during the interbellum period of 1919-1939. Due to this geopolitical force being mainly dormant, no small island case studies will be explored, save one, when Italy is surveyed. Instead, analysis will be given to each great power's interests, manoeuvres, and challenges as it relates to SISE. In the context of this thesis the interwar period is best viewed as a bridge to World War II, when SISE would absolutely explode, because by then the powers were ready and willing to contest one another for small islands.

In the succeeding sections SISE will be analyzed in three main parts: the status quo powers (Britain and France), the revisionist powers (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan), and the offstage powers (America and the Soviet Union).

	1920	1930	1940
Britain	16%	11%	11%
Germany	14%	14%	17%
France	5%	4%	4%
Russia	1%	6%	13%
Italy	1%	2%	2%
United States	62%	54%	49%
Japan	2%	4%	6%

3

THE STATUS QUO POWERS

In the interwar period France and Britain were the only great powers that were also liberal democratic states. Thus it fell to them to ensure peace in Europe and in their colonial holdings overseas. But while they were trying to secure peace, other problems and matters jockeyed for their attention as Maarten Pereboom notes “serving as guardians of the peace was but one challenge Britain and France faced in the tumultuous postwar world,” adding, “while

European security problems remained unresolved, Britain and France also faced stiff economic competition from the United States, and the colonies showed signs of restlessness under foreign rule. France's continuing preoccupation with Germany alienated British leaders who hoped to put the struggles of the previous decade behind them.⁴ All of these difficult challenges meant that both powers (especially France) would be more European in their focus, rather than global, because they worried about the security of Europe. In relation to SISE this entailed a cooling down or dormant period, whereby its effects would by and large not be seen. The following subsections on France and Britain explain the challenges each power faced during this time frame and why each one did not experience SISE.

Britain

By the 1920s it was clear Britain's descent from the summit of the great power mountain was underway. As P.A. Reynolds points out "the United Kingdom emerged from the 1914-1918 war a gravely weakened power."⁵ London had exhausted its industrial might, treasury, and manpower. British leadership was in a conciliatory mood throughout the interwar years because they knew Britain was in no shape to fight another great power war in Europe. As well there were pressing maritime concerns and domestic issues the rise of the Labour Party, the General Strike of 1926, and the Great Depression.

Ever since Admiral Horatio Nelson's watershed victory over the combined Franco-Spanish Fleet at Trafalgar, the Royal Navy had enjoyed maritime pre-eminence. Britain's long-

standing naval hegemony had over the years ensured “the safety of the British Isles, from invasion, and of protecting the colonies, outposts and bases, and the commercial and strategic routes to them, which Britain’s prosperity and power so largely depended.”⁶ By 1920 it was clear the United States was in the process of building a fleet even larger than its British counterpart. The days of British naval hegemony were over for good.

Even more alarming was the increased ascendancy of Imperial Japan in the Far East. London worried that its Far East holdings, like Hong Kong and Malaya, might one day be very vulnerable to a rising Japanese thirst for island colonies in South East Asia.

By the late 1930s Britain also had to worry about its Mediterranean position and island holdings, because Italy’s fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, had begun to speak of this region as being within Italy’s sphere of influence, and that the Mediterranean Sea was in fact an Italian Lake. Also, during the end of the 1930s, Britain was gravely worried about the intentions of Nazi Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. In short, with all the great power challenges London faced by the late 1930s, in terms of the revisionist powers contesting Britain’s hegemony in certain regional theatres, it is easy to see why SISE was dormant for Britain.

Britain found itself in the doubly unfortunate position of being simultaneously in relative decline while also experiencing “imperial Overstretch,” especially in naval terms. London’s naval power over the interwar years was stretched too thin; Britain’s maritime commitments still spanned the globe from the Far East, to the Mediterranean, to the Caribbean, and of course to the home waters around the island state itself.

This island great power was, during this period, wholly on defence and never on the offense. And one critical component of SISE is that to allow for the effect to take place, with great strength, you need great powers competing with one another for a litany of reasons. Britain

was in no position to compete with other great powers, and so promoted the notion of maintaining the status quo and tried to appease the revisionist powers, especially Nazi Germany, at every turn.

Britain was an insecure yet satiated power in terms of its colonial holdings. Insecure in that it saw other powers eclipsing it in terms of rank and power in the interwar great power system. Satiated or satisfied because it had more than enough colonial holdings, including plenty of small islands, which it could develop and make use of.

For all these reasons SISE did not affect Britain in any major way during the interwar era. However, Britain's relative great power decline, especially in the aforementioned theatres, and the fact it found itself in a dangerous, imperially overstretched position, all should be seen as factors that helped precipitate SISE following the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. For weakness invites power and competition.

France

The French, during the interwar period, were almost obsessively focused on European matters as it pertained to dealing with a defeated Germany. This fixation with its vanquished foe is understandable given that France lost more men than any other Allied country save Russia.⁷

The majority of the actual fighting during World War I, in the western theatre, had taken place in France itself; hence, a lot of infrastructure in the north eastern part of the country lay in ruin shortly after the war. France was an exhausted great power following the Armageddon like conflict. One French diplomat accurately summed up France's postwar status when he quipped "France must grow accustomed to being a lesser power than France vanquished."⁸ Finally, the Great War was the second major conflict France had fought with Germany in less than fifty

years. From this perspective then it is easier to understand Paris' visceral preoccupation concerning the future of Germany. The British could criticize the French all they wanted and claim they were being too harsh and obsessed with Germany, but Britain did not share a border with the Teutonic Titan.

During the interwar years French leadership put their famous 'mission to civilize'⁹ their colonial peoples on the backburner due to the pressing security concerns presented by a Germany that was down but not out:

Most leaders in Paris did not preoccupy themselves with imperial matters.

After all, the ongoing German problem affected the future of the *metropole* itself. Another war on the scale of the last one, which had claimed one tenth of the active male population, was unthinkable, but the old adversary was still there, 70 million strong and much better equipped industrially to wage modern war.¹⁰

All of Paris' increased attention to European matters caused there to be a significant decrease in its overseas affairs, thus SISE dissipated over the interwar period. This dissipation of SISE became even more acute once Hitler came to power and the more amenable and democratic, Weimar Republic, was replaced with the intransigent Third Reich.

By the time of the crisis at Munich, in 1938, the French had become even more European in their outlook and overall foreign policy approach. By late 1938, Nazi Germany had by non-violent means absorbed the Rhineland, Austria, and parts of Czechoslovakia. Hitler's Germany had become a potential European hegemonic power, and this threat ensured that Paris' "Maginot

Line mentality" of defending French home territory at all cost was most important. It also meant that France would not be sucked in to any small islands anytime soon, because again, the pressing concern was a resurgent and belligerent Germany.

Out of the two *status quo* powers during the interbellum period, France was the more inward looking, in terms of focusing primarily on protecting itself from a revanchist Germany, and setting up a defence system that would ensure general European security i.e. the Locarno Treaties. With all this focus on home security and domestic rebuilding following the war, it is not hard to see why SISE affected France little during this era. Across the Rhine a vengeful Germany over time would grow in strength and ambition.

THE REVISIONIST POWERS

The interwar period, in great power terms, is best viewed as a transitional respite period in which a new great power system was developing, only to come to its violent fruition in 1939. With this in mind it is appropriate to view the revisionist powers (Japan, Italy, and Germany) as the rebels of this system and the powers responsible for precipitating the end of the interwar era.

All these powers had one powerful sentiment in common during this time, namely, unhappiness with the distribution of power, land, and prestige in the interwar system. These three maverick powers, believing by the late 1930s, that destiny was on their side, would all begin to prepare for war with the *status quo* powers, and seek to become the leading powers of the great power system.

The revisionist powers would also stimulate SISE by continuing to push the interwar system to the brink of total anarchy. With great power chaos inherently comes great power competition, and Germany, Italy, and Japan were all eager to compete with the *status quo* powers. In particular, both Tokyo and Rome, would by the 1930s, clearly embrace SISE, as they determined, that in order to become stronger powers they needed certain advantageous small islands. Specifically, Mussolini understood the importance of acquiring small islands in order to establish hegemony over the Mediterranean theatre. Indeed, even Nazi Germany was experiencing the magnetic effects of SISE to a marginal degree when it mused about staking claim to former overseas colonies that had been lost.

The following sub-sections analyze each of the revisionist powers during the interwar period, in terms of their great power ambitions and manoeuvres, as it relates to SISE. Through this analysis it is clear that it was the revisionist powers that induced this geopolitical effect to once more become highly active at the end of the interwar period.

Imperial Japan

Japan was a highly dissatisfied power following the end of World War I. Its leaders felt Japan had not been treated as an equal at the peace conference at Versailles in 1919. In particular, the rejection of Japan's proposed "Racial Equality Clause," deeply offended the Japanese delegation, and was seen as a major affront to their national dignity and prestige.

To add further insult to injury, a few years later, at the Washington Naval Conference (1921-1922), Japan was pressured by the stronger more dominant Anglo-American powers to

accept limits on its navy, in terms of the number of capital ships allowed as well as the tonnage. Tokyo saw this conference, and the subsequent Washington Naval agreement, as an act that was egregiously anti-Japanese in nature, and aimed squarely at containing Japan, thus ensuring continued Anglo-American domination of the great power system. Because of these perceived grievances and frustrations Japan had with the Anglo-American powers, its leadership decided by the late 1920s, that if Japan was to ever become a truly independent and respected great power, it had to break out of the Anglo-American dominated interwar great power system. Hence, Japan decided to overturn this great power order and pursue revisionist policies.

Greater East Asia—which includes South East Asia, is a region that is rich in small islands so it was quite natural that a great power such as Japan, which ironically enough is an archipelago itself, would be sucked into a number of these surrounding islands. The SISE Japan was beginning to experience by the late 1930s was so strong because the south western Pacific area contained, in relation to Imperial Japan, all five components of interest: great power competition, geopolitical position, weakness and small size, prized resources, and prestige and honour.

Weakness and small size are inherent in all small islands relative to great powers and need not be expounded upon here. Also, the component of prestige should be viewed as a subsidiary element in Japan's case, because while it was seeking to attain more prestige through acquiring islands, this must be seen as a by-product of the intense great power competition it was in with the Anglo-American powers by the late 1930s.

The other three facets were the ones that really exacerbated SISE, for Japan, in the Pacific, leading up to World War II. Japan cravingly eyed the Dutch East Indies Archipelago for

its rich oil and rubber resources, which it needed if it hoped to compete with America for hegemony in the Pacific.

Japan logically saw the Philippine archipelago as a thorn in its side, specifically, this small island chain, which was an American colony, posed a national security threat to Japan as a small island geo-pivot. From Luzon Island it was conceivable that the United States could launch an amphibious invasion of Taiwan, perhaps even Okinawa. Moreover, by the late 1930s America, much to the chagrin of Tokyo, had placed long range bombers at airfields in the Philippines. These bombers were able to reach the paper houses of Japan. Thus, Tokyo would eventually be pulled into this archipelago for national security reasons.

Finally, Japan, was more and more being attracted to a strike on Hawaii. If war was to come with the United States, which was a high possibility, Hawaii's advantageous geopolitical position, that of being the key small island geo-pivot for the United States Navy, would cause Japan to experience a growing SISE in relation to Hawaii by 1939. For if conflict was to come between these two rival powers, the Hawaiian small island chain, and its grand naval base at Pearl Harbour, would be the key geopolitical staging ground and command point for the United States. As Marius Jansen notes once "the United States Pacific Fleet had been moved, despite some misgivings, from the West Coast to Pearl Harbour at Hawaii," it presented "the Imperial [Japanese] Navy with a *threat and a target.*"¹¹ Japan knew this geopolitical pivot had to be taken out or seriously damaged in a war with America, if it had any hope of winning.

Japan, as a revisionist power by 1939, that was involved in a war with China, and increasingly was at odds with America, came to experience intense SISE's all over the Pacific, in large part because it was committed to overturning the interwar great power order. The elements

of prized resources, great power competition, and geopolitical position would be the key components compelling Japan to be sucked into a plethora of small islands during World War II.

Fascist Italy

Italy like Japan was highly dissatisfied coming out of World War I because “more than the people of any other power, perhaps, the Italians entered the First World War for the purpose of securing certain definite additions of territory, and during the conflict their territorial ambitions further increased. They emerged from the war with the high hope and confident expectation of territorial acquisitions which should meet their nationalistic and imperialistic aspirations.”¹² However, Italian expectations were not realized.

In particular, Rome was left with a bad taste in its mouth following Britain’s refusal to honour the London Pact, whereby Italy had been promised a number of territories, if it joined the war on the side of the allies. In fact, to add insult to injury, Italy was forced to stand by as France and Britain carved up the German and Ottoman Empires for themselves. They pressured Rome to hand over the Dodecanese Islands to Greece. Due to these many perceived injustices, many Italian leaders, and the majority of its public, were radicalized, and became more recalcitrant, and belligerent, in their views on their country’s role in the world. Indeed, some historians go as far to state that these disappointments and humiliations in foreign affairs are “probably the chief reason for Italy’s embarking upon a new course in 1922.”¹³

This type of aggrieved and chaotic atmosphere proved to be fertile ground for Benito Mussolini and his Fascist ideology, which came to power in Italy in 1922. Mussolini’s foreign

policy during the interwar years was permeated by that classic theme that had been a cornerstone of Italian external policy since the unification of the country in 1861, namely, the quest to be a greater more respected power in the great power system. For “Il Duce,” Italy’s main aims were all external in nature: gain more European territory, gain more colonial territory, undermine British naval hegemony in the Mediterranean, and eventually, if possible, challenge it; and overall make Italy a respected and formidable great power. Mussolini’s foreign policy objectives, were focused on the Mediterranean generally, and the Adriatic and Balkans, more specifically.

Understanding how geostrategically important the Dodecanese Islands were for his country, Il Duce pressed his claim to the small island chain, and eventually the other powers acceded formally through the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Mussolini understood the importance of small islands militarily, because immediately after Italy attained legal recognition of her possession of the Dodecanese, “a fortified naval base was at once constructed, and the foundation was laid for Italy’s hoped-for predominance in the eastern Mediterranean.”¹⁴

Moving into the more perilous 1930s, Fascist Italy became committed to revisionism and grand irredentism, bombastically making claims to territories based on Roman heritage. Rome was committed to overturning the *status quo* great power order; and this brought it closer to Nazi Germany, a romance which would prove to have dire consequences for both powers in relation to SISE.

By the mid 1930s, Fascist Italy, feeling confident, decided to become more pro-active in its foreign policy approach. In 1935, it invaded Ethiopia, in hopes to avenge its humiliating loss at Adowa, thirty-nine years earlier, and to establish the long time independent East African nation as a colony. Italy achieved all this by 1936, but even before that war of conquest had

ended, Mussolini was starting to feel the tug of SISE. This suction effect was coming from the Western Mediterranean, where the Spanish Civil War was being fought, and Il Duce saw an opportunity to acquire the Balearic Islands.

Mussolini eyes the Balearic Islands

With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, Mussolini, being already ideologically attracted to General Francisco Franco's nationalist rebellion, became involved in the civil war because Little Caesar believed if Franco was victorious he would be open to leasing or selling the Balearic Islands to Italy. SISE was inducing Fascist Italy to get involved in a conflict which was increasingly international in its rival camps of support.

The SISE components of interest that were present for Italy on the Balearic Islands were geopolitical position and great power competition.

Geopolitically, Rome envisaged using the Balearic Islands as naval bases to hinder French communications between Paris and French North Africa, and also to hamper British lines of communication between Gibraltar and Malta. These small islands could be used by Italy as highly potent geo-pivots in the Mediterranean theatre.

In terms of great power competition, gaining the Balearic Islands would have been a decisive prize for Rome, because they would have killed two birds, or in this case two great powers, with one stone. First, having the Balearic Islands would further Mussolini's long term strategy of challenging British naval hegemony in the Mediterranean. Second, acquiring these islands would demonstrate to Paris that a Madrid-Rome axis was taking hold. Italian planners

thought this would force an isolated and surrounded France to divert some of its military resources from the French-Italian border to the Pyrenees region along the French-Spanish border.

Author James Burgwyn highlights the geopolitical and great power competition when he notes “Mussolini perceived solid geopolitical advantages in Italian intervention. A friendly Franco regime in Madrid would enable Rome to draw Spain into an expanded Italian Mediterranean orbit,” adding, “also possible was Italy’s leasing or purchasing of naval bases in the Balearics. Situated near Gibraltar, the Italian fleet would be in a position to challenge Britain’s already long and vulnerable lines of communication through the Suez Canal and disrupt naval traffic between Algeria and the French mainland.” Overall, Burgwynn concludes that Italy intervened by proxy in the Spanish Civil War because “the strategic purpose of keeping Spain separated from France was uppermost.”¹⁵

By acquiring the Balearic Islands, Mussolini could have accomplished these geopolitical-great power goals, of surrounding France, and challenging Britain in the Mediterranean. John Mearsheimer leaves no doubt that the Balearic Islands were Il Duce’s main goal when deciding to support the Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War:

Italy sent troops to fight in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) on the side of General Francisco Franco’s reactionary junta. Italy’s main aim was to acquire the Balearic Islands in the western Mediterranean, which would allow Italy to threaten France’s lines of communication with North Africa, and the United Kingdom’s lines of communication between Gibraltar and Malta.¹⁶

Fascist Italy did not acquire the Balearic Islands from Spain following Franco's victory over the Republican forces in 1939. It was a disappointment for Mussolini, who had such grand ambitions for his country in the Mediterranean. SISE had pulled Italy into the Balearic Islands but Mussolini's objectives were not realized. However, as the drums of war grew louder in Europe, by the summer of 1939 Mussolini was already earnestly crafting plans for possible invasions of Corsica and Malta. The flamboyant dictator knew, if he were to ever be the Neptune of the Mediterranean, as he so dearly wished, Italy had to conquer and absorb critical small island geo-pivots, such as Malta and Corsica. SISE would weigh heavily, as the Italian armed forces prepared for total war against the western democracies.

Nazi Germany

Under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, Germany had gone from being a defeated and severely weakened power, to a resurrected one by 1938. After five years under Nazi rule, Germany was once more a formidable great power that by 1939 had become a potential hegemon of Europe. Yet even though the Third Reich had clearly become the greatest active power in the interwar great power system by 1939, Hitler's focus always remained continental, and maritime concerns always were of secondary consideration.

There are clear reasons for Nazi Germany's lack of SISE, most notably because it was a continental power geographically, and was motivated along revanchist lines to regain some of its former lost territories, and reassert itself as master of Europe. For the most part, Hitler had always been more interested in gaining *Lebensraum* or living space for Germany, in Eastern

Europe, rather than in far-off peripheral regions well outside the continent. Hence, the Nazis unshakable focus on continental gain greatly reduced any affect SISE might have had on the Third Reich in the lead up to World War II.

Worth mentioning, however, is the Third Reich did in fact stake claim to the old colonies that it had lost after its defeat in the First World War. A revived and strengthened Germany was of the view that it should be given back its former colonial possessions, in Africa, and the Nazis attempted to justify their claims along economic lines. Joachim von Ribbentrop, who would be Germany's Foreign Minister during the Second World War, asserted that "it is no longer possible for some countries to flow with milk and honey while others have to struggle for a bare existence."¹⁷ Berlin did not however lay claim to its former Pacific holdings instead choosing to allow them to remain in Japanese hands.

The reason Hitler did not seek to regain Germany's former Pacific small island territories, was because *Realpolitik* considerations were more pertinent for Nazi leadership, than the pull of SISE. Frankly, it was more important, strategically, for Germany to have Japan as an ally than as a foe; the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis, by 1939, was nearly complete, Hitler did not intend to see this alliance break apart because of a few irrelevant small islands.

Thus, Nazi Germany did not experience SISE to any major degree directly. But due to the fact that, by 1939, it was the strongest power in Europe, it helped increase SISE regionally, and globally, because the rise of the Third Reich caused the great power system to become acutely unstable. It is under these types of volatile conditions, that SISE flourishes, as will be evident in the next chapter.

THE OFFSTAGE POWERS

For the United States and the Soviet Union the interwar period was an epoch where each power early on was determined to stay out of the emerging great power system. This is especially true of America, whose Congress voted not to join the League of Nations in 1919.

Washington still firmly believed in not getting unduly entangled in overseas affairs, especially in Europe. Economically, America still relied primarily on its own domestic market for economic growth, and viewed possible participation in a new international body as an unneeded drain on American coffers. As well, America, more than any other great power since the time of its birth in 1776, always had a strong independent streak instilled within its national psyche. Many Americans were simply not interested in joining an international body that would inevitably dilute their nation's sovereignty and restrain its power.

The Soviet Union during the first half of this era was more concerned with internal matters, as up until 1922, Russian society had been engulfed in a brutal civil war, between Monarchists and Communists. Following the Bolsheviks victory in the civil war, Lenin and his party faithful, were much more concerned with internal stability and development, than foreign affairs.

Both the United States, and the Soviet Union, started to become more engaged in the great power system moving into the 1930s, as the revisionist powers began to jockey more aggressively for position, and advantage in the international arena. However, by 1939, America was still not a member of the League of Nations, while the Soviets, who finally joined in 1934,

were soon expelled from the League in 1939, for aggression against Finland. Both powers, near the end of this era, continued to have a stand-offish approach to Europe and the interwar great power system in general.

The offstage powers would indirectly stimulate SISE during the interwar period and would assist in this geopolitical effect becoming more significant following the outbreak of World War II. Washington and Moscow indirectly stimulated SISE, by not being directly involved in the great power system during this time frame. Consequently, they facilitated in the rising instability and eventual anarchy that came to plague this system by the late 1930s. Under these chaotic conditions, which were rife with great power competition, SISE reappeared and became important once more during the Second World War.

The following sub-sections analyse both of the offstage powers during the interwar period, in terms of their great power ambitions and manoeuvres, as it relates to SISE. This survey will highlight small island areas that by the late 1930s were concerns to each insular great power.

The United States

America entered the interwar period as a great power in denial. It refused to accept that as the greatest power it had an inherent responsibility to be productively involved in the emerging great power system. Instead it chose to focus on internal affairs, while continuing to exercise its hemispheric hegemony, and further flex its muscle in the Far East. And it was in the Far East, that America, would eventually find itself at odds with Imperial Japan, over a wide range of issues, some that included small islands.

America had become a truly expansive Pacific power following its victory over Spain in the Spanish-American War of 1898. It obtained many small islands and a large island archipelago. The most notable island acquisitions, in the Far East, were Guam and the Philippines. Along with Hawaii, these islands made the United States a formidable naval power in East Asia specifically, and in the Pacific generally. By the 1930s, America had consolidated its authority over these small islands, and each possessed the capacity to host large scale American naval forces. Particularly, the American naval base of Pearl Harbour had become the home base for the entire American Pacific fleet.

In Washington, national interest planners were pleased because thanks to these important small island geo-pivots, America's naval power could be effectively projected to all regions of the Pacific. The 'birds of prey,' Admiral Mahan, so presciently spoke of a generation before, now had many nests to use as resting spots. And foreign policy planners in America agreed with Mahan that the Japanese were their greatest rival for Pacific primacy:

In 1910, Admiral Alfred T. Mahan, whose 1890 book *The Influence of Sea Power on History* had attracted as much attention in Japan as in the United States, identified Japan as 'the problem state of Asia.' U.S. naval planners were concerned over the weakness and vulnerability of the U.S. position in Asia. In the face of Japan's growing power, the United States needed a fleet strong enough to prevail over the Japanese Navy in the western Pacific. Defeating the Japanese battle fleet would depend upon greatly strengthening bases and defences in Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines.¹⁸

The acquirement and consolidation of these islands into naval bases caused much panic in Tokyo during the interwar years. Japan, which had been seen as the preeminent great power in East Asia, felt threatened by an America's military presence that was so close to its shores. Bombers placed on islands such as Guam and Luzon would put Tokyo and other Japanese cities within striking distance of a potential American air raid.

SISE was evident again in the Pacific by the 1930s because America's military presence on islands so close to Japan, caused the Asiatic great power to become nervous and feel threatened. Similarly because America had holdings near Japan, it also feared a possible Japanese attack. Great power competition was on between the Land of the Rising Sun and the American Eagle. To make matters worse, by 1939, Japan was engaged in a war of conquest against China, which America, for great power reasons, vehemently opposed. Tensions between the two Pacific powers would reach a breaking point two years later.

Geopolitical position and great power competition were the main components that would bring America to war with Japan in 1941. American owned small islands such as Guam, Luzon, and even somewhat far-off Hawaii, all added to instability in the region, as Japan increasingly felt more and more insecure, as American military power encroached upon its sphere of influence.

Throughout the interwar period America was the reluctant power, not willing to engage actively in the great power system. This proved to be one of the primary destabilizing forces for this short-lived system. It also proved to be one of the main reasons SISE became paramount in the western Pacific, because this instability encouraged Japan to challenge the great power system, and it also compelled America to increase its military presence in the region.

By 1939, a war with Japan to most Americans seemed remote, while to most Japanese it was a distinct, and in some more hawkish circles, much desired possibility. Hawaii would prove to be the small island catalyst that by sucking in Imperial Japan would induce America to go to war.

The Soviet Union

For the initial three years of the interwar system, Russia was engulfed in a civil war that devastated the country. By 1922, Communist forces under Lenin emerged victorious, and for the next ten years the Bolshevik government would be primarily concerned with internal matters ranging from economic development, power consolidation, to internal security. By 1928, Joseph Stalin, rose to become the supreme leader of the Soviet Union. Yet, even with the leadership of the state settled after four years of Communist party infighting and jockeying following Lenin's death in 1924, Moscow was still primarily focused on internal matters, building up a war torn and dilapidated country into a robust, united, and industrialized great power. These latter goals were put into action through Stalin's first five-year plan which was introduced in 1928.

Having the Soviet Union as an offstage power during the first half of the interwar years, allowed for opportunistic and ambitious revisionist elements within Germany and Italy to feel more confident about the possibility that they could successfully overturn the fragile great power order and replace it with a system that was dominated by them.

For SISE, this situation meant that for the first-half of this great power system, Moscow was so inward looking, so insular, that this geopolitical effect had no fuel, let alone a matchstick to light its fire.

By the early 1930s, SISE's dormancy was to end for the Soviet Union, because by then Moscow found itself capable of looking beyond its borders in terms of strategic interests, and in the Far East Japan was becoming an issue of great concern. Great power competition between Moscow and Tokyo was rife over the island of Sakhalin.

This island had been contested between Japan and Russia for centuries, and by the mid 1930s, with Japan now a more aggressive power, bent on becoming the hegemon of East Asia, Soviet leaders became anxious concerning the security of their far flung peripheral holding (some ten thousand kilometres away from Moscow).

With the Soviet Union still in the process of rebuilding itself into a fully fledged great power, and facing security threats from Imperial Japan, and on their western front from a rising Nazi state, Stalin decided it best to once more become a more active great power.

In 1934, for the sake of national security, the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations. One author perceives this policy, for Soviet Russia to become active once more in the great power system, as a rational one "considering the threat perceived by the Soviet Union from Germany and Japan it appeared logical for the Soviet Union to embrace the League of Nations."¹⁹ Stalin joined the League of Nations because he hoped it would ensure his nation's security in the face of many threats. Benns and Seldon explain, "After 1933, because of alarm over the aggressive policies of Nazi Germany in the west and imperialistic Japan in the east, the Soviet government ceased to be content with nonaggression pacts and sought instead to obtain definite promises of aid in certain contingencies." They conclude by stating "the Soviet Union joined the League, and thus on paper obtained the benefit of collective security."²⁰

Though the Soviet Union, after 1934, should be considered an active great power, and no longer an offstage power, it must be noted as well that this state was a *status quo* power from

1934-1939. Moscow was primarily concerned with preserving the territory (thus “socialism in one country”) it already had, and certainly was not interested in directly engaging the revisionist powers. While Stalin was committed to holding the northern half of Sakhalin, he hoped that open conflict with Japan could be avoided at all costs.

SISE than was an unimportant, non-influential force, for the Soviet Union, during the interwar period, save the ambiguous and unstable situation over the island of Sakhalin in the Far East. However, this great power conflict over control of the elongated island was not potent enough to bring Tokyo and Moscow to war with one another up to that point. Ironically, only six years later Soviet troops and tanks would be rolling though Toyohara, the capital of Karafuto (name for the former Japanese prefecture constituting Southern Sakhalin), and annex the whole island for good.

CONCLUSION

The interwar great power system was a very fragile one and is best viewed as a transitional stage that helped to precipitate World War II in 1939.

This short-lived system was highly unstable, adversarial, and eventually unmanageable. The chaotic atmosphere that permeated this system proved to be a fertile breeding ground for revisionist great powers which were bent on overturning the *status quo* great power order.

Like the interwar order, SISE too was evolving, becoming more significant as the revisionist great powers became more audacious and belligerent. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the revisionist powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan), were most concerned with consolidating power at home, and strengthening their respective military-industrial complexes. Hence, each power had little appetite for small islands in the short term. None of them was yet powerful enough to openly contest for islands, and face possible conflicts with other established great powers, like Britain, France, or Soviet Russia. By the late 1930s, both the Italians and Japanese were contemplating acquiring key small islands, at the expense of other powers and lesser states.

With the United States and the Soviet Union being largely uninvolved in this great power order, this system would be even more untenable and disorderly. Anarchy, no matter to what degree, produces irrational great power competition; as each power becomes viscerally concerned with its own security and rank in relation to other powers. These conditions contributed to the development of SISE, during the entire course of this interwar system.

This great power order would reach a crescendo by the fall of 1939, as Nazi Germany, feeling confident in its abilities, and underestimating the resolve of France and Britain, precipitated a great power war by invading Poland. With open conflict set to be undertaken between the *status quo* powers, and the revisionist powers, SISE would was of central importance in the international system. The contest for salient Small Island geo-pivots would become an existential interest to many of the powers, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

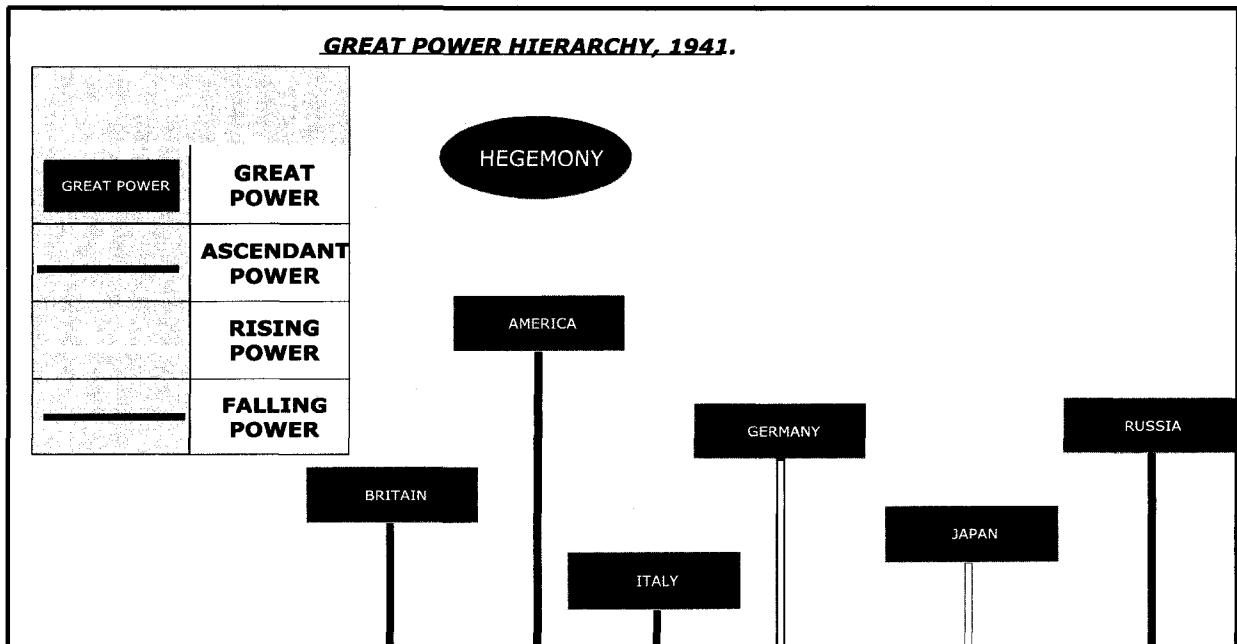
SISE: 1939-1945

6 SISE DURING THE GREATEST GREAT POWER WAR

The Second World War (1939-1945) was to be the last (and greatest) great power war to be waged in modern times. It was precipitated by the aggressive actions of Nazi Germany, which by 1939 had become a potential hegemon of Europe. Eventually, the most formidable power, the United States, would be dragged into this great power conflict after being attacked by Imperial Japan, at Pearl Harbour, in December 1941. Japan had become a potential hegemon of East Asia.

The period that is probed in this chapter cannot be viewed as a great power system *per se*, but instead is better understood as the most devastating global great power war to have ever taken place. This Ragnarockian conflict spelled the end to the previous multipolar composition of the great power system that had for centuries been the default polarity. In its place a bipolar great power order would emerge.

This conflict would pit the four Allied powers (Britain, France, and later the United States and the Soviet Union) against the three Axis powers (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan). By 1941, with six of the seven great powers (France having been defeated in June 1940, though, of course, for de Gaulle particularly, France continued to fight with the Resistance at home and the Free French forces elsewhere) engaged in a bitter struggle for the supremacy of the great power system, this intense competition with Krakatoan like force induced SISE to become evident. The great powers would battle each other for control over salient small island geo-pivots, prized resources, and for reasons of overall competition that were inherent and rabid in this total war period.



At the end of this epic conflict, the United States, and the Soviet Union, would emerge as the leading powers, with all others either decimated or no longer functional great powers.

The main components that served to suck in great powers during this great conflict were great power competition, prized resources, and geopolitical position. By far the most powerful and ubiquitous component was great power competition, because this competition was existential, as all the powers were competing, not just for rank, within the great power hierarchy, but for their very survival.

This chapter examines SISE during World War II, and how in the context of a total war setting, it affected the great powers, in terms of attracting them to certain small islands. SISE will be reviewed in three key theatres, namely: the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the south-western Pacific. Specific case studies will be analyzed in each theatre from Iceland and Britain itself, in the North Atlantic, to Malta and Crete in the Mediterranean, and finally to the 'Island hopping' campaign in the Pacific.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC THEATRE

The ‘Battle of the Atlantic,’ a phrase first coined by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in 1941, lasted the entire duration of World War II (1939-1945). At the outbreak of the conflict, Britain still possessed a formidable fleet, with only the United States having a similar impressive naval capacity. Germany’s Kriegsmarine was much smaller and overall no match for the Royal Navy. Thus, due to its clear naval inferiority, but realizing the strategic necessity to stymie British shipping lanes, Hitler reverted to the World War I German strategy of threatening British naval hegemony with submarines.

For the first eight months of the war it appeared that Britain faced no real threats of direct invasion due to its naval superiority. However, this all changed immediately following the successful spring blitzkrieg by Germany in 1940, which brought about the fall of the Low Countries, Denmark, Norway, and London’s great power ally France.

The fall of France effectively meant that Britain, pushed off the continent, would have to rely on its navy, air force, and “Islandness” for the defence of its homeland, the British Isles. More worrying still for Churchill, was that with Denmark’s capitulation and subsequent absorption into the Third Reich, its former colonial small island holdings of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and even Greenland were now all vulnerable to potential German invasions. Geostrategically, the former two islands, if controlled by Hitler, could serve as launching pads for a possible German invasion of Britain; and all three islands could be used as naval bases for the further disruption of British shipping in the North Atlantic with submarine warfare by the German Wolf Packs.

By the summer of 1940, the uncertainty over these islands meant greater attention and significance for SISE. The United States would also be sucked in to the fray as Roosevelt, too, like Churchill, feared that these off-lying islands could fall into the hands *The Führer*.

SISE was luring Hitler, by the summer of 1940, but it was not to these North Atlantic islands, but instead to the island of Britain itself. The Battle of Britain would be a battle of epic proportions, and the ramifications of its outcome, would prove to have an enormous impact on the war.

1940, was the crucial year in the war, in relation to this theory, because it was the only time that Germany would have an opportunity to invade either Britain, or the Danish administered islands. From 1941 onwards (especially after the entry of the United States into the war), the allies would command hegemonic control of the North Atlantic, thus ensuring that Germany could no longer threaten any islands in the Atlantic for the remainder of World War II.

The following sub-sections analyze the SISE case studies of the Danish colonial holdings in the North Atlantic (the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Iceland) following the fall of Denmark, and the Battle of Britain.

Nazi Germany sucked in to Great Power Island: The Battle of Britain

The fall of France ensured Germany would bestride the western portion of the European continent unopposed. The remaining British forces had been repelled off the mainland, at Dunkirk, during the last week of May, 1940. Hitler was now at war with only one remaining great power: Great Britain.

During the month of June, this stand-off, between warring powers, was a peculiar one, generally speaking, but actually, historically normal, in the European sense. Once more a great power had become a potential hegemon on the European continent, and ran amuck, destroying all opposition, and setting up a would be imperial domain. And once again the maritime great power, Britain, remained defiantly offshore, determined to continue its battle against Nazi tyranny.

Any student of history would immediately take notice of the parallels between the British conundrum Hitler faced, and the strikingly similar one Napoleon faced, during his long war with the *Perfidious Albion*. The main strategic question that faced Bonaparte over one hundred thirty years before, confronted Hitler in 1940: what to do with Britain? Even with the advent of air power near the end of World War I, in order for a power to successfully defeat an offshore opponent, eventually an army would still have to be landed on the enemy's territory. Air power alone could not force Britain to its knees.

By July 1940, Hitler had made the decision that an invasion of Britain was necessary, in order to knock her out of the war. Nazi Germany was being sucked into a great power island.

The Third Reich ultimately was sucked into Britain for the primary reason of great power competition. Hitler and his generals became convinced that to defeat Britain it had to be invaded by the German Werhmacht, otherwise the British would fight on as they did during the Napoleonic Wars.

The problem that confronted Hitler was the same problem that had confronted all continental powers that had tried to defeat Britain for the past three centuries, and that was the problem of the "Stopping power of Water."¹ Land power is pre-eminent on land, but once that

power must cross water, its efficacy is stymied, and amphibious assaults are incredibly complicated, and gravely vulnerable to both air and naval power.

Britain's historical great power experience and success rests on the geopolitical fact that it was an island great power with a peerless navy:

The Royal Navy of England hath ever been its greatest defence and ornament; it is its ancient and natural strength—the floating bulwark of our islands.²

Aware of the difficulty of invading Britain due to the “Stopping power of Water,” Hitler ordered Operation *Sealion* (the German invasion of Britain) to be scheduled for September. Operation *Sealion*’s ultimate goal would “be to eliminate the English homeland as a base for the prosecution of the war against Germany and if necessary, to occupy it completely.”³ During the months of July and August, Germany’s aim would be to eliminate the RAF, and establish the Luftwaffe’s air superiority over the English Channel, which would pave the way for a manageable invasion of Britain. For ten weeks the air war raged, as British and German pilots fought for control of the skies. What they did not know was that this summer aerial engagement would serve to be a pivotal turning point in World War II, and one that was not in Germany’s favour.

By September, Berlin decided to postpone the invasion of Britain indefinitely due to mounting losses of planes and even harder to replace trained pilots. From October to December, Hitler still left the possibility of invading Britain on the table. But with control of the skies

unattainable and naval hegemony in the English Channel clearly unachievable, Hitler made one of the most fateful military mistakes of his career: he ignored SISE.

By December 1940, Nazi Germany was still at war with Britain, yet due to its decisive defeat in the Battle of Britain, in the short-term it had no hope of invading, and thus defeating the island great power. However, Britain was a formidable foe for Germany and great power competition was still extremely high between the two powers. The SISE components of competition and geopolitical position were still attempting to pull Hitler in the direction of focusing on Britain at all costs. Hitler, to his detriment, ignored the logical attraction of SISE, and chose to underestimate Britain. The *Führer* decided in December to leave Britain as it was, undefeated, and admittedly, in no position to threaten Germany on land (at the moment). Instead he turned his attention and the Third Reich's resources to the invasion of the Soviet Union, which he scheduled for spring 1941. Paul Kennedy explains what a self-defeating policy it was for Germany to attack Russia while leaving Britain undefeated when he comments, "Inevitably, then, Hitler's fateful decision to invade Russia in June 1941 changed the entire dimensions of the conflict. Strategically, it meant that Germany now had to fight on several fronts and thus revert to its dilemma of 1914-1917."⁴

Ignoring SISE would have disastrous consequences for Germany, in terms of its ability to win its European war. By leaving Britain to its own devices, Hitler foolishly ignored history. One can picture Napoleon rolling in his grave screaming at Hitler to defeat Britain first before invading Russia.

Britain, not threatened by invasion, could over the years, reconstitute its strength, enlist more allies (like the United States), and force Hitler to leave some German divisions in the West, which were desperately needed in the eastern theatre. Britain, would become the quintessential

island geo-pivot from 1941-1944, as London and Washington built up Allied forces with the stated goal of launching an invasion of German controlled France; and this proposed invasion, which came in June 1944, would be launched from Britain.

Hitler should have never ignored the pull of SISE, and had he truly understood geostrategy, and history, he would have never left Britain undefeated and committed the bulk of his resources to a war with the Soviet Union.

A German Blitzkrieg in the North Atlantic?

Denmark peacefully surrendered to invading German forces on April 9, 1940. Ryan Boulter, an Island Studies Graduate, accurately describes the immediate impact this collapse of the Mother Country had on its island territories. At the time Iceland had Home Rule within the Danish Realm. He comments “the link was broken between Denmark and Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Iceland.”⁵ Thus, following Copenhagen’s capitulation, both Berlin’s and London’s strategic interests turned to the Danish small island territories of the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland. What was causing both powers to be attracted to these North Atlantic islands were the dual components of great power competition and geopolitical position.

For Germany, if it were able to acquire any of these islands (though controlling Greenland seemed like a pipedream given America’s Monroe Doctrine), it would serve to greatly improve its geostrategic position in the North Atlantic theatre vis-a-vis Britain’s. The highly

successful Nazi U-boat campaign could, especially from Iceland, acutely hamper allied shipping lanes, and thus forcibly stretch British supply lines.

The British were drawn into these small islands for the exact same SISE reasons as their German rivals: Great power competition and geopolitical position. However, for Britain, control over these islands was absolutely critical, in relation to their ability to continue to conduct their war effort. Iceland, in particular, if controlled by Hitler, would have presented Churchill and his war cabinet with the threat of an invasion of the British Isles from the northern flank. As Boulter explains, “From the outset of the Second World War, there were concerns on the part of Allied countries about the strategic importance of Iceland. Geographically, Iceland is strategically positioned as a great base for controlling the sea lanes between Iceland and the Faroe Islands and Greenland, as well as an excellent transatlantic stop over for refuelling and restocking of ships and planes. Iceland was therefore vitally important to the Allied countries and it could not fall into the hands of the Germans.”⁶ For London then, Iceland posed an existential threat, if it were to fall under Nazi occupation. Hence they wasted no time in gaining control of the island. On May 10, 1940, Britain ‘invaded Iceland,’ to preclude any Axis attempt to control this geopolitically important island.

A few weeks earlier the British for the same security reasons ‘invaded’ the Faroe Islands, which were even closer to the British mainland than Iceland and remained there in a protectorate role until the end of the war.

By the spring of 1941, Denmark’s largest colony in terms of land mass, Greenland, became a *de facto* protectorate of the United States. Britain did not end up directly controlling this island because since it was so close to America’s shores and within its sphere of influence, President Roosevelt thought it better to place Greenland under the United States’ security

umbrella, to ensure the Western Hemisphere would be safe from Nazi penetration and meddling. Also, it would allow the British to use their scarce resources in other more pressing regions of the war, such as North Africa. Washington had not yet, as of the spring of 1941, entered the war but it was undoubtedly London's biggest supporter and cheerleader.

Once more, Britain was able to 'invade' these islands at will because it controlled the seas. Realistically, and in hindsight, though Germany knew how geopolitically salient these North Atlantic islands were, they were highly unattainable for Berlin, because due to Britain's control of the sea lanes, there simply would have been no way Germany could have launched successful invasions of any of these islands. And in the event that Germany did actually invade Iceland, it would have been impossible to hold or keep supplied.

Indeed, Hitler did experience SISE toward the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland, but frankly did not have the capacity to acquire these islands. For every proposed theory, including this one, for a hypothesis to work it must meet some basic principles of realism; and in SISE's case, in this specific case study, Germany did not have sufficient naval power to project its forces to these highly sought after North Atlantic islands.

Many World War II historians often overlook how crucial the control of these Danish islands were to the overall success of the war effort. Iceland, especially, was a critical small island geo-pivot for the Allied war effort:

Many military historians are on record saying that the outcome of the Battle of the Atlantic was crucial for allied victory in the war. Had Hitler's generals and admirals gained control of Iceland—as they did in the case of Denmark and Norway—how would that have affected the conduct and the outcome of

the War? If German U-boats had enjoyed safe harbour in Icelandic fjords, how would the great convoys have fared that supplied the Russians on the Eastern Front? Hitler certainly had plans to occupy Iceland, for he knew, that he who controlled Iceland, controls sea-lanes of communication across the Atlantic. It was therefore crucial for the Allied War effort to secure bases in Iceland.⁷

THE MEDITERRANEAN THEATRE

The Battle for the Mediterranean commenced immediately following Italy's entry into the war on June 11th, 1940. While logically the opposing Italian and British naval forces appeared about even, in terms of quality, the Royal Navy in every facet of naval power was head and shoulders above their Italian rivals.

Ignoring such obvious facts, Mussolini audaciously ordered "the offensive at all points in the Mediterranean and outside."⁸ Il Duce had long and loudly claimed that the Mediterranean was an 'Italian Lake' not a British one; now with Italy's entry into the war, it was finally time to prove it.

The Battle for the Mediterranean lasted, in the competitive sense, from June 1940 until German Field Marshal Rommel's, the celebrated Desert Fox, surrender at Tunisia, in May 1943. This theatre would comprise Benito Mussolini's imperial ambitions, as it would encompass

North Africa in the south, to the Balkans in the North, with the Mediterranean Sea serving as this arena's lynchpin.

Critical to gaining the advantage in this theatre would be certain key small island geo-pivots, such as Malta, and presumably Crete. SISE would be a force to be reckoned with, as the Axis leadership dyad, of Hitler-Mussolini, would attempt to gain control of certain small islands in the Mediterranean. The Allies, however, knowing the importance of controlling many of these geo-pivots, would fight these Axis advances tooth and nail.

It was under this atmosphere of exacerbated competition, that eventually, by 1941, morphed into a struggle for great power survival, for Britain, as Rommel's German-Italian *Afrika Korps*, continued to push into Egypt, threatening the British Empire's jugular, the Suez Canal.

This section reviews SISE during the high point of the Battle for the Mediterranean, that was waged between the Allied powers and the Axis powers, from 1941-1943. For it was in these two years that Italy, with the paternal support of Germany, was able to compete openly with Britain, and later the combined might of the Anglo-American powers. By the summer of 1943, with Axis forces defeated in North Africa, and Mussolini overthrown in Italy, the battle for the Mediterranean, for all intents and purposes, was over.

The following sub-sections analyze the SISE case studies Malta and Crete. Both these islands were, prior to 1939, held by non-Axis states. However, from 1940-1943, these small Mediterranean islands, containing key elements of SISE, would draw in the Axis and Allied powers.

Malta: The Island that Mussolini just could not have

Malta had been a British possession since the early stages of the Napoleonic Wars. It was the critical naval base for the British, in the Mediterranean all throughout the 19th century. It became unquestionably the most important small island geo-pivot for the British Empire after the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869. Malta served as the lynchpin connecting British naval power from Gibraltar in the west all the way to the Suez Canal, the lifeline of the Empire, in the east.

By 1939, Malta was still the key British small island geo-pivot in the Mediterranean; its role had not changed. What did change, however, was that by 1939, Britain and Malta were faced with a belligerent and irredentist Italian leader, who seemed bent on establishing the entire Mediterranean as an Italian sphere of influence.

Mussolini knew, if he was to realize his grandiose schemes, he would have to conquer the island of Malta. Geopolitically, this tiny island in the central Mediterranean served to poke the Fascist leader in the eye, not once, but twice. First, Malta served as the foundation for British naval hegemony of the Mediterranean. Second, Malta was a dagger pointed at the heart of Italy's colonial ambitions, as it was located between Italy proper and Libya, its chief colony.

Italy then, was being sucked into Malta, because this island, in terms of geopolitical position, was too important to ignore. Also, to defeat Britain, in the Mediterranean, Rome would have to control Malta or at least nullify it. A top down combination of geopolitical position, and great power competition, caused Italy to attempt and plan to conquer Malta. Immediately following Italy's entrance into the war, in June 1940, on the side of Germany, Malta was attacked by Italian aerial bombardment. For three straight years, Malta would be besieged, by Axis forces.

Mussolini was much more determined to capture Malta than Hitler was however. As Donald Macintyre explains, the Italian leadership recognized “the necessity of capturing Malta,” noting that many top German generals and admirals “also advocated the capture of the island,” but, “Hitler and the German Supreme Command, however, remained dubious about the necessity for the operation which would require the employment of land and air forces that in their view, were better employed on the Eastern front.”⁹

The British, knowing how crucial Malta was to their overall military effort in the Mediterranean dismissed notions of appeasement; some members of Churchill’s own war cabinet were of the view, early on, that if Malta were given to Italy, perhaps it would placate her. In the end, the Prime Minister, and his cabinet, realized that Malta could not be surrendered at any cost. Britain decided to hold on to the island and make it the great irritant in the ‘soft-underbelly’ of the Axis.

Geopolitically, Malta acted for the British as the decisive choke point vis-a-vis Rommel’s *Afrika Korps*. From Malta, British submarines and planes could, and did, bomb German and Italian supply ships that were bound for the Desert Fox’s beleaguered and under resourced army.

One point most Second World War historians agree on, is that one primary reason Rommel was defeated, and Egypt and the Suez were saved, was because Allied submarine and bomber strikes had been so effective against Axis shipping in the Mediterranean. Rommel might have been a military genius, a modern day Julius Caesar, but even great warriors need equipment, swords, and shields, or in this case, fuel, tanks, artillery to achieve victory on the battlefield. Malta acted as an island aircraft carrier and choked the *Africa Korps* of its critical supply lines.

It was Malta, as a key small island base, in conjunction with its citizen's peerless bravery and steely resolve that defeated the Axis army in North Africa; the British land forces would merely strike the final blow against a weakened unsupplied enemy.

Two months after Rommel and his men surrendered in Tunisia, in May 1943, the last Axis bombing raid took place. From the summer of 1943 on, Malta would continue to serve as an important naval base in the Mediterranean and have the luxury of not having to worry about attacks from the Axis powers.

Italy and as an ally, Germany were sucked into Malta in the summer of 1940, because for Rome especially, the SISE components of geopolitical position and great power competition were present on the island. Britain, likewise, was pulled into Malta, because geopolitically, it was the lynchpin of its Mediterranean imperial system, hence too important to lose.

Malta was the great thorn in the side of Mussolini, the island that cost him his North African dreams, and military campaign; it was the island 'Little Caesar' just could not have. The bravery displayed by the Maltese was recognized by their patron as the entire island was awarded the George Cross. A letter sent to the people of Malta, from the King George VI, in 1942 read:

To honour her brave people, I award the George Cross to the *Island Fortress* of Malta to bear witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history.¹⁰

“Flying Germans over Crete,” Hitler’s costly understanding of SISE

The winter of 1940-41 was one of genuine enchantment for Hitler and his Nazi comrades. Germany had achieved dominion over west-central Europe; Britain was not beaten, but was more of a nuisance than a threat to the Third Reich; and most important, Berlin still was in the enviable position to be the actor in this conflict rather than the reactor. During this time, Hitler had instructed his General staff to begin crafting a plan for an invasion of the Soviet Union which would be the primary focus of the German general staff.

Fascist Italy, the junior partner in the European Axis, had been involved in a war of aggression, with an historic rival Greece, since October 1940. Things became so bad, for the Italian forces, that by November, Hitler decided to intervene to assist Mussolini in his bumbled conquest of Greece. By late April, Axis forces had conquered the Greek mainland, repelled the British Commonwealth Forces that had attempted to help the Greek army defend their country. Allied forces were compelled to evacuate the mainland and retreat to the large Greek southern island of Crete. It was on this island that Nazi Germany would experience SISE. Germany was sucked into Crete, because it contained, in relation to Berlin’s war aims, two crucial elements of the geopolitical theory; namely, prized resources, and geopolitical position.

Crete contained the element of prized resources, through association, in the sense of being a crucial small island geo-pivot, in the eastern Mediterranean. The prized resources were the Ploesti oil fields in Romania, which at that time, was an Axis ally. The Third Reich, was worried, if it allowed Crete to remain an allied island, that eventually British bombers would be placed there, which in turn, could be used for long range bombing raids against these oil fields, which were the lifeblood of the German war machine. Hitler was initially reluctant about becoming further involved in the Mediterranean region, but became convinced that drastic

measures needed to be undertaken after his advisors “told him that the Ploesti oilfields might still be threatened by bombers stationed in Crete.”¹¹ Thus, in terms of prized resources, Hitler moved into this island, to protect valuable resources, rather than seize ones he did not already control.

Geopolitically, this Greek island, if left in Allied hands, would serve as an effective launch pad, and ‘living aircraft carrier,’ from which Allied naval and air forces could strike at the southern Balkan flank of the Axis realm. Thus, defensively there was incentive to conquer the island.

Offensively, there was incentive as well. The Germans were of the view that if they could acquire Crete, it would enable them to do three important things. First, they could disrupt Allied shipping in the eastern Mediterranean with submarine and aerial bombardment warfare. Second, from Crete, they could send out supply ships to Rommel’s forces in North Africa; third, the island could be utilized as a launchpad for a future invasion of the Middle East i.e. Syria and Iraq. Hence, for the combined reasons of geopolitical position, and prized resources, Nazi Germany was sucked in to Crete.

The invasion is of note because it was the first time that an attack was conducted using airborne divisions as its primary invasive component. Over 14,000 German paratroopers descended upon Crete on May 20, 1941. Hitler had agreed to the audacious plan for an air borne led assault on the island because he believed an amphibious assault would be nearly impossible, as Crete was some two hundred miles from the Greek mainland and the Royal Navy patrolled the waters in and around the island. The Germans suffered heavy casualties, particularly their air borne divisions. In the end, they took the island on the first day of June, 1941. This victory had many immediate positive effects for Germany. As one author explains, “with the capture of Crete, Hitler had secured his southern flank,” adding that “he need no longer fear any immediate

threat to the oil well at Ploesti. Moreover, he had provided cover for his campaign in North Africa.”¹²

This death defying offensive, from the sky, also struck fear into Germany’s main enemy, Britain. One London based newspaper reported, near the end of the Battle for Crete, that “if Hitler takes Crete one thing is certain the next island to be assaulted is our own.”¹³ This unique, and daring attack, would mark the first, and only time, Hitler would attempt to take a prized small island, by way of air borne assault. Generally, when a land power is sucked into a small island, it almost always chooses an amphibious assault, as its attack of choice, but in Crete, Hitler chose differently. *The Fuehrer* decided on “Flying Germans,” instead of “swimming ones,” for he knew any assault via the water would be checked by the British Royal Navy.

THE PACIFIC THEATRE

The Battle for the Pacific took place right after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Japan’s leaders knew that their surprise attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941 had awakened the Yankee sleeping giant, yet they optimistically believed that it would take anywhere, from six months to one full year for American industrial and military might to come to bare in the western Pacific. Japan had attacked a great power which had long been in an isolated slumber; America had eight times the population and eight times the industrial capacity. To many it seemed Japan had just signed its own death warrant, and as history would have it they could not have been more right.

Believing gains could be made in the western Pacific that would eventually force the United States to the negotiating table, Tokyo ignored all the doomsday conclusions, and decided to move ahead in the winter months of 1941-42, and run wild in western Asia.

The Battle for the Pacific lasted in the competitive sense from December 1941 until the Allies' decisive victory at the Battle of the Leyte Gulf in October 1944. Most Historians mark this date as the end of the actual, "Battle" of the Pacific because most of Japan's remaining ships (especially the aircraft carriers) were sunk or badly damaged, thus ending Japan's ability to wage offensive operations on the High Seas. After this battle, the remaining eleven months of the war were just a one-sided affair, with Washington hoping that Tokyo would surrender without having to invade the actual home islands themselves.

This theatre would constitute Imperial Japan's hegemonic ambitions, as its proposed "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," would stretch from mainland China in the west, to the Indonesian archipelago in the south and as far as Midway Island in the east. Within this grandiose great power demarcation were a plethora of islands that Tokyo sought for a variety of SISE reasons.

All elements of SISE are clearly illuminated during the Pacific campaign, from 1941 to 1944. Japan was sucked into the Indonesian archipelago primarily for prized resources. Okinawa was invaded by America because it was viewed as a pertinent small island geo-pivot. With the surrender of the Dutch and French empires and the weakening of the British Empire, weakness permeated this theatre, making it all too inviting for a predatory Japan. Finally, the components of prestige and great power competition (over islands) melded into a potent synergy to help precipitate the great power war between the Eagle and the Rising Sun.

This section reviews SISE during the Battle for the Pacific that was waged between the Allied powers (largely just America) and Imperial Japan, from 1941-1945. The following subsections examine all facets of SISE as it relates to this theatre. First, a look at the causes behind this conflict and what role this geopolitical theory had in its precipitation; Second, light will be shed on why Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour was logical, and was induced by SISE; and third, the element of geopolitical position will be highlighted. The famous "Island hopping Campaign," of 1943-1944, and the specific case of the invasion of Okinawa, in 1945, will be discussed.

"The Eagle against the Rising Sun"

Histories on why Japan decided to go to war with America in December 1941 are countless and unending. Indeed, because of Japanese society's opaque nature, it has been, and still is hard, for many outsiders to grasp why Japan made such a seemingly obvious fatal error when it decided to attack the United States. Kenneth Pyle sums up this latter point of scatter brained fatalism well when he opines, "on the face of it, Japan's decision for war appears to fly in the face of realism. To declare war on a power with no less than eight times the material power might seem a rash and reckless act."¹⁴ Two of the key reasons Japan went to war with America, in December 1941, also happen to be two key components of SISE, i.e. great power competition and prestige and honour.

Since the dawn of the 20th century, American foreign policy planners and thinkers (such as Admiral Mahan) had targeted Imperial Japan as America's most likely foe, and competitor, in the Pacific region, for great power regional pre-eminence.¹⁵ Similarly, by the end of the 1920s,

following the Treaty of Versailles, and the Washington Naval Conference, Japanese leaders became convinced that the United States was its main rival for hegemony in East Asia. Thus, by the beginning of the 1930s, after a decade of tacit hostilities and palpable animosities, Japan and America, engage in a belligerent relationship with one another, and this antagonistic rivalry and great power competition would culminate with Japan attacking America and precipitating the Pacific War.

In terms of concrete great power competition, between Tokyo and Washington, nowhere could it be seen clearer, in the long term lead up to the war, than in Japan's constant complaints and expressed dismay at the United States, for placing military bases on key small island geopolitically pivots, such as Luzon, Guam, and even Hawaii. Tokyo understandably viewed these islands as staging areas, or "living aircraft carriers," that would be utilized by the American military, in any conflict with Japan, should one break out. Conversely, Washington, by the 1930s, was quite alarmed with how powerful Japan had become in East Asia, on the continent and in the islands of the Western Pacific. Specifically, President Roosevelt, and his foreign policy team, were concerned about Japan's gains in China; America, for almost half a century, had adhered to, and supported, an "Open Door Policy," whereby all great powers were allowed to trade and have relations with China (albeit with certain regions assigned to certain powers). This 19th century policy was in jeopardy of disappearing, as Japan grew to become hegemonic in China, by 1941.

Hence, for Japan, its great power competition with America, which by 1941 would reach a crescendo plunging the powers into war with one another, was a competition primarily fuelled by the basic great power concern over security, and secondarily, over Tokyo's desire to become the hegemonic power of East Asia. For the United States, the great power competition with Japan, was initially, and primarily, powered by its own economic concerns, as it did not want

Japan or any other power gaining the upper hand in the Chinese market place; secondarily, and near the end of the 1930s, the competition for America was fuelled by the great power concern, that, if Japan were to exercise hegemony over China, it could, perhaps, one day be stronger than the United States in the Pacific region.

For all these great power competition reasons listed above, America and Japan (a great power island archipelago), would eventually enter into armed conflict. As it pertains to SISE, Japan's security concerns are critically important, because American island geo-pivots such as Hawaii, Luzon, and Guam, denied Tokyo the kind of security certainty all great powers seek. This security uncertainty, caused by the American held small islands, helped this rivalry grow as it did SISE.

The component of prestige and honour was also conspicuous, in terms of being one of the main causes that led to Japan attacking America, in 1941. Japan was a very sensitive nation when it came to notions of status and rank. Ever since their perceived mistreatment and discrimination at the Treaty of Versailles, and the Washington Naval Conferences, Japanese leaders had held deep-seated and bitter resentment towards America (and to a lesser extent Britain). These acts of insult (from the Japanese point of view), in conjunction with the blatant racism Japanese immigrants in America faced during the inter-war years emboldened Japan's desire to have the United States recognize it as a truly equal great power. Being acknowledged as a member of the prestigious great power club had been a major foreign policy goal for Japan since the Meiji Restoration, as Akira Iriye explains, "the country's (Japan) leadership and national opinion had emphasized the cardinal importance of establishing Japan as a respected member of the community of advanced powers."¹⁶

Eventually, by the fall of 1941, decision makers in Tokyo would feel compelled to make a stand, and ultimately opted for attacking the United States. Prestige and honour played a key part in the final decision to go to war with America. No longer would Japan accept being talked down to, or pushed around by the United States.

Needless to say, once war erupted between the two great powers, SISE exploded, because the Pacific War's (1941-1945) battlefield was essentially one expansive maritime body which was littered with small islands; thus, in this propitious landscape, SISE would flourish, as will be demonstrated in the succeeding case studies.

SISE and the Logic behind Pearl Harbour

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour in December 1941, because in relation to Japan, this small island archipelago contained two components of SISE: geopolitical position and great power competition.

As has been already explained, American held small island geo-pivots which in effect, denied Japan the kind of security certainty that any great power seeks. And though Hawaii was the geo-pivot furthest away from Japan, it was the overall most threatening small island, in grand strategic terms.

Hawaii, by 1941, had already long been the naval headquarters for the United States' Pacific fleet. Geopolitically, Pearl Harbour and the Hawaiian Archipelago were ideally suited to function as the key American naval base in the Pacific, due to its favourable geopolitical position in the world's largest ocean. Hawaii, was close enough to the American mainland, that it could be supplied, and kept within the United States' orbit, but, far enough away from America's main

Pacific competitor, Japan (or so they thought), thus, rendering it “safe” from Japanese invasion, and most likely Japanese attack. Pearl Harbour, being an extreme off-lying geo-pivot, served to be a major threat to overall Japanese security, because it was at this naval base where America’s Pacific naval forces rested, were equipped and supplied, and ultimately, were projected throughout the Pacific.

Gordon Rottmon, a career military man, and later author of military history books, succinctly describes the decision behind establishing the Hawaiian Islands as the naval headquarters for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and it is worth citing at length:

In 1899 the Navy proposed that its main Pacific Fleet base be located at Manila in the Philippines. The Army objected to this stationing as it felt that the proposed base was vulnerable to attack by Japan. The second option was to concentrate that Fleet in American waters as ordered by Mahan, but this positioned the Fleet too far (6965 miles) from the Philippines to respond to the defense of an important possession in a timely manner. The Army did not possess the resources to establish a sufficient defence force in the Philippines capable of holding out until the Fleet arrived. Annexed at the request of the Queen of the Republic of Hawaii at the same time the United States gained control of the Philippines, the Hawaiian Islands were an ideal location for a naval base to defend the west coast of the United States, protect America’s far-flung possessions across the Pacific (5,300 miles), and allow the Fleet to redeploy to the Atlantic via the Panama Canal, once completed in 1914. The

Navy withdrew its proposal to base the Fleet in the Philippines in 1909 and

development of a base at Pearl Harbour was soon begun.¹⁷

If one is to use Mahan's analogy that naval ships were like land birds, then aircraft carriers and battleships were condors, and Pearl Harbour served as the Condor's nest for the American Pacific Fleet. Frankly put, if Japan were to wage war with the United States in 1941, it would have been foolhardy and illogical not to attack Pearl Harbour, because it was there, that all the "*birds of prey*," were refuelled and retooled. Hence, by the fall of 1941, the critical geopolitical position of Hawaii as a naval base was on the minds of Japanese military planners. They felt compelled if war came to attack this key small island geo-pivot.

Great power competition is innately tied to the element of geopolitical position. The Tojo cabinet agreed in early November 1941, that if no diplomatic solution could be reached with the United States by December, that the attack on Pearl Harbour would commence.¹⁸ The Tojo brain trust felt, that if Japan had any hope of competing with America, in an all out war that a daring strike at the very heart of American naval operations in the Pacific, Pearl Harbour, had to be undertaken. If the Japanese were successful in a brazen surprise attack on Hawaii, in which the majority of America's offensive naval ships (battleships and aircraft carriers) were sunk or badly damaged along with the actual base then Japanese leadership hoped America's will to fight a long bloody war with Japan would be seriously reduced and this devastating blow would ensure Japan would not have to worry about the United States striking back at them in a major way, for at least a year or maybe longer.

With no diplomatic agreement in sight, Admiral Yamamoto and his Pearl Harbour strike force set sail from the Chisima Islands (the Kurils), on November 26, 1941; their mission was to

destroy the main Pacific battle group stationed there.¹⁹ The element of great power competition helps then, to explain, why Japan opted to attack Pearl Harbour because it was the jugular point in the American Navy's Pacific system. From this naval base flowed all the supplies, ships, information, and personnel that facilitated America's naval hegemonic position on the Pacific waters. A surprise offensive on Pearl Harbour was Japan's best chance at either defeating America, or prolonging the conflict to such a tiring point, that Washington might grant Tokyo a palatable peace settlement. Great power competition rationally called for Japan to attack Hawaii, in order to defeat the United States in an all-out war.

Japan was ultimately sucked into Hawaii, in the sense of the Pearl Harbour assault, because this small island chain contained two key elements of SISE for Tokyo, namely, geopolitical position and great power competition. When viewed through a SISE prism, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, seems, even in hindsight, quite logical; and is probably best viewed as the most prudent choice among "two repugnant alternatives," i.e. tacit surrender through doing nothing or an all or nothing gamble via a surprise attack against America.²⁰

Geopolitics and Island hopping

At this juncture, in the thesis, almost three hundred years of great power history, in conjunction with this geopolitical theory, have been covered. The Pacific Campaign during World War II is a highly useful great power conflict to observe SISE in, because the dynamics of this military campaign were so relevant for this theory. Never before, or since, the war in the Pacific, has SISE, ever had greater pull or importance for great power policy decision makers.

The Pacific Campaign became one of “Island hopping,” because of the geopolitical landscape of this battle, i.e. an expansive ocean body that was covered with small islands, especially in its south western region. Furthermore, SISE began drawing both Japan, and the United States, to a myriad of islands, because these two great powers had the naval capacity to project their forces to these peripheral regions. Both states, by the early 1940s, were formidable naval powers. Thus, with the ability to invade and conquer key small islands each power took it upon themselves to do just that. Both Japan and America felt an increased suction effect, because they had the capability to acquire islands. Once more, competition between two great powers, that both had the capacity to fight one another, far away from their respective homelands, in maritime theatres, induced the island hopping and facilitated SISE.

The popular World War II buzz word, “Island hopping,” was a term that came from the American military Pacific Command, and is best associated with the United States’ offensive campaign in the Pacific, from 1943, all the way to the final “Island hop” in Okinawa, in March, 1945. That’s not to say Japan did not island hop, or use small island A, to leapfrog to small island B. In fact, it did just that during the early stages of the war.

Japan gained the upper-hand over America following its audacious surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, and immediately acquired small islands that it thought was of interest to the state, be it prized resources in the Indonesian archipelago, or superior geostrategic position in the cases of Guam, and Wake island, or for other reasons, Japan successfully gained island after island in the first phase of the Pacific conflict.

However, after Japan’s crushing back to back defeats in the Coral Sea battle, as well as at Midway Island, by the early summer of 1942, it was no longer able to compete with the United States Navy in the offensive sense. Hence, for the remainder of the war, Japan would be on the

defensive against the unrelenting American Colossus. Indeed, Admiral Yamamoto's now famous remark to Prime Minister Konoye, following the signing Tripartite Pact, regarding Japan's ability to wage war against the United States proved to be prophetic: "If I am told to fight regardless of the consequence I shall run wild considerably for the first six months or a year, but after that I have utterly no confidence for the second and third years."²¹ By mid 1943, when the United States' military-industrial complex was finally totally up and running, and producing armaments at lightening pace and efficiency, the war then became completely one-sided. It is during this time frame (mid 1943-1945) that the famous Island hopping campaign commenced, beginning with Operation Cartwheel.²²

This operation was a grand military strategy that aimed for American forces to be sucked into largely undefended islands that surrounded Japanese island strong holds such as New Britain. Weakness was a valued resource for American Pacific forces in their geostrategic march toward choking off Japan's well established island geo-pivots. Thus, U.S. marines were drawn into small and undefended island after island, in an overall grand strategic effort to comprehensively defeat Imperial Japan. This innovative, highly geopolitical, military strategy is best captured from the eyes of a Japanese General as he both expresses his frustration, and seemingly, his admiration, of the tactics employed by U.S. Pacific Command:

This was [Island Hopping] the type of strategy we hated the most. The Americans attacked and seized, with minimum losses, a relatively weak area, constructed air fields and then proceeded to cut the supply lines...Our strong points were gradually starved out. The Japanese Army preferred direct assault after the German fashion, but the Americans flowed into our weaker

points and submerged us, just as water seeks the weakest entry to sink a ship.²³

The Island hopping strategy proved to be amazingly successful, and conclusive, in that it ultimately helped end the war. For roughly an eighteen month period, from 1943, to Japan's official surrender aboard the USS Missouri, on September 2 1945, SISE would engulf the western Pacific, and so many tiny islands and their inhabitants would be caught in the maelstrom of great power war. Never before, or since, has mankind been witness to such strategic and calculated violence that utilized islands as its key pivot points.

A Typhoon of Steel: Okinawa the last great battle of World War II

Okinawa was to be the final island hop, but also the most violent. Over 100,000 soldiers (combined) were killed in the Battle of Okinawa, and thousands upon thousands of civilians lost their lives in the cross fire. It is remembered as one of the bloodiest battles of World War II, because of the intense and close of nature of the fighting; Japanese soldiers considered this battle a last stand, and, for the most part, had to be killed by U.S. marines because the majority refused to surrender.

Okinawa, like it had for centuries, caused a great power to be sucked into it because of its advantageous geopolitical position. This island was to be used as the primary small island geo-pivot, from which America, would launch a proposed final and decisive invasion of the actual Japanese home islands.

Once again, for the poor Okinawan people, their destiny was being determined by their geopolitical location, something that was completely out of their control. Okinawa, in the World War II context, was an incredibly important geo-pivot, but not just for the obvious reason of using it as a launching pad for the invasion of Japan. Admiral Chester Nimitz summarized its strategic value cogently:

Establishment of our forces on Okinawa has practically cut off all Japanese positions to the southward as far as sea communications are concerned. It has made the Japanese situation in China, Burma, and the Dutch East Indies untenable and has forced withdrawals which are now being exploited by our forces in China.²⁴

One can comprehend then, from that quotation, from America's last Five Star Admiral, that Okinawa was a multi-purpose geo-pivot of high value. Not only could it threaten Japan offensively, but defensively as a buffer territory; American possession of Okinawa blocked and hindered Japanese supply lines, from Japan proper, to starving forces on the South East Asian mainland.

Clearly Okinawa has, as an island, contained one of the highest degrees of SISE ever witnessed. Again, the sole element of geopolitical position is so paramount and enticing, on Okinawa, that this tiny island nation, almost by default, must realize it will always drag in larger predatory powers, and it will likely never be independent. The Battle of Okinawa proved this latter point true, as America keenly saw the small island archipelago, as the keystone island that would facilitate the final defeat of Imperial Japan.

This bloody battle is remembered by many as the great “Typhoon of Steel,” as it should be. It is most likely, the most costly battle (in terms of lives lost), to have ever taken place on a small island. Esteemed historian George Kerr notes “more than twelve thousand Americans had died and the number of wounded exceeded 35,000” and on Japanese military casualties, “90,401 Japanese soldiers had been killed. Only four thousand prisoners of war were taken alive.” Finally, on the devastating loss of civilian life, Kerr records, “it has been estimated that 62,489 perished in this ‘typhoon of steel’; of these some 47,000 were civilians,” concluding “*One in eight of the civil population was dead.* No family remained untouched.”²⁵

Okinawa, after the end of World War II, would come under the aegis of the United States and continue to serve as a critical small island geo-pivot in Washington’s wars against Asian Communism, as noted western scholar on Japanese Affairs, Chalmers Johnson explains:

America’s two major wars against Asian Communism-in Korea and Vietnam-could not have been fought without bases on Japanese territory [especially Okinawa]. Those military outposts [mostly Okinawa] were critical staging and logistics areas for the projection of American power onto the Asian mainland, as well as secure sanctuaries, invulnerable to attack by North Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, or Cambodian forces.²⁶

CONCLUSION

The Second World War is an excellent great power period to review in terms of SISE, because it is an era that provides a litany of examples, and the near hyperbolic conditions (all great powers at war with one another) these suction effects take place to allow for a better understanding of how real and potent this proposed effect is and can be.

Unlike the other eras that are reviewed and analyzed in this work, this period, 1939-1945, cannot be considered a great power system; simply because there was no system. The time frame consisted of six years, of assiduous warfare, that, when it was over, facilitated in the emergence of a new great power bipolar order (see next chapter). This total war period was the culmination of two decades worth of great power rumblings and changes that took place during the previously covered interwar period.

The most ubiquitous element of SISE was also the most obvious: great power competition. This geopolitical effect could clearly be observed in many regions of the global theatre, not just the Pacific. When one discusses small island warfare, in the World War II context, it is most common to think of the Pacific theatre, which is understandable. However, this chapter has shown, once more, that SISE is geographically a universal force, as long as small islands are present in any given region. Both Nazi Germany, and Fascist Italy especially, experienced the draw of this suction effect, even though they were both primarily land powers.

While great power competition was the foundational SISE element, inducing the powers to be pulled in to various islands, geopolitical position was the most decisive element in this existential competition. From Iceland in the frozen North Atlantic to Malta in the sunny Mediterranean and to a whole host of islands in the balmy South Pacific small islands due to

their advantageous geopolitical positions, played key roles in first sucking powers in, and second, helping one coalition gain the advantage (usually the Allies), and eventually defeat the other rival camp.

In the wake of this total great power war a bipolar great power order would emerge, whereby the United States and the Soviet Union became the only remaining great powers, some would label them superpowers. In relation to SISE, this new rising order presaged a waning of this geopolitical effect in the short term. But like so many effects, it has its ebb and flow, and eventually small islands would once again suck in great powers during the Cold War era, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

SISE: 1946-1991

SISE DURING THE COLD WAR

The Cold War Era (1946-1991) is best remembered as a period in which the great power system was clearly bipolar with the USSR and the United States contesting one another for global supremacy. Across the United States citizens were coming to the realization that a long competition with the USSR, following the Axis powers defeat, was on the horizon, “The most important political development during the last ten years of localized and finally global warfare,” a columnist noted in the *New York Times* shortly after Japan’s surrender, “has been the emergence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as the greatest dynamic and diplomatic force on the vast Eurasian land mass which stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans.”¹

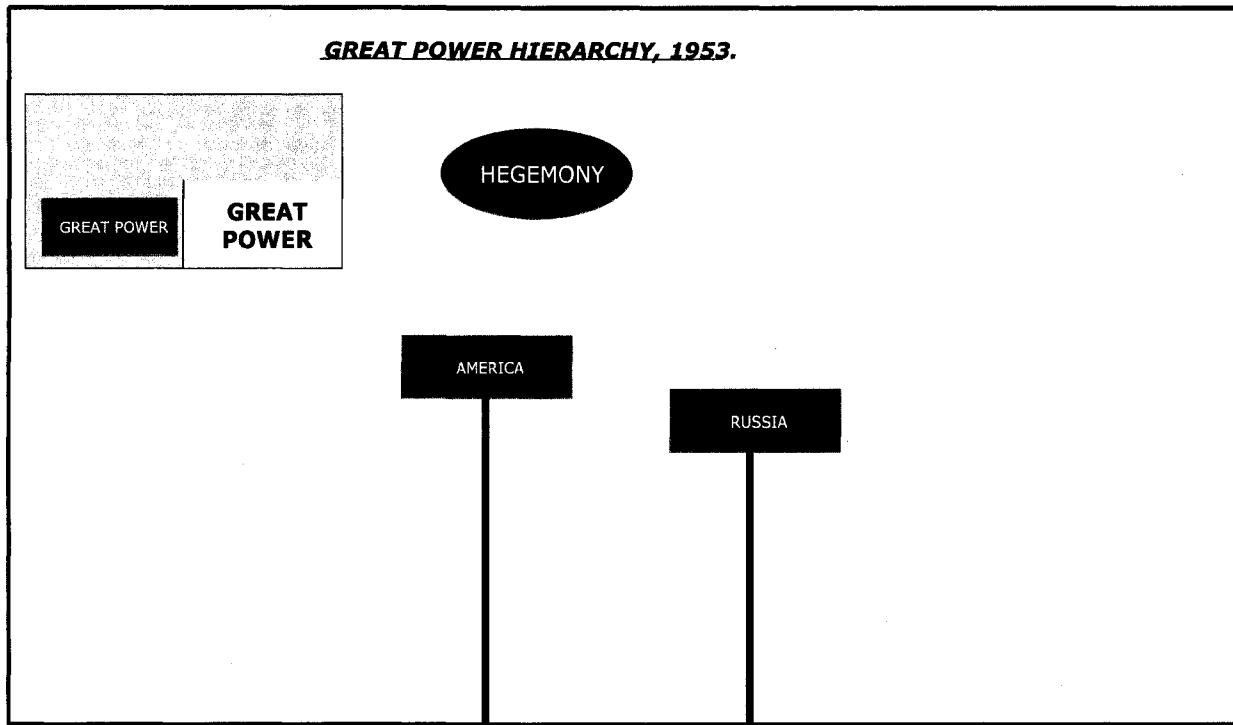
Surely, Alex Tocqueville and Halford Mackinder were smiling from their graves, elated that their predictions, first, that one day America and Russia would become the greatest powers, predicted by Tocqueville, and second, that Russia could one day dominate the heartland and thus the World-Island (Eurasia), predicted by Mackinder; both had come to fruition by the early stages of the Cold War.² In a depressing letter to a friend, in early 1945, the father of the famous Cold War “Containment Strategy,” George F. Keenan, a brilliant student of geopolitics in his own right, wrote of the coming conflict between Russia and America for supremacy of Europe and more generally the World-Island:

A Basic Conflict...arising over Europe between the interests of Atlantic sea-power [led by America], which demand the preservation of vigorous and independent political life on the European peninsula, and the interests of the jealous Eurasian land power [Soviet Russia] which seek to extend itself to the

west and will never find a place short of the Atlantic Ocean, where it can from its own standpoint safely stop.”³

Adding to the inevitability of a bipolar post World War II order was the realization that there were no other states with the ability to compete with Moscow or Washington. No other great powers existed following World War II, as Britain and France being so battered from that conflict, washed their hands of empire and looked inward to reform and reconstruct their broken economies and national polities. Britain was the more anxious of the two to be done with colonial responsibility, particularly after MacMillan’s “Winds of Change” speech. France tried to hold on in the Levant and Indochina. After the debacle in Algeria de Gaulle created a largely cosmetic francophone community of independent states in Equatorial Africa where France continued to exert immense influence. But France continues to hold on to its islands giving independence only to the Comoros (but not Mayotte) in 1975 and to Vanuatu, a condominium shared with Britain. Germany was totally defeated and dismembered; divided up among the United States, Great Britain and France in three zones in the West and the Eastern Bloc led by the Soviet Union. Japan also became a vanquished great power following its defeat in the Second World War, and during this entire bipolar great power conflict would become a ward of the United States. Finally, Italy too, was a war-torn beleaguered state, which no longer

possessed the capacity nor the interest of being a great power.



This great power system only had two primary actors which competed with one another for prestige, power, position, and resources. To be fair, this bipolar system became diluted by the late 1960s and early 1970s as new power centres began to emerge in Peking, New Delhi, and Brussels, but none of these nascent power centres would become developed enough to openly compete with the USSR and the United States. By the 21st century however, those power centres would begin to carve a place for themselves in the great power hierarchy (this is covered in chapter nine). But for the purposes of the thesis the Cold War period is defined as a bipolar system that had the United States and the Soviet Union as the two ascendant and competing powers.⁴

As stated in previous chapters, SISE occurs more frequently when functioning in a multipolar great power environment because one main precept that facilitates this geopolitical theory's efficacy is rabid competitive competition. In a bipolar system fierce competition will

usually always wane because, simply by definition, a bipolar system has less actors or competitors, thus making for less constant and less intense great power contestation. This is not to suggest that Moscow and Washington did not compete with each other often or intensely, they did, especially during the early days of the Cold War which should be seen as the period of “deepest freeze,” from the Truman administration to the Kennedy administration culminating with the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962.

Besides the bipolarity of the Cold War great power system, what also caused SISE to diminish noticeably was the advent of nuclear weapons following the droppings of two atomic bombs on Japan by America in 1945, near the end of World War II. No longer could any rationale state brazenly invade, conquer, or acquire an island, or any territory for that matter, without seriously considering the reaction from either nuclear armed superpower. This reality induced the United States and the USSR to be much more measured and reasoned in their approach to SISE.

This chapter examines SISE during the Cold War, and how in the context of a bipolar system, did it affect the two superpowers and other regional powers, in terms of drawing them to specific small islands.

This chapter will be case study heavy as four different cases will be analyzed under a bipolar atmosphere. First, SISE will be reviewed in relation to the Cuban Missile crisis. Second, the Falklands War will be examined and once more the element of prestige will be highlighted. The invasion of the small Caribbean Island of Grenada by American forces in 1983 will be looked at and discussed. Finally, the island of Diego Garcia will be explored in relation to this proposed theory.

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

It is widely said that the Cuban Missile Crisis was the most tense period during the Cold War. There is a substantial consensus among Cold War historians that this standoff that occurred in October 1962 between the United States and the Soviet Union, over missiles on the Caribbean island of Cuba, was the closest the two superpowers ever came to nuclear war. Everyone who lived through the perilous week was cognizant that nuclear war was a real possibility. As Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Max Frankel notes, "The fear of war during the crisis week of October 22-28, 1962, was palpable, in the Kremlin as in the White House. It was even greater among populations that could read uncensored accounts of the chilling rhetoric with which Khrushchev and Kennedy bargained for concessions to resolve the crisis."⁵

What then ultimately brought these two mighty nuclear armed powers to the precipice of Armageddon? Some light can be shed by viewing this conflict through a SISE prism. In fact, what helped to cause this nuclear showdown, what induced the two superpowers to be sucked into Cuba, were the combined components of inherent great power competition and geopolitical position.

In 1962, the Cold War was still very much a frigid affair, with palpable suspicion and mistrust on both sides, and intense ideological competition for the world's masses. In some cases wars of proxy were fought between rival factions that were being supported by Washington on one end and Moscow on the other. Thus, the great power competition between the two hostile states was very acute during this time frame. Furthermore, a couple events facilitated the exacerbation of great power competition between America and the USSR over hegemony in Cuba.

First, in 1960, one year after Fidel Castro had overthrown the Batista government and took power for himself, President Eisenhower became extremely worried about the increasingly friendly relations between Havana and Moscow. By the time John Kennedy assumed the Presidency in January 1961, the CIA already had a plan to forcibly remove Castro from power by way of a *coup d'état*. That April the Bay of Pigs Invasion commenced and failed miserably. This provocative act greatly alarmed the communist government in Havana, but more importantly it enraged and worried Cuba's great benefactor, the Soviet Union, and prompted them to act. The Soviets were convinced (considering Kennedy made no secret of his desire to oust the Castro regime) "the U.S. government was sure to mount another more effective assault." Thus Khrushchev thought "a Soviet shield for Cuba would preserve a communist outpost in the Western Hemisphere."⁶ Hence, the U.S. sponsored failed Bay of Pigs invasion assisted in the heightening of great power competition between Moscow and Washington over hegemonic control of Cuba.

The other important event that took place in 1961, that must be seen as a critical lead up event to the eventual nuclear showdown in October 1962, was the Kennedy Administration's determination at placing ballistic missiles in Turkey. These missiles were targeted at Russian cities, including Moscow, thus putting the Soviet home front in a very vulnerable situation. And in the larger context of the Cold War, superpower versus superpower, these missiles gave the United States a clear upper hand in their existential and global competition with the USSR. As was to be expected, from Moscow's perspective, this tangible disadvantage was unacceptable and had to be countered.

To this point, leading up to the October Crisis, with a newly minted communist government in Cuba, the Failed Bay of Pigs Invasion, and Moscow's discovery that the United

States had placed ballistic missiles in Turkey, it need not be overstated that the Cold War, between the two antagonistic superpowers, had reached a point of deep freeze. And it seemed, for better or for worse, the main storm clouds that forebode a potential great power battle were gathering over the island of Cuba. Great power competition was luring Moscow to become more involved in Cuba, and use it as an effective counter to American missile deployments in Asia Minor.

At this juncture the SISE facet of geopolitical position comes into play and forms an interdependent synergy with great power competition. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, saw in Cuba, many propitious great power opportunities. In the long-term, by absorbing Cuba into the Soviet led international Communist Bloc, it would allow Moscow to have a direct client state located in the middle of the Western Hemisphere, only ninety miles away from the American mainland. Having Havana within the Kremlin's orbit would serve as a great irritant to Washington because Cuba, by rebelling against U.S. primacy in the Caribbean, and allowing the USSR to become its patron, was overtly challenging America's commitment to the long established Monroe Doctrine, whereby the United States would not allow other great powers to gain footholds in the Western Hemisphere. In the short-term, Khrushchev chose to use Cuba's advantageous geopolitical position for the stationing of ballistic missiles, and military forces, to threaten the United States directly, thus creating an effective counterweight to American missiles in Turkey.

The favourable geopolitical position of Cuba then played a huge role in sucking the Soviets into that island. Similarly, for the United States, Cuba's close geographic proximity to the American mainland caused the superpower to be drawn in to it for perceived security reasons. Ultimately, Cuba's geopolitical pivot position, that could be utilized by either power,

for different great power objectives, was the fundamental reason both were so attracted to this small island.

In the end, cooler heads prevailed in the Cuban Missile Crisis, as it was agreed by both Kennedy and Khrushchev that missiles would be removed from Cuba by the Soviets in exchange for missiles being removed from Turkey by the Americans.

No mistake should be made however regarding how close the two superpowers came to nuclear war. The Cuban Missile Crisis was the closest the United States and the Soviet Union ever came to fighting an all out nuclear war against one another. The catalyst for this near nuclear holocaust was the small island of Cuba. This island alone, could have never prompted America to consider employing a nuclear strike against Havana, but when the SISE elements of great power competition with the USSR, and the islands advantageous geopolitical position are taken into account, it becomes comprehensible and crystal clear why this crisis in October 1962 brought the two superpowers to the brink of MAD.

THE FALKLANDS WAR

Britain and Argentina were not great powers in the capital “G” sense in 1982 the year war broke out between them. The fact that these two states were not great powers in the strictest sense was not the only aspect of this conflict that made the whole narrative so strange, quintessentially an aberrant war:

The South Atlantic conflict [The Falklands War] was a strange little war. It was fought in one of the most remote parts of the world. Its prize was real estate that may have been worth less than the asset value of the forces committed to defend it (or seize it, for the matter). The combatants were a power whose glory days had long since passed—by its own reckoning—and a power whose days of glory were at times more imagined than real.⁷

Once more this geopolitical theory is one that is dynamic and flexible. A great power in the largest most supreme context is one that is at the apex of the international system in the power sense. However, this theory allows for a high degree of prudent relativity, in terms of which state constitutes a power in a particular given context, situation, or region.

In the case of the conflict between Buenos Aires and London over the disputed Falkland Islands, located in the far south western Atlantic, both states can be considered powers relative to the sleepy sparsely populated small islands of the Falklands. Again a major strength of SISE's dynamism is its adaptive relativity.

This conflict was precipitated by Argentina's military government's decision to invade these islands in an attempt to divert Argentinean attention away from domestic turmoil at home and also possibly acquire the Falklands, a small archipelago long claimed by Argentina. Britain reacted to the unprovoked invasion with resolution to regain their lost island territories and expel the South American invaders.

This 6 week war, which lasted from the 2 April – June 14 1982, was a confrontation that in its genesis had partial elements of prestige to it, and Britain's counter-response was driven primarily by the SISE elements of prestige and honour.

Argentina had laid claim to the Falklands shortly after it gained independence from Spain in 1816. However, in 1833, a British task force compelled Argentinean authorities on the islands to vacate and remove their flag and replace it with the British Flag, signalling the islands were part of the British Empire. Though the Argentineans conceded to these demands at the time, they never officially recognized Britain's re-establishment of sovereignty over the islands in 1833, and in fact Buenos Aires still claims the islands presently.

Keeping that history in mind is important because being cognizant of Argentina's one hundred fifty year plus old claim to the Falklands allows an observer to more fully understand why the element of prestige helped to draw Argentina into this island archipelago during the first week of April 1982. The military junta knew that retaking of the Falklands, would likely be well received by their countrymen because a majority of citizens saw these islands as rightfully Argentina's. The British Empire, in their view, was a distant, greedy, alien power that for far too long had denied their country a rightful piece of its national territory.

When one state feels it is being denied in some way, be it in terms of some sort of recognition, respect, or the righteousness of their cause or grievance, these denials are almost always perceived as simultaneous affronts to a nation's prestige and honour. In Argentina's case, in relation to the Falkland Islands, this denial of claimed territory by the British was construed as a lack of respect and recognition of their country. Buenos Aires, knew the public would support the invasion for reasons of prestige and honour.

The British response to this surprise attack is one of the clearest modern cases of a power being sucked into a small island or islands for the primary reason of prestige and honour. Now, of course, when any nation or great power is attacked it will, as expected, defend itself and its territories. Thus, some might ascribe Britain's response to Argentina's attack on the Falklands as

simple and clear defensive measures. Yet that is to paint the reasons why Britain reacted the way it did with to broad a brush. At the core of the British public's feverish outcry for action against the Argentinean provocation was a palpable sentiment that Britain's honour was at stake in this conflict.

Since the end of World War II Britain had gone through a lot of substantial heart-wrenching changes. Britain got out of the "Empire Business," and by the 1970s most of its former colonies were independent states. As well, Britain by the 1970s was clearly no longer a great power in the capital "G" sense. More and more it seemed to be at best, the most trusted ally and junior partner of its former colony, the United States. Finally, through the 1960s and 1970s, Britain underwent painful economic changes and turmoil that culminated with the winter of Discontent in 1979. Hence, by 1982, collectively, the British nation was in the early stages of recovery when it came to regaining a national sense of confidence, power, and purpose. Argentina's surprise attack on the Falklands gave Britons something tangible and concrete to focus on and coalesce around.

Over a generation after decolonization the British people on the surface appeared to be coming to terms with their new status as a "Middle power," yet the public's reaction to the unlawful unprovoked invasion of the Falklands, caused such a stir, that it fervently evoked and rekindled a nostalgic sense of national unity and purpose among the British people that was reminiscent of a great power. For many British what drove them to support the war was their own pride in their country, historically speaking. Early on many foreign observers and domestic critics felt the "question is not, *would* Britain defend the islands, but *could* it do so?"⁸ Many British perceived this scepticism and doubting of their country's abilities in war as blatant signs

of disrespect. The counting out of Britain by many commentators further impelled the British forward in terms of supporting the conflict.

Interestingly enough, previous to the war, many in Britain wondered if it was more in the interests of their country to sell the far away islands to Argentina or the highest bidder. Less than 3000 people lived on the small islands, and economically the Falklands were not real “golden eggs” for Britain. However, thoughts of getting rid of the Falklands quickly faded following the invasion. When the British people saw television images of Argentinean tanks and troops rolling through Port Stanley it incited great anger, a sense of injustice, and most important a feeling that Britain’s pride and mettle were being tested by an upstart Latin American junta.

With a palpable and ubiquitous patriotic zeal sweeping Britain following the invasion, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s government decided to reclaim the lost islands. Support for the government’s decision to retake the Falklands was high. “From the start there was an overwhelming majority supporting the sending of the task force, again at around the 80 percent level.”⁹ For six weeks British newspapers and TV stations covered the ongoing conflict, and when victory came in early June it produced jubilation throughout Britain. In fact many historians claim that Thatcher owed in large part her 1983 re-election success to her actions and Britain’s victory.

Britain was not then primarily sucked into the Falklands for normative SISE reasons such as geopolitical position, great power competition, or prized resources. On the surface, London felt logically compelled to reclaim a territory that had been attacked and usurped. But again that is too conventional and overly simplistic; the main element that caused Britain to be so zealously pulled into the Falklands, following their invasion in 1982, was the immeasurable element of prestige and honour. What is more, of those British who supported the war the two most popular

motives “were that the Falkland Islands were a *British colony* and that the nation’s *international image* was at stake.”¹⁰ There was also the issue of self-determination since the Islanders were adamantly British and had no interest whatsoever in living under Argentine sovereignty. The military junta in Buenos Aires, by invading this small island British territory, inadvertently reawakened Britain’s long dormant imperial or great power identity. Once this imperial mentality came out it took over; and Britain whole heartedly struck back at their Argentinean aggressors to defend their territory and honour.

In the end this SISE case study of the 1982 Falkland War is another clear example of a power being drawn into an island due to the element of prestige and honour.

GRENADA

The U.S. invasion of Grenada is a classic and relatively recent case of a great power being sucked into an island because the SISE elements of great power competition and geopolitical position were present in this case. In order to make it perfectly clear why Washington was drawn into Grenada in late October 1983, it is useful to be aware of the larger context in this case.

The most critical context in this case is the Cold War. The United States still saw the Soviet Union as its prime competitor and challenger in global power politics. Adjoined to that Cold War context also must be the awareness that ever since the United States had become a great power it had viewed the Caribbean as one of its main spheres of influence. Gordon Lewis

explains the necessity of recognizing America's great power history in the Caribbean if one is to comprehend this conflict. He argues that "no one can fully understand the Grenada episode, in all of its ramifications, without considering the general background of the United States as a new world power, beginning in 1898 with the Spanish-American War, and developing with great rapidity after 1945."¹¹ Fused with these interconnected historical contexts is this case's contemporary context as it relates to the United States. Four years earlier, the American people experienced a very traumatic event when their embassy in Iran was overrun by Iranian revolutionaries and its inhabitants were held hostage for over one year. In 1983 revolutions in foreign countries, where Americans were residing, were still of great concern to the American public and Washington. With an awareness and acceptance of these two interconnected contexts (historical and contemporary) the SISE case of Grenada drawing in the American superpower can be easily explained and analyzed.

The series of tumultuous events that occurred over a four year period in Grenada can be best summed up (from the American perspective) as a period of time where a democratically elected government was overthrown in a bloody coup by a revolutionary group that had strong communist leanings in 1979. All this concerned the U.S. government greatly but still they took a measured calm approach to Maurice Bishop's new left-wing Grenadian government. America's concern turned to outright panic on October 13, 1983, when there was an internal coup and an explicit communist group took power, announced martial law would be imposed on the island. It is under these chaotic circumstances that the element of great power competition is so clear.

Great power competition is not just about gaining an important advantage over an expressed opponent or rival, these gambits are notable. But this competition takes on other dimensions. Such as the salient sub-facet of security competition and the eternal great power

quest for security certainty. As Mearsheimer points out “survival is the primary goal of great powers. Specifically, states seek to maintain their territorial integrity and the autonomy of their domestic political order. Survival dominates other motives because, once a state is conquered, it is unlikely to be in a position to pursue other aims. States can and do pursue other goals, of course, but security is their most important objective.”¹² It is in regard to this latter point of security that primarily caused the United States to invade Grenada in October 1983.

Both collectively and individually the new communist revolutionary government posed a perceived security threat to the United States. Individually, and on a direct human level, over one thousand American medical students who were studying in Grenada were at risk of being held hostage by this new menacing regime. For the United States government it evoked memories of the horrible American hostage situation that occurred in Iran just three years earlier.

Collectively, America as a great power entity, viewed its own security at risk because this new government was a communist one that sought to tighten its already close relations with communist Cuba, but most troubling of all, the Soviet Union, the United States’ global rival for almost forty years. Part and parcel of the new security risk Grenada posed was that this new radical government stood in direct defiance of Uncle Sam’s long established Monroe Doctrine, a policy of hemispheric dominance.

It is one thing to speak of this rather audacious foreign policy doctrine along hemispheric lines, but it quite another to discuss it when referring to the Caribbean region. Ever since America had become a full blown great power at the turn of the twentieth century, it had always viewed the Caribbean region as the inner core of that doctrine, or the nearest to a home region. In fact, from the antebellum era to the Spanish-American War in 1898, there had been powerful business and political lobbies in the United States who thought it best, and “natural,” for their

government to annex large archipelagic swathes of the Caribbean.¹³ In short, when it comes to the Caribbean region, the United States has, since the genesis of the twentieth century, been extremely sensitive to any challenges, either internal or external, to its assertive hegemony. And this sensitivity derives from the fact that one of America's greatest sources of power is its unique regional hegemonic position in the Caribbean, and more generally, the western hemisphere. Recognizing the uniqueness of this feat Mearsheimer states "the United States is the only regional hegemon in modern history, although other states have fought major wars in pursuit of regional hegemony: imperial Japan in Northeast Asia, and Napoleonic France, Wilhelmine Germany, and Nazi Germany in Europe. But none succeeded."¹⁴ Of course other regional powers are emerging and none so dramatically than India.

Memories of Cuba slipping violently out of America's imperial orbit were still fresh in the minds of the American public and government. As was the recent socialist revolution in Nicaragua whose leaders had aligned themselves with Castro and were committed to opposing American interests and supporting Marxist revolutionary groups in the region. Dealing with one communist government in the Caribbean, that was a client state of Moscow, and another left-wing government in nearby Nicaragua, together, posed a serious enough security threat (one that almost led to an all out nuclear war in October 1962), that the Reagan administration was not willing to allow for another communist state, which could become a launch pad and safe haven for Russian military forces, to come into being in the region.

From an American perspective, in which the Iranian Revolution had occurred four years earlier in 1979, the same year the Sandinistas seized power in Managua, the Cuban Revolution and the subsequent missile crisis still fresh in people's minds, and the odious appearance that the Soviets were once again meddling in Uncle Sam's backyard, President Reagan and the American

public (who overwhelmingly supported the invasion) became convinced that drastic action was needed to preclude another small island Caribbean state from coming under the yoke of Moscow.

As history has recorded the invasion was a success and American forces quickly gained control of Grenada. Democracy was restored and the communist revolutionaries were jailed and in some cases executed. The United States had shown a willingness to back up its claim of regional dominance in the Caribbean, another Cuba would not be allowed. Elaborating on this latter point, of displaying its hegemonic dominance, one author comments, “The Reagan administration seized the chance of ending the left-wing reign in Grenada, demonstrating the military superiority of the US in region and frightening groups in the Caribbean and Central America who were in the process challenging US hegemony or who were considering it.”¹⁵ The American intervention was widely supported across the Commonwealth Caribbean, particularly among the smallest island states.

The United States was sucked into Grenada because the island contained two elements of SISE, which were deemed vital to the American national interest, namely geopolitical position and great power competition. Geopolitical position is an obvious and subordinate component that interconnects with the much more important magnetic element, great power competition.

A democratic government had been overthrown in 1979; it had strong communist proclivities, yet both the Carter and Reagan administrations did not feel compelled to invade Grenada. For four years this undemocratic regime was left to its own devices. What made the United States experience such an overnight, overpowering suction effect, was the precipitous appearance of great power competition, via the skulking involvement of the Soviet Union, once the communist revolutionaries took over and wore their communism on their sleeves. President Reagan refused to allow another Caribbean state put the American hyperpower’s security at risk

and allow the Soviets to have another base in their backyard. As decisive and quick as the invasion was, so too was the United States' view that in the ongoing global great power competition with the USSR it was unacceptable and dangerous to permit Moscow to have yet another small island geo-pivot in the Caribbean.

DIEGO GARCIA

Diego Garcia is the most enigmatic small island that is covered in this thesis since it is barely known to the western public, even though time and time again this very small island, located in the central Indian Ocean, has protected the interests of the West, and more specifically, the aims of the Anglo-American powers.

This tiny island, which is part of the Chagos archipelago, had long been under the sovereignty of Britain by the time of the Cold War era. The United States would become very interested in the island as well, and in 1971, Washington and London reached an agreement whereby both countries would use Diego Garcia as a military base for joint interest purposes.¹⁶ An unfortunate side effect of the Anglo-American powers' decision to turn Diego Garcia into a total military base was that they decided to forcibly deport the indigenous population of about 2000 people to other islands in the Indian Ocean.¹⁷

What caused the United States, by 1971, to become so interested in Diego Garcia was that this island contained two key elements of SISE for it, namely, geopolitical position and prized resources.

First, in regard to geopolitical position, the United States was drawn in to Diego Garcia because of its excellent geopolitical position and its potential for being a crucial geo-pivot for the American military. Conversations between Washington and London about the possibility of making the island a shared military base began in earnest in the mid 1960s, when there were growing concerns in both capitals about the Soviet Union's increasing influence in the Indian Ocean region. Indira Ghandi had become Prime Minister of India by 1966, and America worried she had strong pro-Soviet leanings. These fears, of a Moscow-New Delhi axis, became a formal reality in the late summer of 1969, when India and the USSR signed a treaty of friendly relations. This union set off alarm bells in Washington, and induced the whole process of turning Diego Garcia into a full-fledged shared Anglo-American military base.

In early 1971, Britain and the United States agreed to terms and the island began to be turned into a military base. Between July 1971 and May 1973 the two thousand indigenous inhabitants were forcibly removed from their homes, and transferred, eventually, to Mauritius and the Seychelles, some twelve hundred miles away from their home island.

Expounding on the geopolitical position point, when American military planners looked at a map of the world, previous to their acquisition of Diego Garcia, it became quite apparent that the United States lacked a real permanent and advantageous presence in the Indian Ocean region.

By the late 1960s the Cold War had moved from being a conflict that pitted Moscow against Washington directly, in the guise of nuclear war, to a period of detente in which America and the Soviet Union no longer really spoke of the possibility of war between one another, and

instead both thought the new battle front in the Cold War would be more diplomatic and move to the “Non-Aligned” third world; the need to enlist allies in this titanic ideological struggle commenced. Famed Cold War historian, John Lewis Gaddis, describes the Non-Aligned battleground in which the superpowers sought to gain friends:

“Non-Alignment” provided a way in which the leaders of the “third world” states [like India] could tilt without toppling: the idea was to commit to neither side in the Cold War, but to leave open the possibility of such commitment. That way, if pressure from one superpower became too great, a smaller power could defend itself by *threatening* to align with the other superpower.¹⁸

Thus, when India started to gravitate toward Moscow’s orbit in the late 1960s, Washington saw Diego Garcia as a favourable island for killing the proverbial two birds with one stone. First, by having a military base on the island, it ensured that American forces would have an excellent geopolitical midpoint in the Indian Ocean, linking its Far East forces with forces in the Western Hemisphere. Diego Garcia would be used as a base for transit and the refuelling of ships and planes.

Second, controlling Diego Garcia would allow Washington to have that all important offshore presence in the subcontinent region, deterring the Soviet Union from the Persian Gulf, and reminding India that it best not get too cozy with the Soviets because America and her military forces were stationed and ready in the Indian Ocean theatre. The advantageous geopolitical position had drawn America to Diego Garcia; it would serve as an “unsinkable

aircraft carrier" and a watchdog deterrent type of military base. In Washington's generational great power competition with the USSR, the gaining of Diego Garcia was an invaluable accomplishment and gambit.

There was another important facet of SISE that induced America to be sucked into Diego Garcia and that was prized resources. Though this element would become much more important following the "Oil Shocks" of the 1970s, the United States also saw the establishment of a military base on the island as imperative to their own national interest, because from this base the American military could monitor the oil flow in the Persian Gulf region, and when necessary, intervene militarily to ensure the stable flow of oil back to the home front. Specifically, in June 1975, Congress agreed to the military's request to enlarge and upgrade the base at Diego Garcia. The Pentagon argued effectively that a larger base would be needed to safeguard U.S. and European oil interests in the Persian Gulf, and to counter the growing Soviet influence in the region. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 served to compound the U.S. military's worries over the safety of Persian Gulf Oil. When the Carter Doctrine was announced, which basically stated that the United States viewed the Persian Gulf region and its oil as a vital interest and any outside attempt to gain control of the region would be repelled by force if necessary, the strategic value of Diego Garcia increased tenfold. The Rapid Deployment Force, called for in the Carter Doctrine, could be stationed at times on the island when needed. Diego Garcia as a military base was expanded even more following the revolution or as one commentator puts it "following the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979, Diego Garcia saw the most dramatic build-up of any location since the Vietnam era."¹⁹

Hence, throughout the 1970s, with oil shortages a painful yet common occurrence, and political instability in Iran that could threaten oil supplies, the Anglo-American island base of

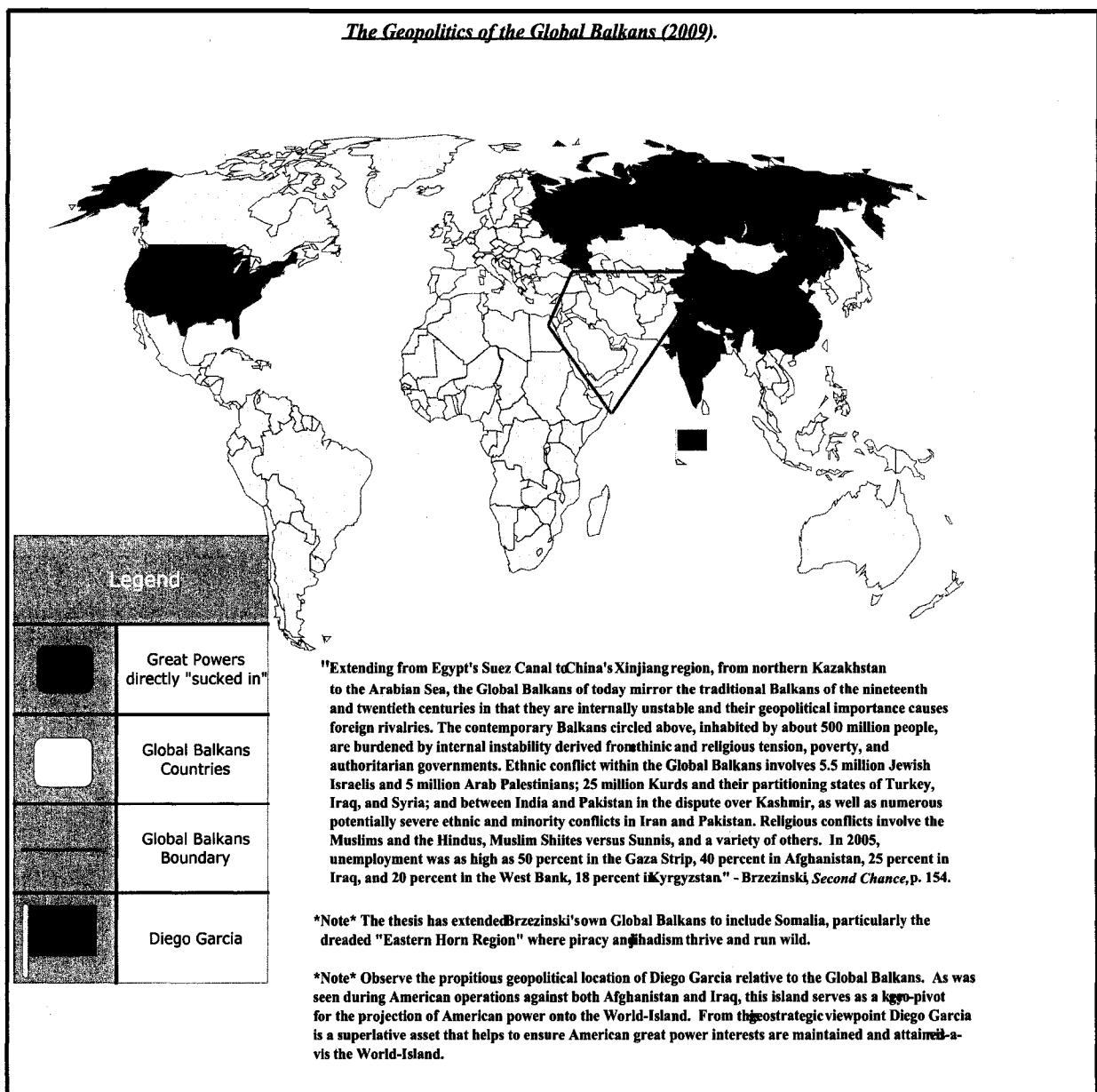
Diego Garcia became even more important, as now the element of prized resources became part of the overall SISE dynamic that compelled the United States to maintain a powerful military presence on the island. Indeed, for many including President Carter ensuring a safe and steady supply of oil became the most important reason to maintain a strong military presence in Diego Garcia.

This Cold War Island's geopolitical importance began to fade in many persons' eyes after the Soviet Union imploded and Clintonian policy analysts began disseminating their creed of globalization as a kind of fix-it-all solution to the world's ills. However, 9/11 would once again catapult Diego Garcia back into the limelight, and back to the top of the Pentagon's list as one of the most important pivot points for the U.S. military.

From this island, which maintains a transitory military population, bombers were launched against the Taliban in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001, and against Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the spring of 2003. In fact, the first American attack on Iraq in March 2003 came from bombers launched from Diego Garcia, as left-wing academic Chalmers Johnson explains, "Along with B-52s and B-1s, Diego Garcia's B-2s led the 'shock and awe' bombing attacks on Baghdad on March 22, 2003, dropping 4,200 pound 'bunker busters' on the essentially undefended city."²⁰

In terms of the "War on Terror" this island would serve as a convenient refuelling point for secret CIA rendition flights.²¹ Presently, Diego Garcia is an invaluable small island geo-pivot for the United States. It serves to protect U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf, in terms of prized resources (oil), and also provides America with an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" from which American military power, via air and sea, can be projected against regional enemies be it

Iran or extremist groups that are found within the Global Balkans—an area that grows more volatile with each passing day.²²



Diego Garcia, in its Cold War context, was an island that attracted the United States to it, because it contained two primary and key elements of SISE: geopolitical position, and later, by

way of the need for secure oil, prized resources. Worth stating, is that great power competition was part and parcel of geopolitical position in terms of the United States' decision to build a military base there. The Soviets, mainly through a congenial Ghandian India, were threatening to extend their ominous sphere of influence into the Persian Gulf region. Diego Garcia's exceptional geopolitical position in deterring Soviet influence, and protecting American oil interests, was the most powerful element that caused this suction effect. For all these reasons, Washington, by 1971, was drawn in to this small island in the central Indian Ocean.

CONCLUSION

The Cold War period is an intriguing era in which to analyze SISE in because it is the only bipolar system that is available for social scientists to examine in the modern great power context. Often academics and others will look for clarity, be it in a case study, model, or system. In the case of the Cold War bipolar order that lasted from 1946-1991 no one could have asked for a more pure clear system to observe. It is in this system's clarity that is so satisfying for international relations scholars.

This geopolitical effect for the first time in modern history functioned in a two power order that most importantly was also an atomic one; for the majority of this conflict both Moscow and Washington had the capacity to destroy the other and the world many times over. What this entailed for SISE was that, with the exception of Khrushchev's death defying gambit in Cuba, this terrifying confrontation would wane with time. As each superpower respected the

other's home sphere of influence (again save for Cuba in 1962). One might quip that SISE during the Cold War entered a bit of an "Ice Age," because, the two sole existing great powers rarely contested each other for small islands. This geopolitical freeze can be credited to MAD, and the very pertinent and oft understated fact that the Soviet Union was by nature a continental power. Not since Peter the Great, in the 18th century, had any Russian leader really dreamed of a significant maritime empire for Russia and later its Soviet incarnation, had always controlled the largest swathe of the most important island: Mackinder's World-Island.

Hence, because the two superpowers could not engage each other outright, their battleground moved to the third world and wars of proxy were undertaken. After 1962 spheres of influence, especially clearly understood home spheres, were respected. It is directly after the Cuban Missile Crisis that it can be said that a deep freeze set in for SISE in relation to the superpowers.

As demonstrated in the case studies there were a few enticing islands that magnetically attracted America, such as Diego Garcia in the 1960s and 1970s, and of course Grenada in 1983. The United States, being the peerless maritime power had a much higher chance of being sucked into various islands such as the two aforementioned ones.

A case like the Falklands should be viewed as an aberration and a study whereby the powers that were sucked in were not great in the conventional sense, but were noteworthy relative to the poor defenceless island they fought over.

This nearly half-century old system was not a very active one in terms of the superpowers directly competing for islands. This geopolitical effect occurred rarely, and when it did often it was outside each superpowers traditional sphere of influence. Great power competition was the most common element that induced either power to be drawn into an island. Even in the case of

Grenada, where the “Red Menace” threat was perhaps overblown, because it was in Washington’s home sphere of influence absolutely no chances were to be taken, thus Grenada was invaded and pacified.

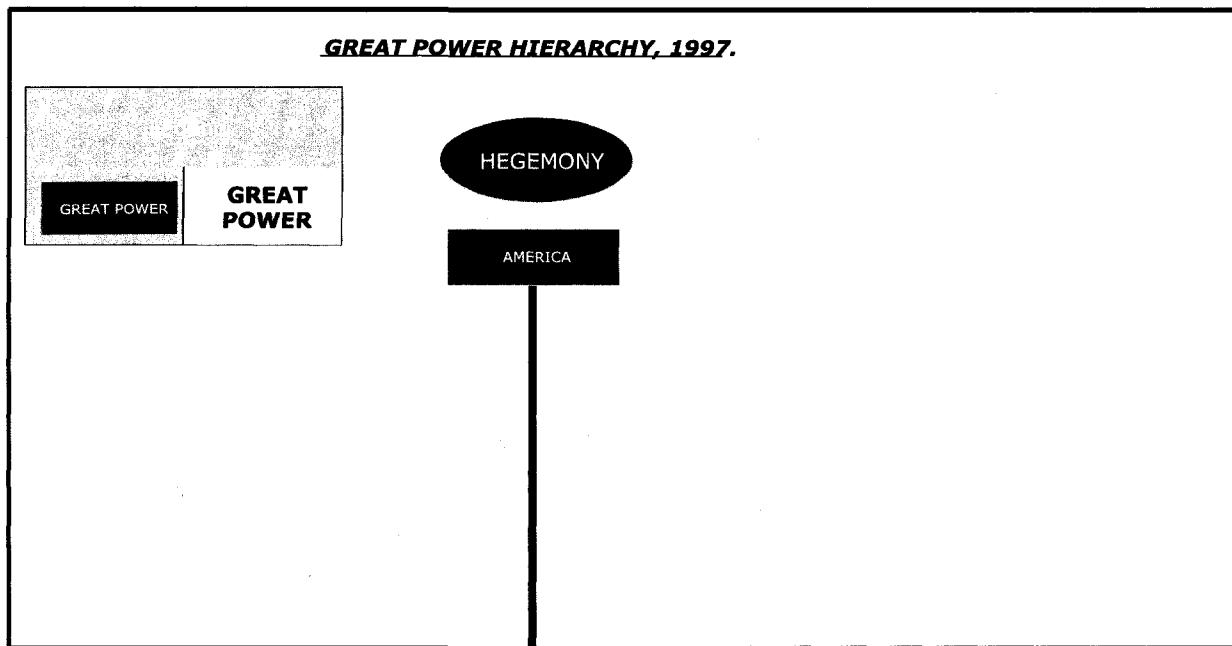
With the precipitous implosion and collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991, the bipolar order came to a conclusive end. A new era of never before seen true unipolarity would emerge, as the United States would, for the first time in its history, bestride the globe like an apex-colossus. By the late 1990s a consensus would emerge that “Pax Americana” had finally arrived, the benevolent lone superpower would usher in a great new epoch of peace and prosperity for all. Buzzwords like “Failed State” and “Nation-Building” would become all too common, as would peoples hopes that the days of great powers and power politics were forever gone. It is within this extremely optimistic context that SISE will be reviewed and examined in the last chronological chapter: SISE in a unipolar age.

SISE: 1992-2009

The collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 was as momentous an event in great power history as were the surrenders of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in 1945. It was as consequential as Germany's defeat in World War I and Napoleon's demise at Waterloo in 1815. All these watershed moments in great power history were such because they all precipitated an ushering in of a new great power era and system. Yet the dissolution of the Soviet Union is a unique and stand-alone event in terms of what after-effects followed. The almost overnight disappearance of the Soviet superpower meant that for the first time in modern world history, one power, the United States, would reign supreme and alone. This unipolarity presented great opportunities for the American superpower in terms of promoting liberal democratic values, free markets, and of course attaining the nation's great power interests.

This fifteen plus year period of respite from the stresses and travails of a pluralistic great power system became just that, a temporary break. During this period a school of thought developed that took hold and caught the imagination of the western world and western policy leaders and thinkers. This whole amorphous movement is best described as the school of Globalization. And President Bill Clinton led this optimistic charge going so far as to purport that globalization was an undeniable unstoppable force that would one day bind all nations together and that power politics and national interest would become relics of the past.¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski describes President Clinton's view of Globalization as having strong undertones of historical determinism. As he puts it "Globalization thus became the theme that Clinton preached with apostolic conviction both at home and abroad. During a November 2000 visit to

Vietnam he called globalization 'the economic equivalent of a force of nature'; a few months earlier he had told the Russian Duma that the world's 'defining feature is globalization.'"²



From roughly 1992-2009 the United States would be the prime global actor and use its enormous influence and power to shape this nascent unipolar system as it saw fit. Near the end of George W. Bush's second term it would become clear to many foreign policy analysts that the "Unipolar Moment" was coming to an end.³ Powers such as China, Russia, India, and economically, the European Union, by 2008, had sufficient power and resources to assert their own great power sovereignty and in many cases make gains in their national interests at the expense of the beleaguered worn out American power.

In relation to this final historical chapter, however, SISE will be mainly analyzed during the golden era of unipolarity from 1992-2006. When the United States was hegemon other powers were still growing in strength but still much too feeble to challenge American

ascendancy. This period is known to many as a time of relative global peace and stability. With the great powers gone and a liberal benign hegemon at the helm noble endeavours such as peacekeeping, nation-building, and spreading liberal democratic values could and did commence. With no great power competitors to help make the international system more competitive SISE would to a large degree lose one of its key elements, great power competition. And in a unipolar environment where the hegemon was a liberal democratic power a lot of the suction effects that occurred did so because more advanced western powers were spreading modernity to failed states and other troubled regions around the globe.

This chapter examines SISE during the “Unipolar Moment,” and how in the context of a unipolar system, did it affect the lone superpower and other regional powers, in terms of drawing them to specific small islands.

The chapter will review one island case study, one regional model, and finally survey the challenge of failed states in relation to SISE. To begin, Taiwan will be examined and presented as one of the few cases where some great power competition was present during this supposed reprieve from great power politics. Next, the South Pacific Islands will be discussed and their relationships with regional powers will be touched on. Finally, failed island states will be analyzed and it will be explained how these states have served to catch the attention, and in some cases, draw in America or lesser regional powers.

A SLEEPING DRAGON NOT SO SLEEPY: CHINA AND AMERICA QUARREL OVER TAIWAN

China first lost Taiwan in a war with Imperial Japan in 1895, and through the Treaty of Shimonoseki the island officially was dislodged from its mother country. In 1949, after Mao Ze Dong's communists won the civil war against Chiang Kai-Shek's nationalists, the latter losing group fled to a recently liberated Taiwan and formed a rival Republic of China, contesting communist mainland China's claim as the one true government of all China. Taiwan and its pre-1949 inhabitants were sucked in to a Cold War battle between America and the Soviet Union along with communist China.

Taiwan's role as a Cold War battle ground in the early days of that grand conflict were solidified by two great strait crises both in the 1950s. Both short armed conflicts between the ROC and the PRC were ostensibly over a few small islands located between them in the Formosa Strait, but in reality these conflicts, one occurring from 1954-55 and the other in 1958, were about the bigger issue of the PRC wanting to conquer the ROC. It is said that it was during these crises that President Eisenhower came the closest to using nuclear weapons, though in the end he decided against it on both occasions. President Eisenhower in trying to convince Congress to agree to protecting Taiwan spoke rather presciently about just what an important geopolitical lynchpin this island was; one might conclude Ike understood the relevance of island based geostrategies long before anyone else did:

Since the end of Japanese hostilities in 1945, Formosa [Taiwan] and the Pescadores have been in friendly hands of our loyal ally, the Republic of China. We have recognized that it was important that these islands should

remain in friendly hands. In unfriendly hands, Formosa and the Pescadores would seriously dislocate the existing, even if unstable, balance of moral, economic, and military forces upon which the peace of the Pacific depends. It would create a breach in the island chain of the western Pacific that constitutes, for the United States and for other free nations, the geographical backbone of their security structure in that ocean.⁴

After the two short battles between the two Chinese states a period of manageable stability came about (most likely because by the end of Eisenhower's Presidency the United States became a formal defence ally of the ROC). For the next generation no major open conflict would erupt between the PRC and the ROC that is until 1995. It is this Third Taiwan Strait crisis that will be analyzed in relation to SISE.

The issue of Taiwan, in terms of its sovereignty, is of note because it is an issue that involves both China and the United States, both of whom are great nuclear powers. Beijing's biggest motivation for being perpetually drawn to Taiwan is clearly the element of prestige and honour. The Communist government sees Taiwan as a break-away province and has long had a policy that one day all of China shall be united under the sovereign authority of Beijing. More contemporarily, however, the element of great power competition has become part and parcel of China's attraction to Taiwan; what has caused this competition to commence is of course Washington's involvement as an explicit ally of Taipei.

The United States was originally sucked into Taiwan shortly after the Korean War broke out in an attempt to contain the spread of communism and ensure that the Soviet Union would not gain anymore footholds in East Asia. And in the 1990s, America was still involved in

Taiwan for reasons of great power concern and competition, but the landscape had changed somewhat, from a former setting where Taiwan had to be defended against communism, to the present setting of Taiwan had to be defended to deter a rising China and ensure North East Asian regional stability. The sleeping dragon by the 1990s had awokened from its centuries of malaise, civil war, and internal discord to begin once more actively attempting to assert its hegemony over Taiwan. It is at this juncture that SISE in relation to the Third Strait Crisis is reviewed.

Right in the middle of the “Unipolar Moment,” an early and ominous sign of SISE and great power competition would rear its ugly head in the form great power brinksmanship in the Formosa Strait. For a long time the triangular relations between Beijing, Taipei, and Washington had been relatively stable and calm. This cooling of tensions was in large part due to the normalization of relations between Communist China and the United States beginning with Nixon’s much lauded “Opening” and culminating successfully with Carter’s official recognition of mainland China as the one true China. Yet by the 1990s, with a mutual enemy, the USSR gone, both sides saw amicable relations with the other as less important than before.

This third great crisis over Taiwan was precipitated by Communist China’s worries that then Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui was moving away from a One-China policy to a more autonomous policy for Taiwan, and also by Chinese disapproval at what they perceived as America giving Taiwan too much formal recognition by allowing its President to visit the United States in 1995.

Communist China, angered over Taiwan’s apparent move away from a One-China policy, and America’s perceived encouragement of this by inviting President Lee Teng-hui to visit the United States, responded with some serious sabre-rattling. China fired missiles near the shores of Taiwan during the summer and fall of 1995, and again in the spring of 1996 to

intimidate Taiwanese voters into not voting for President Lee Teng-hui. In response to these firings the United States sent Carrier battle groups to patrol the Formosa Strait, and reassure Taiwan that in the event of war with China, Washington would stand by its side.⁵ What sucked in Communist China and the United States to Taiwan during the crisis of 1995-1996 was chiefly the element of great power competition and to a lesser extent the element of prestige and honour.

America was a dominant great power in the mid 1990s, a lonely superpower, but China was an emerging great power, though largely dormant and non-combative. However, Communist China had always been sensitive regarding its own sphere of influence; Taiwan for China was not just an area of interest, it was an area of homeland interest and an internal matter. Washington, by seemingly inviting Taiwan's President with open arms, was in China's view meddling in an internal matter. Hence, China felt the great power competition need to convey to the U.S. that Taiwan was in Beijing's orbit and this was dramatically demonstrated with the firing of missiles.

To a lesser extent China was pulled into Taiwan during this crisis for the reason of prestige and honour. To have a Taiwanese leader legitimized in the United States by allowing him to visit was seen as a major affront to China's prestige. Yet this component was clearly a subsidiary element to the more concrete component of great power competition. China did not want Taiwan to move any further toward independence, and wanted Taipei to end its overt dalliance with its great power rival the United States.

The United States too was sucked into Taiwan in 1995-1996 for the SISE reason of great power competition. But for America it was not a competition so much concerned with spheres of influence, but instead it was primarily concerned with letting Communist China know and be aware that Washington was still the dominant power in the western Pacific, and that the issue of

Taiwan would only be settled diplomatically, not militarily. For the U.S. this issue boiled down to its own credibility regarding opposing China in defence of Taiwan. The Clinton administration was forced to deploy “two full carrier task forces to the area around the Taiwan Straits, the largest U.S. armada assembled in the Pacific since the Vietnam War.”⁶

If push came to shove Washington with its aircraft carriers wanted to make clear to Beijing that the United States was prepared to go to war with China if it invaded Taiwan. Thus, to defend an important island ally, and make clear to a potential future great power rival that America exercised maritime hegemony in the western Pacific.

How could all this happen during an era of unipolarity? The jury is still out on whether this period (1992-2009) was a true unipolar period.⁷ What most international relations experts do agree on though is that throughout the 1990s, China was rising, and was a growing great power not yet ready to strike out except when issues deemed existentially important to its interests were at stake, as has been chronicled in the case of Taiwan in the mid 1990s. Taiwan proved it could awake the sleeping dragon from its great power slumber even during the age of Pax Americana.

THE SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS RELATIONS WITH THE GREAT POWERS

In any exercise that includes the South Pacific region it is important to be clear on the definition of this region in question actually is. In political geography circles there is probably not a point more moot than demarcation of the South Pacific region. For the purposes of this thesis the South Pacific region, as a geographical term, is used in its broadest sense, and even the term Oceania can be used interchangeably. Of greatest concern are the sovereign thirteen island micro-states located throughout the South Pacific. The sixteen dependencies are part and parcel of this discussion but since they are formally dependencies they will not be the focus of this section.

During World War II these very small islands, nestled away in the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean, became of huge interest to many of the great powers, particularly Imperial Japan and the United States, as they clashed for hegemony in the western Pacific. Due to these islands' favourable geopolitical positions it caused Tokyo and Washington to be magnetically pulled into them.

Throughout the Cold War, this region was, for all intents and purposes, an American protectorate; indeed, with the acknowledgement and agreement from Australia and New Zealand, this large oceanic area became part of America's inner security system. In short, the Monroe Doctrine had been tacitly expanded to include the South Pacific region. And though for the majority of the Cold War period these islands attracted little attention from Washington or from Canberra in the security sense, for a fleeting moment in the 1980s this small island infested region caught the attention of the Anglo-American powers. The Soviet Union, after its invasion of Afghanistan, pondered a role in the region as a way to shift American focus from Central Asia

to another theatre. As one author comments “In the mid-1980s there was a concern about the increasing Soviet influence in the Pacific, with several nations willing to make diplomatic and commercial arrangements.”⁸ Libya too made half-hearted attempts at establishing relations with some of the independent island micro-states, such as Vanuatu, but these overtures were not sustained, and ultimately were rejected by the Pacific island states, due in large part to diplomatic pressure from the Anglo-American powers.

Thus, in the Post-World War II period, external threats involving the great powers have been completely absent from the South Pacific realm. The United States, with Australia as its deputy sheriff, has exercised complete hegemonic control of the area. South Pacific expert Stephen Henningham observes “following allied victory in the Second World War, the Pacific islands became or were reconfirmed as an integral part of the United States and Western sphere of influence. They have retained that status.”⁹ Furthermore, this region has, since the 19th century, been the natural real estate of the Anglo-American powers, with one small exception, “All the island states and territories are former colonies or protectorates of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, or the United States, except for Vanuatu, which formerly was the Anglo-French Condominium of New Hebrides.”¹⁰ No longer are these islands ‘prized stepping stones’ sought after by a few great powers. Instead, the Pacific island states are largely taken for granted small island geo-pivots or “unsinkable dinghies,” that are part of a larger somewhat informal American security umbrella that stretches across this relatively peaceful region. In fact, some Pacific island states such as the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau, which are recognized by international bodies such as the United Nations and the South Pacific Forum as fully sovereign countries, have very close ties to the United States, especially in the military realm. Washington is responsible for these “sovereign states” defence and security,

and these states are expected not to sign treaties with outside entities that are hostile to America.¹¹

With no credible great power threats to this region during the period (1992-2009), the affects of SISE have been minimal. Great power competition would not be on the table, as no conceivable competitors existed or would exist for the foreseeable future. Australia, the chief regional power, an acting enforcement officer for America, would over the years be sucked into failed or failing small island states, like the Solomon Islands, for reasons of security and exercising their hegemonic right to bring order to chaotic sub-regions within their sphere of influence. The case of the Solomon Islands in reference to SISE and failed island states will be discussed further in the succeeding section.

Important to mention as well is that Australia and New Zealand are relative to the Pacific island states, major regional, as Henningham explains, “Australia—and, to some extent, New Zealand—have often been seen as wielding the weight and influence of great powers in their relations with the Pacific island states.”¹² He points out that some Australian politicians have often been quoted as referring to the South Pacific region as “our backyard,” adding that some pundits are of the belief that in Canberra there is some support for an “Australian version of the Monroe Doctrine, similar in some respects to that pursued by the United States with respect to Latin America.” Indeed, in relation to the Pacific island states, Australia and New Zealand act as “the superpowers of the South Pacific.”¹³

Strengthening the Anglo-American powers uncontested dominance in this expansive region is the fact that the South Pacific region is probably one of the most remote areas in the World. When all but one of the world’s great powers, as of 2009, are located continentally on the World-Island, it produces a situation whereby the United States, along with its allies

Australia and New Zealand, control this area with a virtual great power monopoly, simply because none of the other powers, far away on the World-Island, have the capabilities to compete in the South Pacific theatre.

Hence, with no great power competitors, no prized resources, their geopolitical position undervalued in a unipolar system, and with seemingly little prestige or honour to be gained from islands already spoken for by the dominant great power, the South Pacific region during the unipolar era experienced little SISE. This area in discussion was firmly and unquestionably an American great power fiefdom. The area was pacific not just in name but also in nature, in terms of its level of enviable stability and security. Finally, it is difficult imagining this situation changing in the near or long term, as the United States hegemony in the region is likely to remain in place regardless of what happens in Europe, the Middle East, or East Asia. More than any other reason, the South Pacific's extreme peripheral location ensures this.

SISE and the Challenge of Small Island Failed States

The concept of “Failed States” really became enmeshed with mainstream foreign policy thought immediately after 9/11. Granted during the 1990s this notion of a failed state, whereby a state is considered failed for the primary reason that no functioning central government exists that can forcefully exercise its authority throughout its territory, gained a significant amount of traction in the eyes of the western public after President Clinton removed American troops from Somalia, many dubbing that war-torn country a failed state.

After 9/11 this idea overnight became an essential phrase in the foreign policy lexicon. The American superpower had been attacked from Afghanistan, a failed state, now after September 11, 2001 the world's most formidable great power had a new purpose for its security policy: to vanquish safe-havens used by terrorists, and where necessary, intervene and occupy failed states. Rather precipitously SISE would come to the fore in the unipolar environment and many small islands would come more into the focus of the United States.

Under the fused principle mentioned above in Chapter Two, that this work combines Morgenthau's Human Nature Realism with Mearsheimer's Offensive Realism, it is important to see why the United States would be sucked into failed or failing island states. Great powers according to Morgenthau have an inherent lust for power, and Mearsheimer's theory claims that great powers seek to maximize their power for the reason of security and survival which ultimately leads to hegemony as their final goal. Thus fusing these two famous realist theories together one can understand why in the post 9/11 climate the United States acted the way it did by invading two countries (Afghanistan and Iraq), and redoubling its anti-terrorist efforts globally. America, as the lonely superpower, had an innate craving for power that was compounded with its natural desire, after the 9/11 attacks, to more actively secure itself and establish its hegemony further around the world.

For many small islands, that are isolated and remote, just the kind of places terrorist prefer to set up shop, they would become much more closely monitored by Washington. In the following sub-sections SISE is examined in this post-9/11 environment, where the United States at varying levels, was pulled into some islands. First, the case of the Solomon Islands is reviewed where Australia with the endorsement of America intervened in 2003 citing the island chain as a failed state. Second, Islamic extremism on islands is probed as is the United States'

involvement in these trouble areas. And third, the perennial failed state case of Haiti is analyzed to illustrate the fact that islands which do not have a lot of value for great power interests are often ignored even though they are clearly failed states.

Australia's Solomon Dilemma

In July 2003 it became clear to Prime Minister John Howard that Australia would likely have to intervene militarily in a neighbouring state, the Solomon Islands. What was causing this inward looking Conservative Prime Minister to become outward looking and adventurous? The reason was that by the summer of 2003, the Solomon Islands, an archipelago of over one thousand islands, was a failing state on the brink of becoming a legitimate failed state. By July 2003, ethnic tensions and civil infighting had reached a point in the Solomon's where lawlessness was rampant, the subsistence economy had broken down, and armed gangs roamed undeterred. In short, the government had lost its ability to govern the country. In the case of the Solomon Islands one observer argues, cogently and clearly, that in 2003 these islands were definitely and egregiously failing:

“Before the intervention in July 2003, Solomon Islands bore many of the hallmarks of state failure. While it had not yet collapsed entirely, it was certainly failing: it was in the throes of a security and political crisis. Law and order had broken down, the economy collapsed, institutions were weak, and the government was paralysed and had lost legitimacy in the eyes of many Solomon Islanders. Ethnic Tensions continued to simmer, service

delivery was poor, and there was a broad social malaise born of few employment prospects, the prevalence of guns and the general instability. Government did not have control over its territory.”¹⁴

With the situation as dire as it was, Australia ended up intervening in the Solomon Islands, immediately after the failing country’s parliament requested that an international force be sent to quell the violence and restore order. Though Prime Minister Howard waited until after the invitation, many believe he was prepared to act even without consent from the Honiara. The security force was over 2000 strong and three quarters Australian, the rest of the forces coming from other South Pacific countries including New Zealand. Eventually order was restored and elected officials were able to exercise authority to a much improved degree over the volatile archipelago.

Canberra was sucked into this Melanesian scattering of small islands because this chain contained elements of SISE. These elements were weakness and geopolitical position, in conjunction with the natural behaviour of a great power when it feels threatened, especially within its own home sphere.

Australia, which as stated earlier in the context of the South Pacific is a great power, perhaps even a superpower, when faced with a perpetually weak and failing state on its north-eastern flank understandably became more focused on the Solomon Islands by 2003. No power ever allows a nearby weak state, teetering on the brink of failure, to totally fail, especially if that power believes total failure could pose a direct security threat. When Prime Minister Howard and his Foreign Minister, Alex Downer, made the case to the Australian public for a necessary intervention in the Solomon Islands, it was under the premise that if the feeble islands were

allowed to fail and left untouched, they could endanger Australia's security and well-being. Newsmagazine the *Economist* tersely describes Canberra's decision (and its allies) to intervene "Australia, New Zealand and other countries of the Pacific who have contributed to this force [in the Solomon Islands] clearly mean business. They do not want a failed state on their door step, with all the implications that holds with drug-running, money laundering, and its potential as a base for terrorist attacks."¹⁵ The SISE element of weakness can attract a great power to an island because a weak anarchic place tends to be a magnet for nefarious characters and activities. Hence, one reason Australia was drawn into the Solomon Islands was because the clear weakness of the failing state posed a perceived direct threat to its national security.

Part and parcel of the weakness component is also the component of geopolitical position. This is obvious, but needs stating. The Solomon Islands are only a three hour plane ride from Australia, and it is the islands' extremely close proximity that forced Canberra, by the summer of 2003, with chaos ensuing there, to seriously consider intervening in the troubled micro-state archipelago. The Prime Minister himself, at the time leading up to the Australian led intervention, justified the enterprise by placing the problem in the context of the War on Terror, and stating no nation on Australia's door-step would be allowed to fail and become a safe-haven for criminals, drug-lords, and terrorists.¹⁶ To be more candid, what John Howard was really stating was that Australia would intervene for the reason of national security; along with that it was exercising its right as regional hegemon in the South Pacific to become directly involved in stabilizing a perilous situation on the islands.

In reference to great power behaviour, Canberra acted no different than other regional hegemons, when it comes to intervening in a state that falls within their orbit if they deem it necessary. And never does a great power deem it more necessary to intervene in a state then

when that state is an adjacent one and poses a security threat to that power. Kennedy made many unsuccessful attempts to overthrow and assassinate Castro, and Reagan acted decisively in the case of Grenada. Both American Presidents acted as aggressively as they did because both Cuba and Grenada were geopolitically located only a “stone’s throw” away from the continental U.S., and trumping everything else, these two Caribbean islands were part of the United States’ home sphere. Prime Minister Howard did wait until he was “invited in” to the Solomon Islands to intervene, but it is highly likely that even without an invitation, eventually Australia would have moved in, especially in the context of those times when the War on Terror was at its zenith and in many circles an “illegal” intervention would have been considered acceptable.

Thus due to the SISE components of weakness and geopolitical position, being present in the Solomon Islands, in relation to Australia in the summer of 2003, Canberra experienced an irresistible pull toward these failing islands.

Islamic Extremism on Small Islands and their SISE on the United States

In the post-9/11 world, the War on Terror dominated the media, and the public’s attention too was turned to concerns about Islamic Extremism. President Bush made it his solemn duty to root out and destroy the terrorists wherever they were hiding. At first glance, when most think about Islamic terrorism, images of Arabs and the Middle East naturally spring to mind. But the gospel first heralded and spread by Prophet Muhammad, in the 7th century, eventually became a

global religion. And both the Indonesian and Philippine archipelagos have become home regions for the Islamic faith (the former much more so than the latter).

When the United States' War on Terror mentality was at its height from 2001-2004, Washington's security organizations like the Pentagon, and the CIA, scoured the globe in search of potential terrorist safe havens and bases. Early on it came to America's attention that islands in both the Philippines and Indonesia, posed possible security threats, as each archipelagic country had for years dealt with Islamic insurgencies that possibly had links with al-Qaeda. Specifically, the Philippine island of Mindanao, and the Indonesian island of Sulawesi were singled out, as being island locations that could be possible bases for al-Qaeda associates and operatives. Another Indonesian island, Bali, was eventually designated unsafe for Americans and all foreigners following deadly terrorist attacks, known as the Bali Bombings, in 2002 and 2005. Yet Bali is not considered a terrorist safe-haven, instead it is viewed as a top target for Islamic terrorists in South East Asia because it is a popular tourist destination for Westerners and due to its Hindu faith and culture.

Washington during the early days of the War on Terror was being sucked into Mindanao and Sulawesi because these islands were weak and posed a threat to global and American security.

Mindanao, the second largest and southernmost island in the Philippines, is, like the rest of the country, a predominantly Christian inhabited island. However, south western Mindanao has a long history of being mainly populated by Filipinos, who practise Islam. From 1969 to the 1990s, Manila was forced to deal with armed Muslim separatist militias in Mindanao who sought to secede from the Philippines. By the early 2000s, many of these groups had been disarmed and political grievances had been addressed to the point where most Filipino Muslims were satisfied

enough that they would no longer resort to violence. Yet the south western part of this island, by 2002, was believed to still host Islamic terrorists, some of whom may have had links with al-Qaeda.¹⁷

The United States, since its victory in the Spanish-American War in 1898, had controlled the Philippines first as a direct colony and then after World War II, as more of a quasi-vassal or client state. Washington had for years supported the dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, who was eventually defeated in an election in 1986 by democratic forces. In 1992, the then completely independent Filipino government, passed legislation expelling U.S. Armed Forces from the Philippines. Large overseas bases such as Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval base were shut down. Ever since their formal expulsion, the United States has sought a way to get back to the Philippines, and the war on terror provided the right opportunity. In 2002, the US military was allowed back into the country to train the Philippine Army, help locate terrorists, and ultimately squash any Islamic extremists' cells that were located in south western Mindanao. Berkley academic, Chalmers Johnson, summarizes the convoluted Filipino-American relationship particularly with regard to its military aspect:

After World War II, we gave the Philippines its independence but, until the Philippine Senate expelled us in 1992, we maintained two of our largest overseas bases there—Clark Air Base at Angeles City and Subic Bay Naval Base at Olongapo, both on the island of Luzon. Ever since 1992, the Pentagon has been trying to find a way to re-establish a military presence in the islands, whether by exaggerating the threat of China, through military "exchanges" under so-called visiting forces agreements, or more recently

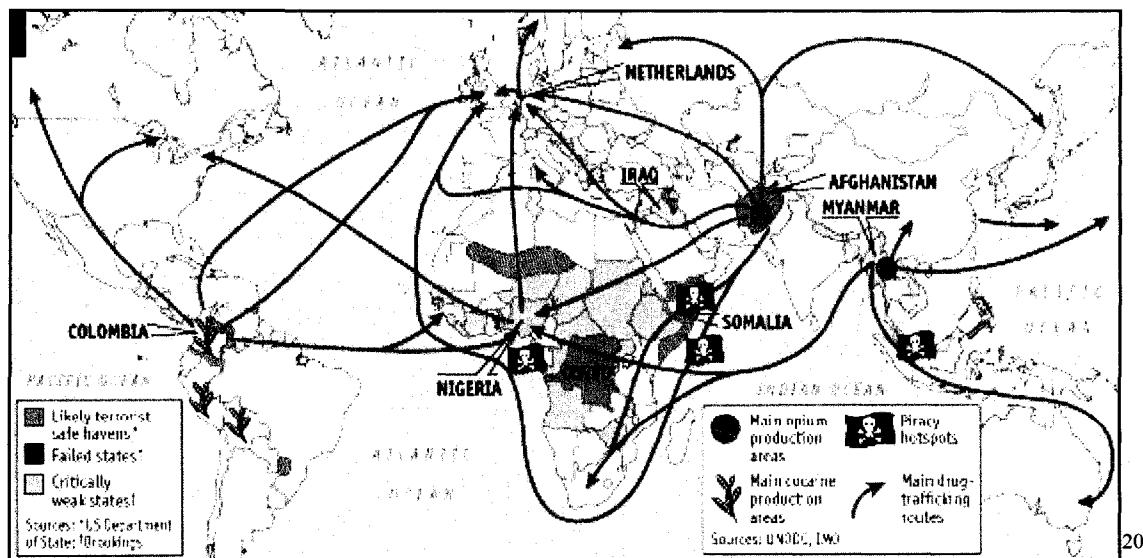
under the rubric of the “war on terrorism.” During 2002, the Bush administration succeeded in reintroducing forces into the Philippines to train Filipinos to fight Muslim guerrillas in the southern islands.¹⁸

The United States was being pulled back into its former colony for reasons of weakness and security, in the contemporary war on terror context. In the larger context if the Pentagon was likely glad to be returning back to this island archipelago because a more cooperative ally in Manila would mean better geostrategic positioning for the United States Navy in the region. The game of great power one-upsmanship is perpetual.

As for the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, a similar situation appeared following the 9/11 attacks, in the sense that the United States became much more interested in the Islamic terrorist groups that operated on this island. Sulawesi is one of the four great Sunda Islands, and is located between Borneo and the Maluku Islands (also known as the Spice Islands). This troubled island has a history of violence between its Christian and Muslim communities, but fighting reached new heights leading up to 2001. Riots, murders, and beheadings became the norm, and in late 2001 it was confirmed through various sources, that one of Sulawesi’s terrorist groups, Laskar Jihad, had links to al-Qaeda, and actual al-Qaeda members had fought on Sulawesi against local Christians.¹⁹ With concern over the terrorist presence on this island, the Bush Administration fought Congress hard for once again normalizing military relations with Indonesia. From 1999-2005 the United States Congress had placed a ban on arms-sales and impeded deeper military cooperation with the Indonesian military, following Jakarta’s invasion of East Timor in 1975. However, by 2005, with relations improved, and quelling terrorism at the top of Washington’s agenda, the ban on arms-sales and military cooperation was lifted.

The United States was sucked into Sulawesi, like Mindanao, because the Indonesian state was weak, and for fears over terrorism that ultimately could pose a threat to American security. In the 21st century, in the age of globalization, the two great oceans, which had long served as America's moats, were no longer safety guarantees; people who sought to harm the United States could now reach the homeland in a variety of ways using a number of lethal devices. Thus, for reasons of weakness and security, far off islands tucked away in interminable archipelagos, such as the Philippines and Indonesia, would become of intense interest to the United States, and it would become more involved in these regions over the course of the 2000s.

History has shown that great powers often will be sucked into small islands for security reasons, either for offensive or defensive purposes. In the cases of Mindanao and Sulawesi, the United States became involved in a support advisory role because it deemed it more prudent to combat Islamic terrorism on islands far away from America rather than giving the terrorist the chance to go on the offensive. Also, the United States was pulled into these islands because it deemed both Jakarta and Manila as too weak and incompetent to properly deal with terrorists.



Presently, these two islands are the only islands that are listed by reputable institutions such as the U.S. State Department and Brookings, as areas that are likely serving as Islamic terrorist safe havens. One can be assured the United States is closely monitoring events on these two islands, and is doing what it can to actively pacify these volatile regions.

Haiti: A Failed State with No Suction Effect

The recent plight of Haiti is highlighted to show why a failed small island can sometimes remain in a perpetually downtrodden state. Though located near the United States, it has been allowed to remain as a third world country. Washington pays little attention to Port-au-Prince because the island contains few if any components of SISE.

Haiti is the oldest black republic and the second-oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere, yet since its freedom was fully achieved in the early 19th century, this island nation (located on the western portion of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola) has been in a state of relative despair. Failed government has replaced failed government, and the only thing that has ever remained constant in Haitian life has been the state of near anarchy and economic turmoil that has long characterized this country's history.²¹

The most recent example of volatility in Haiti came in 2004, when a rebellion broke out, and led to the eventual resignation of then President Jean-Bertrand Aristide (a man who had been President before in the early 1990s only to be overthrown in a *coup d'état*). Once more, as almost always happens during a crisis in Haiti, the United States became involved and along with

other countries eventually intervened to quell the violence and restore a manageable degree of order.²²

Over the two hundred plus year history of the Haitian Republic the United States has intervened on scores of occasions. Most notably from 1915 until 1934, America directly ran Haiti, and as late as 1947 was still controlling some of Haiti's affairs through its "Good Neighbour Policy." Finally, the last major U.S. intervention before the 2004 incident occurred in 1994, when President Clinton was prepared to send thousands of American troops to quash a military coup, and restore the democratically elected government back to the Haitian seat of power in Port-au-Prince.

With all these notable great power interventions from the United States, on the surface, it seems that Haiti has a strong suction effect on Washington, most likely due to that power's concerns about having a failed state on its doorstep. In fact, though the United States has been pulled into Haiti numerous times, it has always been in a half-hearted manner. Often times America has intervened in Haiti simply because this troubled country falls within its great power sphere of influence. Also the "CNN effect," undoubtedly has, since the 1990s, forced the United States to take the plight of Haiti more seriously. But Haiti, a failed state always in turmoil, is the perfect example of a small island not garnering the attention of a great power because that power has no major interests in that island.

Outside of the obvious, the United States does not want Haiti to descend into complete chaos; Washington really does not have any tangible interests in this predominantly French-speaking country. It does not have any prized resources, its location is unimportant especially as long as the Caribbean region remains secure for the U.S. There is no great power competition over Haiti, and there is little prestige to be gained from staying the course in Haiti because most

policy-makers view this country as such a mess, that the costs of fixing its failed state status would be so enormous, and take so long, that it would not be worth whatever prestige would be accrued from such an endeavour. Haiti has been allowed to wallow in its misery, while right on the doorstep of the richest nation on earth because it contains few SISE elements in relation to the United States.

The United States seems only willing to ever do the bare minimum in Haiti because again it has minimal national interest there. As long as the security situation is reasonably manageable, and international pressure to do something does not mount, Washington, generally speaking, has been content to ensure that Haiti does not spiral into complete anarchy or become a security threat. Contrast Haiti's neglected status, due to its lack of SISE, with islands that have been discussed in earlier chapters, such as Okinawa or Diego Garcia, and this argument becomes even more convincing.

Okinawa has hosted a large amount of American forces since the end of World War II. In fact, until 1972, this small island chain was administered as a conquered territory by the Pentagon some twenty years after Japan proper had regained its own sovereignty. Before being returned to Japan in 1972, many Okinawans were interested in outright independence, yet this movement never took root.²³ Okinawa's people overwhelmingly object to America's heavy military presence on the islands, and have since the 1950s. Yet for over fifty years their calls to have the troops redeployed have gone unheeded, until only recently. The United States has invested a lot of time, money, and effort into making Okinawa one of the premiere geo-pivots in its global geostrategy, since the island's geopolitical position is so important, and because other key SISE element such as great power competition are present (i.e. China). Hence, an island like Okinawa has received a great amount of attention from the United States and been subjected to

special treatment because Washington sees Okinawa as very important to its own national interest.

Diego Garcia is yet another clear example, of an island being the intense focus of a great power, because that power deems that island to be critical to its national interest. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the United States viewed Diego Garcia so important to its grand strategy, in terms of geopolitical position and great power competition, that it forcibly removed the indigenous population. Still today, in 2009, the Chagos islanders have not been allowed to return to their native homeland because the United States still uses Diego Garcia as a key small island geo-pivot. Washington has spent untold billions on this island, in terms of military spending, and removed the local population, all because this island is deemed so important to the American national interest.

Thus, when Haiti is juxtaposed with the examples of Okinawa or Diego Garcia, it becomes clear that the main reason why Haiti has for decades remained in a perpetual state of chaos and poverty is because a power, like America, simply does not see any national interest in the island beyond just minimum security needs. Whereas the national interest is so great in Okinawa and Diego Garcia due elements of SISE being present on those islands, that the United States has long focused enormous amounts of its time, money and effort in those places.

Haiti, from the American great power perspective, is an unimportant, francophone Afro-Caribbean failed state aberration, located on its doorstep. It possesses nothing of *realpolitik* value to the United States, thus its failed state status is allowed to continue unabated. Haiti is like the whole of sub-Saharan Africa condensed into one small island state. Yes the anarchic situation is saddening, but from the great power viewpoint the area in question has no strategic value, and the costs of intervention are too high to warrant any action. Haiti, as of the first

decade of the 21st century, has the dubious distinction of being a failed state with little to no SISE.

CONCLUSION

The unipolar period is a truly unique period to examine SISE because it is the only unipolar model that is available for social scientists to analyze in the modern great power context. It is in this unipolar order's exceptionalism that its strengths emanate. Observing SISE in a system, where for the majority of the era, there was only one power a superpower, is useful and informative because it indicates to the observer how this dynamic operates when seemingly a key component, great power competition is diluted if not completely taken out of the equation. Unlike the Cold War, a time frame whose history is largely cut and dry, in terms of a firm start and end date, the unipolar order that lasted from 1992-2009, has not gained widespread acceptance as a great power period that has come and gone. It is still much too soon, as of this writing, for this epoch to be recognized and accepted in the mainstream, as a legitimate great power period.

This geopolitical effect for the first time in modern history functioned in a one power order in which the hegemon was a liberal democratic one. During the majority of this system, the United States exercised is hegemonic power, globally, with few seeking to challenge it. For SISE this lack of inherent great power competition, meant that elements other then natural competition would come to the forefront, as the United States and other regional powers, would, for different reasons, be drawn to small islands. Hence, because America bestrode the globe as

the sole superpower for much of this time frame, one of the main reasons that caused it to be sucked into islands was the simple great power behavioural fact that it was attempting to assert and implement its hegemony in regions it had hitherto largely neglected. Another key reason the United States was magnetically drawn to certain islands was that the SISE component of weakness was undeniably luring in the war on terror failed state sense.

The Taiwan Crisis of 1996 is an excellent example of first, America becoming deeply involved in an island militarily because Taipei was deemed by Washington as part of its hegemonic system, and second, this case was an anomalous one where a growing but still too weak China contested the United States' claim as protector of Taiwan. After a bit of brinksmanship and gunboat diplomacy on both sides cooler heads prevailed. However, this crisis does not forebode well for possible future conflicts between China, which now is a full-fledged great power, and America, which is now a great power in relative decline. China proved it would pick a fight with the United States over Taiwan when it was not an equal great power, and when America was at its own great power apex.

As discussed in this chapter, the South Pacific Islands really distinguished this era of unabated American power. Already a protectorate of Washington, the South Pacific region became even more firmly under the patronage of the United States through various military and diplomatic agreements. Also, through the United States' close allies, the regional great powers Australia and New Zealand, this region continued to be an Anglo-American fiefdom. This region epitomized the unipolar era, as there was no competition at all between rival powers; instead Washington just tightened its preponderant grip on the area.

Where the United States did however experience suction effects was on islands that were deemed to be weak and failed states. Islands from the South Pacific region, to the Indonesian

and Philippine archipelagos, came to the superpower's attention, following the 9/11 attacks, because after that America viewed any failed state as a possible national security threat. Thus, America was sucked into these islands for the dual synergistic reasons of weakness and security; to pacify volatile islands and establish a manageable degree of order that was decidedly pro-American. The unipolar conditions that still existed after 9/11 permitted the United States to intervene in troubled islands either explicitly or through stealth methods, much more easily than during the Cold War, when a rival power, the Soviet Union, might always seek to counter such gambits.

This system—which lasted less than a generation—was not as active as previously reviewed multipolar systems. But this system, due to its unipolar composition, allowed for much more freedom of manoeuvre for the sole great power, the United States. Besides the impressive great power feats of unilaterally invading World-Island territories such as Afghanistan and Iraq, Washington could and did become very involved on small islands in the 1990s and 2000s, particularly, when the war on terror was kicked into high gear, following the attacks on the World Trade Center buildings. This geopolitical effect occurred rarely, and when it did, the United States was usually involved to some degree, either major or minor. In a period much remembered for its relative peace and prosperity SISE was a much less ubiquitous force than it had been, particularly during multipolar eras. Hence, there was not one identifiable component that was most common or reoccurring during this period, instead America was drawn into certain islands many times for reasons of inherent failed state weakness and national security.

With the review of the unipolar period, the chronological portion of this work has come to an end. In the succeeding final chapter, conclusions will be made regarding this proposed

theory and its validity will be argued. And Mackinder's *Heartland Theory* will be refined placing more emphasis on powers competing for small islands rather than just the World-Island.

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

SISE has been reviewed in numerous great power systems and periods. The main tools of this vetting have been a combination of the empirical method, the political science theory of realism, in conjunction with sound argumentation. With the examination process finished, the concluding chapter will seek to do two interrelated tasks. First, final conclusions will be stated most importantly the validity of this theory will be stressed. Also small islands in conjunction with certain dynamics that seem to refute SISE will be discussed. And second, Sir Halford John Mackinder's *Heartland Theory* will be refined by placing an emphasis on great powers competing for small islands, instead of just solely competing for the World-Island.

CONCLUSION: SISE'S VALIDITY

The validity of SISE has, it is hoped, been shown through the large empirical exercise in this thesis, whereby three hundred fifty years of great power history in relation to small islands, has been reviewed in an effort to substantiate this theory. Historical analysis is useful, and generally when a social science theory is tested it is under the lens of history. Inductive reasoning is not perfect, but it has been one of the main modes of theory verification that theorists have used for centuries when trying to prove their hypothesis's credibility. However, all empirically based theories should, like all others, be subjected to competent scepticism, scrutiny and adversarial review, and SISE should be treated no differently.¹

The other critical verification component of this hypothesis is the inclusion of the realism school of thought, and fusing it with the empirical method of evidence gathering. This whole thesis is one that is clearly ground in political science, particularly, the branches of international relations and its sub-field, the political theory of realism. SISE is best understood, and likely best appreciated, by those who are grounded in these social science fields.

Utilizing the combined tools of history, empiricism, and realism, a validation process has been undertaken. SISE has been examined in five different great power systems, and one brief great power conflict (World War II). To strengthen this theory's versatility it has been examined in three different types of great power orders: unipolar (1), bipolar (1), and multipolar (3). Finally, SISE has been applied and reviewed globally, observing the geopolitical effect in many different theatres most notably the Caribbean, Mediterranean, the South Pacific, and the Indian Ocean regions. Subjecting the theory to diversity, in the sense of various great power models and different geographic theatres helps to strengthen the whole validation process.

Now at the end of the validation process, whereby the tools of history, empiricism, and realism have been utilized, four key conclusions can be made regarding this nascent theory. First, upon review, it shall be stated that SISE is a geopolitical effect that *can* exist in the international system when certain components of interest are present in the relationship between a small island and a great power or powers. Five critical components of interest have been identified. They are as follows, in no particular order: geopolitical position, weakness and small size, great power competition, prized resources, and prestige and honour. These components of interest are magnetic for the great powers. Each component can in itself suck in a great power or powers to a small island. Also, as has been evident throughout this work, in certain cases, more than one component of interest may be present in the SISE dynamic that exists between a great power or powers and a small island. Finally, in reference to the actual components of interest, often times when there is more than one component, these elements will work in synergy with one another to produce the suction effect. A perfect example of this synergism is the most common combination, whereby the components of geopolitical position and great power competition form a chemistry, and work together to suck in two or more great powers.

Second, a conclusion can be made in relation to the three types of great power systems that have been analysed. SISE is most active in a multipolar system, because it is under this structure that the theory is most active, due to the inherent great power competition that encompasses the system. With multipolarity, there are more great powers (generally more than three), and more great powers naturally means that there will be a much greater chance for great power competition and conflict. When an island is being competed for by a group of powers, this suction effect will most often be much more intense, than if one power was being drawn into an island.

SISE is noticeably less active in both unipolar and bipolar systems. The key reason for this decline in suction effect activity is because there are fewer great powers, and thus, less great power competition. However, the bipolar and unipolar models that have been reviewed are stand-alone systems and since there are no other similar unipolar or bipolar models examined, these systems must be seen as exceptional. For instance, the bipolar Cold War model was unique in that it was the first great power system that operated with two adversarial powers having the ability to completely destroy one another through nuclear war. Under this distinct system SISE waned, and the majority of suction effects happened in safe areas, so not to rouse or anger either nuclear armed great power. Also, under the unipolar system, SISE's frequency lessened considerably, but the conditions of the model must also be taken into account. The unipolar era was the first time this geopolitical effect would operate in a system, where only one incredibly robust great power, would roam the world largely unabated. This power was a liberal democratic one, and this period was dominated by international liberal institutions and concepts, which greatly reduced the strength and frequency of SISE, because this dynamic works best in a power politics system such as the multipolar ones that have been discussed.

Third, the component of interest that is most common and most often triggers the suction effect is geopolitical position. This component is the most common one for several important reasons. To begin, this element is the most observed one because at its heart it can serve two purposes for a great power. A power may be attracted to a small island, in terms of geopolitical position, for defensive purposes, in this case the island would be used as a buffer-territory by that power, to act as a frontier wall protecting off-lying home regions or regions of great interest. A power may also be attracted to a small island, geopolitically, for offensive purposes; in this case the island would be used as a geo-pivot by that power, to act as a launching pad to project hard

power into a neighbouring theatre. Another reason geopolitical position is the most common component of interest that triggers the suction effect, is because great powers intuitively perceive that major advantage can be gained by expanding their own sphere of influence, be it for defensive or offensive purposes. This is where, as has been shown, the component of great power competition compliments and in many cases forms a potent chemistry with geopolitical position. Each power desires a propitious geopolitical position because each power is in competition with another power or powers.

The fourth and final conclusion is that SISE is a highly versatile, dynamic, and ubiquitous force. This assertion is backed up by the fact that it has been clearly displayed that SISE has, and can take place, in any geographic theatre, so long as the two fundamental facets are present: an island and a great power or powers. From the seas to the oceans, this geopolitical effect's geographic universality has been demonstrated. This suction effect has occurred most commonly in maritime bodies, where clusters of small islands have existed, such as the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and the greater South Pacific. But the omnipresence of this force also has taken place in island poor regions such as the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic. Since there have always been great powers, and will always be great powers, some of whom now have global interests, and there will always be small islands, SISE will likely continue to be a versatile, dynamic, and ubiquitous force moving further into the 21st century.

REFUTATION CASES AND DYNAMICS

The vast majority of this thesis' focus has been on attempting to prove this proposed geopolitical theory, SISE, actually exists in the international system. However, often times a theory ironically enough earns more credibility and legitimacy through healthy doses of refutation. And certainly there are some glaring cases and dynamics that strongly refute SISE. For example, two islands which have clearly at times warded off this suction effect and not been pushed around by greater powers are Malta and Iceland.

Case study refutations: Malta and Iceland

Malta actually pushed around a larger power in the early 1970s when it put pressure on the British government, and attained its primary goal of increased subsidies. In the early 1970s, British Prime Minister, James Callaghan, had made it publicly known that the large British naval base on Malta would be closed during the decade. The Maltese, fearing the base closure would deal a major blow to their small island economy, engaged in some robust maverick diplomacy to ensure they were properly compensated for the loss of the military base. Malta's Prime Minister, Dom Mintoff, threatened to evict British military forces from the island and turn the base over to the Soviets. Eventually the British caved in, and agreed to greatly increase their economic assistance to Malta to offset the loss of the naval base. This Maltese case certainly refutes SISE because in this particular instance you had a power trying to extricate itself from a small island yet the small island did not want to break off the patron relationship. And through maverick diplomacy and playing one power off another (USSR versus UK/USA), this small island actually

was successful in attaining its own interests at the expense of the larger power. This case suggests larger powers cannot always just walk over or be drawn into small islands as they see fit, sometimes the small island will decide the outcome.

In the case of Iceland the second phase of the “Cod Wars” serves also to strongly refute SISE. In 1972 Iceland unilaterally declared an exclusive economic zone extending beyond its own recognized territorial waters. Reykjavik even went so far as to repudiate the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice over the matter. This brazen move frustrated the British, who sped in impetuously to defend its economic interests in the North Atlantic. London sent military vessels to act as a deterrent to Icelandic vessels to ensure they wouldn’t harass British fishing trawlers. Unfortunately for the British, this show of military force did not work, in fact it caused to create serious international backlash. First, Iceland’s highly manoeuvrable coast guard vessels were armed with wire cutters, thus allowing them to be able to quickly and efficiently cut British fishing nets before the Royal Navy could respond. And second, the picture of Big Britain bullying much smaller Iceland, created international sympathy for the tiny island nation, while these optics created much backlash against the domineering British. Eventually the tension subsided and a compromise was reached in 1976. And in the mid 1990s Iceland’s 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone was recognized by internationally. This case of Iceland’s victory over Britain in the “Cod Wars,” strongly suggests that sometimes small islands can hold their own against larger powers and even attain their interests at the expense of the stronger power. This case also refutes SISE because again you had a greater power being sucked into the Icelandic region for prized resource reasons, yet it could not successfully establish a dominant presence to attain those resource based interests. Britain was thwarted from doing so because Iceland was defiant and the international community was sympathetic toward it. These two

factors caused for SISE to be a non-factor. More than anything else Iceland successfully played the “underdog card” to its advantage and came out on top in this case. It can be said that in the cases of Iceland and Malta there was a certain power to their supposed “powerlessness.”²

Dynamics that refute SISE

Both of the aforementioned cases (Malta and Iceland) are clear examples of SISE not functioning as it is supposed to. This is probably because each case took place within the modern international liberal order. It is now important to highlight some key dynamics of this order that both refute SISE and will likely cause it to be in a severely weakened state in the 21st century. Also the important dichotomy between the behaviour of liberal democratic states and authoritarian states will be emphasized and discussed as it relate to SISE.

To begin, it is clear that the current international liberal order in which global institutions such as the United Nations, International Criminal Court, among others, works against SISE. This is because the international system is dominated by liberal values and principles such as territorial integrity, state sovereignty, equality among states regardless of size, and a near complete rejection of the concept that war is justifiable for national interests sake. These liberal values and principles serve to dilute and refute SISE and overall entrap power politics.

In both cases, small islands were in a conflict with Britain, which is a liberal democratic power. Thus in both scenarios the small island states were treated as equals in deliberations because Britain subscribed to liberal values and the liberal international norms and laws. With no power politics elements present in these cases SISE was a non-factor. It can be stated that

this type of environment is favourable for small island states, in terms of being treated as equals by other larger states, and deters these larger states from experiencing SISE.

As stated this liberal order entraps the key elements of power politics such as notions of larger power supremacy, *realpolitik* precepts, and little respect or recognition for international law. With these power politics elements taken out of the international equation, so too does SISE understandably weaken, even fade away. Elements of power politics are what fuel this effect, and without these important sources of power there can be no suction effect.

Currently, while the international system is mostly influenced by liberal concepts, it is not entirely. For example, the two authoritarian great powers, Russia and China, are primarily driven by *realpolitik* considerations when forming their own foreign policies. Hence, since these states are autocratic by nature and not democratic, it is logical to conclude that they have a greater chance of experiencing SISE because they adhere to power politics principles, and not liberal democratic ones. It is reasonable to conclude that if Iceland was geographically located in the Arctic sea, directly adjacent to Russia, and had begun to wage a fisheries war against the Soviet superpower, it is highly likely that Iceland would be invaded, its coast guard ships destroyed, and it may have been vassalized by Moscow.

This clear distinction of how SISE affects liberal democratic states differently from authoritarian *realpolitik* minded states is a crucial one. When a small island is in a conflict with a larger state that is a liberal democracy, the resolution to that outcome will likely always be peaceful. This is because again the larger state adheres to liberal democratic principles and will treat the small island state as an equal state. The greater democratic power will never consider the use of force, and this larger state will be concerned with its international standing or

reputation in regard to the conflict. All these elements cause SISE to be a non-factor when the dynamic is a small island in conflict with a greater liberal democratic power.

Conversely, when a small island is in a conflict with a larger state that is authoritarian, the resolution to that outcome may involve strong-arm tactics including the use of violence by the greater power. This is because the greater power adheres to authoritarian principles and will treat the small state as inferior. The greater authoritarian power will consider the use of force to resolve a conflict with a small island state, and will not be critically concerned with its international standing or reputation. All these elements cause SISE to be a definite factor when the dynamic is a small island in conflict with a greater authoritarian power.

Thus, it is logical to conclude that the present 21st century liberal international order serves to weaken SISE, even to make it a non-factor in the international system for the most part. But so long as there remains authoritarian great powers, such as Russia and China, who inherently do not subscribe to liberal democratic values or international law, one cannot rationally rule out the possibility that SISE will be active to some degree.

Yet though Russia and China continue to behave as authoritarian states, as evidenced by Moscow's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and Beijing's provocative mulling over of an anti-secession law that would make it legal to invade Taiwan at its own discretion, one has to conclude that the small island states sovereignty is likely to only be strengthened in the 21st century.³ There is a palpable liberal democratic momentum that continues to build in the international system, and at its core is the concept of state sovereignty. This notion and these liberal democratic beliefs act to buttress small island state sovereignty; and thus work to dilute SISE, even making it a non-factor.

In conclusion, it is clear that the modern liberal international order is working to refute SISE. As more and more countries adhere to liberal democratic principles, it is conceivable that someday this suction effect could disappear altogether. However, so long as the authoritarian state dynamic exists in the international system, so too will SISE likely exist, though in a much weaker form than previously witnessed.

REFINING MACKINDER'S HEARTLAND THEORY

Sir Halford John Mackinder's geopolitical perspective was, during his lifetime, largely ignored and given little respect. Yet his *Heartland Theory*, in which he proposes that the largest land mass in the world is the contiguous World-Island (constituting Europe, Africa, and Asia), and the actual heartland component (greater Central Asia), was the most important area of world because of its resources and geostrategic position. Mackinder ominously forewarned, and predicted, that if one great power was allowed to control the heartland of the World-Island, that it could become hegemonic, and thus a danger to the entire international system. His famous dictum goes as follows:

*Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland:
Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island:
Who rules the World-Island commands the World.⁴*

This theory has been adopted and understood by as many people as have rejected it, and 105 years later his theory is still being discussed. Many credit Mackinder as the foundational intellectual influence on George Keenan when he was crafting America's famous geostrategy of "Containment" against the Soviet Union, in 1947. Likewise, Zbigniew Brzezinski acknowledged Mackinder's theory in his own widely-read work on global geo-strategy, the *Grand Chessboard*:

The leading analysts of geopolitics have debated whether land power was more significant than sea power and what specific region of Eurasia is vital to gain control over the entire continent. One of the most prominent, Halford Mackinder, pioneered the discussion early in this century with his successive concepts of the Eurasian "pivot area" (which was said to include all of Siberia and much of Central Asia) and, later, of the Central-East European "heartland" as the vital springboards for the attainment of continental domination.⁵

It is clear that after a century plus, of scrutiny and adversarial review, Mackinder's general geopolitical notions of the World-Island and the Heartland are still central in an ongoing debate. Mackinder's perception of a World-Island, and of a Heartland that is competed for by rival great powers, are ideas that have inspired SISE. However, this theory differs from Mackinder's in that it places more importance and emphasis on the great powers competing for small island geo-pivots, rather than just competing intensely for the heartland region and hegemony of the World-Island. This refining of Mackinder's Heartland theory reflects the fact that for over of three hundred and fifty years, the great powers have competed just as intensely

for small islands as they have the heartland. Undoubtedly, the heartland region or greater Central Asia, is the most important region on the World-Island, and thus the world, in terms of its energy resources, its growing population, and its growing militancy, yet this area has proven too difficult for one power to conquer and hold on its own. In fact, this volatile region is hegemonic quicksand for any great power who aspires to control it through land power alone and by itself.

By and large most powers have learned that being sucked into the heartland is an exercise that will lead to near certain failure. Alexander the Great tried it, and eventually found it impossible to establish firm control and so retreated; the British in the 19th century made inroads into this region, yet they too after suffering heavy casualties and ignominious defeats, deemed it too difficult to hold the heartland and they too pulled out; the Soviet Union also tried to establish hegemony in the heartland, and was actually the most successful, controlling much of the resource rich region for a relatively good amount of time, yet it too eventually became embroiled in intractable conflicts, and eventually had to retreat back to its primarily Slavic lands while being fatally wounded in the process. Now the American superpower has become involved in the heartland region. After almost a decade and it appears that it also is beginning to sink into the hegemonic quicksand that is the heartland region of the World-Island. More likely than not, eventually the United States will cut some sort of a deal in Afghanistan and like all previous great powers, retreat back home, and in its case back to the water and small island geopolitics.

As of 2009, it is clear the great powers, while recognizing the importance of the heartland in relation to World-Island hegemony, view the maritime theatres and key small island geopolitics as possibly even more attractive, and a better way to control the heartland and the World-

Island. China and Russia, the two formidable authoritarian great powers, have been gradually attempting to push the United States off the World-Island, and want it out of the heartland entirely. China's navy grows, and so do its assertive demands that, key geo-pivot Taiwan, will someday be part of a greater China. If this does come to fruition, the United States would (in Taiwan) lose an important small island and this would place enormous geopolitical pressure on its ally, Japan, and on its own geostrategic position on the eastern periphery of the World-Island. Russia has also been doing its part to expel America from the heartland and the super continent by, for example, convincing the Kyrgistani government to close the important Manas Airbase in their country that has been used by Washington to ferry troops and supplies into Afghanistan.⁶ Russia is becoming more aggressive in its arctic claims by making incursions into North American airspace and planting flags at the bottom of the sea.

In the 21st century it is possible that in an effort to gain better strategic position around the World-Island and its heartland, the great powers may be drawn into small island geo-pivots. In the case of America, it will be sucked into small islands like Diego Garcia which then will be utilized as unsinkable aircraft carriers, through which airpower and air transport will be projected into the World-Island. Conversely, dictatorial great powers, China and Russia, will be sucked into small islands for the same core objective of exercising greater hegemony over the World-Island, but they will be drawn to the islands in an effort to establish buffers. Be it the Kuril Islands, Taiwan, or islands in the Arctic, islands will continue to have strategic importance for Russia and China.

Mackinder's *Heartland Theory* has been refined placing an emphasis on the great powers competing for small islands in an effort to control the World-Island, rather than being sucked in to the heartland itself.

Endnotes

Preface

¹ Europe's great power status contains a question mark because it is still presently the great enigma in great power terms. It has the largest economy in the world, but unlike the other great powers it is not a nationally cohesive entity by any means; thus it lacks a uniform and clear foreign policy.

Chapter One

¹ Stephen Royle, *A Geography of Islands: Small Island Insularity* (London: Routledge, 2001).

² Barry Bartmann, "Island War & Security," In *A World Of Islands*, ed. Godfrey Baldacchino, (Malta: Media Centre Publications, 2007), pp. 295-323.

³ D.K. Fieldhouse, *The Theory of Capitalist Imperialism* (London: Longman, 1969); D.K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (London: Pan, 1999).

⁴ Halford John Mackinder, "The Geographical pivot of history," *The Royal Geographical Society* No. IV (April 1904) : 421-437; And Halford John Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York City: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1962).

⁵ Alfred Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1805* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Bison Books Corp., 1980).

⁶ John Rourke, *INTERNATIONAL POLITICS ON THE WORLD STAGE.*, 6th Edition (Guilford, Connecticut: The Dushkin Publishing Group, Inc., 1993); Daniel Papp, *Contemporary International Relations: Frameworks For Understanding* (New York City: Macmillan College Publishing Company, 1994).

⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York City: Basic Books, 1997); And Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership* (New York City: Basic Books, 2004); Professor Huntington is directly quoted comparing Brzezinski to the famous German Chancellor Otto Von Bismark on the back cover of *The Grand Chessboard*.

⁸ Walter Russell Mead, *GOD AND GOLD: Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

⁹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

¹⁰ John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York City: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

¹¹ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace.*, 6th edition (New York City: McGraw-Hill, 1985).

¹² Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, p. 539.

¹³ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 55.

¹⁴ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 56.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, p. xvi.

¹⁷ On America being the present day "Maritime Power" and Britain before it, and for in-depth analysis of the "Maritime System" see, Walter Russell Mead, *GOD AND GOLD: Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), chapters. 4-9 and chapter 20; also see, Niall Ferguson, *EMPIRE*:

The Rise And Demise Of The British World Order And The Lessons For Global Power (New York City: Basic Books, 2003); And for an expounded study on Britain's time as the maritime power see, Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

¹⁸ Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, pp. 19-21.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁰ Mead, *God and Gold*, p. 95.

²¹ Ibid., p. 5.

²² Quoted in Stephen Royle, "Island Definitions and Typologies," In *A World Of Islands*, ed. Godfrey Baldacchino, (Malta: Media Centre Publications, 2007), p. 34.

²³ Furthermore, though most scholars agree that the modern European Great Power system largely took hold during the beginning of the 16th century formally with the coronation of Charles V, who became Holy Roman Emperor, and ruler of the Spanish Empire, starting back than would have caused this thesis to go far beyond its word limitations.

²⁴ For illuminating accounts of the late 17th - early 19th centuries great power system, see Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Chapter 3; Jeremy Black, *The Rise of the European Powers 1679-1793* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990); Also see Derek McKay and H.M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648-1815* (Longman Group Limited, 1983).

²⁵ The term "Offstage Power" is simply used to denote those states that were great powers that were somewhat geographically aloof from the epicentre of the Interwar great power system i.e. Europe.

²⁶ On the "Unipolar" moment, see Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, No. 1 (Winter 1990-1991) : 23-33; This watershed article can also be reached online:

<<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19910201faessay6067/charles-krauthammer/the-unipolar-moment.html>>.

²⁷ On Australia's and New Zealand's great power relationship with the Pacific Island Micro-States, see, Stephen Henningham, *The Pacific Island States: Security and Sovereignty in the Post-Cold War World* (New York City: Macmillan Press LTD, 1995).

Chapter Two

¹ Rourke, *INTERNATIONAL POLITICS ON THE WORLD STAGE.., 6th Edition*, p. 235; For an in-depth work on geopolitics, by an academic widely regarded as the leading voice on the subject see, Saul Cohen, *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Politics.., 2nd Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008); Also see, Gearoid Tuathail, *The Geopolitics Reader.., 2nd Edition* (New York City: Routledge, 2006).

² It is clearly stated that the academic luminaries mentioned in this chapter are credited as indirectly influencing the creation of SISE because none of them directly assisted in its development. Their indirect influence came by way of books and articles not through direct face to face contact. Nor are any of the men mentioned aware of this proposed theory SISE.

³ Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, p. 123; The suction effect the Eurasian Balkans can/is having on the great powers is stated directly on pp. 123-124; Also, on the Eurasian Balkans see Chapter Five of the aforementioned book, as well as Brzezinski's more recent work *The Choice*, chapters 2-3.

⁴ On Mackinder's most famous and influential works see endnote 3 in Chapter One section; For more on geopolitics and geostrategy, see lesser known but worth reading thinker, Nicholas Spykman, *The Geography of Peace* (New York City: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944); And see Alfred Mahan's book for a different view from Mackinder's on the relationship between land power and sea power (see endnote 4 Chapter 1 for Mahan citation).

⁵ The term Realpolitik simply refers to politics or diplomacy based primarily on realistic or practical considerations. Consider it a synonym of the more formal term "Realism." Realpolitik focuses on a foreign policy that is based on considerations of power and security first and foremost, not ideals, morals, or culturally relative principles.

⁶ This table is taken directly from John J. Mearsheimer's book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 22.

⁷ For some great books by Mead, where one can get a sense of his “grand history” generalist writing style, see, Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001); Mead, *Power, Terror, Peace, and War: America's Grand Strategy in a World at Risk* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004); And his aforementioned *God And Gold* (see endnote 7 Chapter 1 section).

⁸ Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics In An Age Of Terror* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. IX.

⁹ George Kerr, *OKINAWA: The History of an Island People* (North Claredon, Vermont: TUTTLE PUBLISHING, 2000), p. 148.

¹⁰ Klaus Dodds, “DIEGO GARCIA,” *Geographical* Vol. 79 Issue 8 (August 2007): p. 14-14; Klaus Dodds has also written a wonderful and concise introductory guide to Geopolitics, see, Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (New York City: University of Oxford Press, 2007).

¹¹ “The Judgement of the Solomons,” *The Economist*, July 24, 2003, pp. 40-41.

¹² Rob Wilson, “Exporting Christian Transcendentalism, Importing Hawaiian Sugar: The Trans-Americanization of Hawai’i,” *American Literature* 72 (September 2000): 522.

¹³ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy Of Great Power Politics*, p. 32.

¹⁴ Royle, *A Geography of Islands*, p. 59.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Quoted in Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers*, p. 198.

¹⁷ Jan Rogozinski, *A Brief History of the Caribbean: From the Arawak and the Carib to the Present* (New York City: Penguin Group, 1994), p. 105; Rogozinski also covers the earlier period in the Caribbean when tobacco was the primary crop grown.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁹ Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York City: The Penguin Group, 2006), p. 485.

²⁰ Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers*, p. xvi.

²¹ Chalmers Johnson, *BLOWBACK: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York City: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), p. 87; To put it into better perspective the “Official” U.S. Defense budget in 2007 was \$439 billion. Thus it can be concluded that a price tag of \$50 billion, for ensuring the safe production and flow of oil from the Middle East to the developed world, is no small cost for the American government to incur. On the U.S. Defense Budget estimates see the web link: <<http://www.defenselink.mil/comptroller/defbudget/fy2007/>>

²² Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 86-87.

²³ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy Of Great Power Politics*, p. 183.

²⁴ Kenneth Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (New York City: Public Affairs, 2007), p. 62.

Chapter Three

¹ [Italics mine], Derek McKay and H.M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648-1815* (Longman Group Limited, 1983), p. 15.

² Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers*, p. 73.

³ McKay and Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648-1815*, p. 43.

⁴ Note, this work acknowledges the term “Offshore Balancer(s)” to University of Chicago Professor John J. Mearsheimer. For explanation of this term and to understand its function see, Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy Of Great Power Politics*, chapter 7.

⁵ The three wars during the 17th century in which the Dutch Republic battled Britain for maritime and commercial hegemony were the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654), the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667), and the Third

Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674). It is important to note that France fought alongside Britain in the Third Anglo-Dutch conflict. The Dutch in the end were simply outmatched.

⁶ Rogozinski, *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, p. 93.

⁷ The information for this table is taken directly from Jan Rogozinski's book, *A Brief History Of The Caribbean*, p. 105.

⁸ Helmut Blume. *The Caribbean Islands* (Norfolk: Longman Group Limited, 1974), p. 68.

⁹ [Italics mine], Anthony McFarlane, *The British in the Americas 1480-1815* (London: LONGMAN GROUP LTD., 1994), p. 131.

¹⁰ William Fowler, *EMPIRES AT WAR: The Seven Years' War and the Struggle for North America, 1754-1763* (New York City: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd, 2005), p. 270.

¹¹ Rogozinski, *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, p. 71.

¹² For example, renowned expert on the Seven Year's War William Fowler often calls this war the First World War; likewise, Winston Churchill saw this conflict as the first global war as well.

¹³ On Britain being able to defeat France in their numerous military conflicts from 1660-1815, due largely to geopolitics and superior financing , see, Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers*, chapter 3.

¹⁴ Fowler, *EMPIRES AT WAR*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁵ Fred Anderson, *Crucible Of War: The Seven Years' War And The Fate Of British North America, 1754-1766* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), pp. 251, 257.

¹⁶ Fowler, *EMPIRES AT WAR*, p. 269.

¹⁷ Michael Glover, *The Napoleonic Wars: an illustrated history 1792-1815* (New York City: HIPPOCRENE BOOKS, INC., 1978), pp. 53-54.

¹⁸ Charles Esdaille, *The Wars of Napoleon* (Singapore: Longman Group Limited, 1995), p. 15.

¹⁹ [Italics mine] Rogozinski, *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, p. 172.

²⁰ Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the World from its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), p. 134.

²¹ The Louisiana Purchase was a major territorial gain for the United States in 1803, especially in terms of getting a "bang for its buck." At the time it the total cost of the purchase for the United States was about \$23,000,000 for 828,000 square miles of territory. It is probably one of the largest land transfers in modern times; one that was done peacefully. Today the land comprising the Louisiana Purchase constitutes around 23% of the territory of the United States.

²² Walter Russell Mead, *GOD AND GOLD: Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), p. 90.

²³ Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers*, p. 124.

²⁴ Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals And Reality*, p. 122.

²⁵ For but a few of the historians that label this period of rivalry between France and Britain the "Second Hundred Years War," see, Arthur H Buffinton, *The Second Hundred Years' War, 1689-1815* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929); also Scott, H. M. Review: "The Second 'Hundred Years War' 1689-1815," *The Historical Journal* 35 (1992), pp. 443-469; and Francois Crouzet, "The Second Hundred Years War: Some Reflections," *French History* 10 (1996), pp. 432-450.

²⁶ Mead, *GOD AND GOLD*, pp. 94-95.

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² Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers*, p. 151

³ Quoted in Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers*, p. 151.

⁴ On “Anglobalization” see Niall Ferguson, *EMPIRE: The Rise And Demise Of The British World Order And The Lessons For Global Power* (New York City: Basic Books, 2002); and Niall Ferguson, *COLOSSUS: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), pp. 186-193.

⁵ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy Of Great Power Politics*, p. 40.

⁶ Though the period from 1815-1871 was relatively a peaceful and stable one from the great power perspective, conflicts that did take place of note were: the Crimean War (1853-1856) Prussian-Danish War (1864), the Austro-Prussian War (1866), among others. However all these conflicts were ultimately continental in scope and size and at no point threatened the stability of the Congress system or Britain’s naval preponderance.

⁷ [Italics mine], Quoted in Norman Rich. *Great Power Diplomacy 1814-1914* (New York City: McGRAW-HILL, INC., 1992), p. 218.

⁸ Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers*, p. 202; Kennedy gets most of his historical economic data from famed French academic Paul Bairoch, see Bairoch, “International Industrialization Levels from 1750 to 1980,” *Journal of European Economic History* 11 (1982); Also see other works by this man.

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¹⁰ Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy 1814-1914* (New York City: McGRAW-HILL, INC., 1992), p. 226.

¹¹ Quoted in Robert Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War* (New York City: Ballantine Books, 1992), p. 88.

¹² Michael Sturmer, *The German Empire 1870-1918* (London: Random House, Inc., 2000), p. 65.

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¹⁴ Ironically, at the time of composition in 1841, Heligoland was a British territory.

¹⁵ Massie, *Dreadnought*, p. 132.

¹⁶ David Healy, *US EXPANSIONISM: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), p. 24.

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²⁷ [Italics mine], Kagan, *Dangerous Nation*, p. 349.

²⁸ Massie, *Dreadnought*, p. 135.

²⁹ All population figures taken from *ibid.*

³⁰ Economic figures taken from *ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

³¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 136.

³² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 172.

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³⁴ Woodruff Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 111.

³⁵ Massie, *Dreadnought*, p. 260.

³⁶ Quoted in Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy 1814-1914*, p. 385.

³⁷ Smith, *The German Colonial Empire*, p. 173.

³⁸ Winston Churchill used this phrase to describe the British and German Grand Fleets that were being built in the years leading up to the First World War. For greater insights into this phrase, and for a thorough historical analysis of the war at sea between Britain and Germany during World War I, see, Robert Massie, *Castles of Steel: Britain, Germany, and the Winning of the Great War at Sea* (New York City: Random House Inc., 2003).

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⁴⁰ [Italics mine], *ibid.*

⁴¹ John Lowe, *The Great Powers, Imperialism and the German Problem, 1865-1925* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 153.

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⁴⁴ Quoted in Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy Of Great Power Politics*, p. 205.

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⁴⁸ Bosworth, *Italy the Least of the Great Powers*, p. 301

⁴⁹ [Italics mine], *ibid.*, p. 299.

⁵⁰ Marius Jansen, *The Making Of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 335.

⁵¹ Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy 1814-1914*, p. 314.

⁵² On the “Dual Subordination” of Okinawa by China and Japan, see George Kerr, *OKINAWA: The History of an Island People* (North Clarendon, Vermont: TUTTLE PUBLISHING, 2000), pp. 166-169.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

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⁵⁹ For more discussion on the Russo-Japanese War, see Chapter 4: **IMPERIAL JAPAN**

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⁴ Maarten Pereboom, *Democracies at the Turning Point: Britain, France, and the End of the Postwar Order, 1928-1933* (New York City: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995), p. 1.

⁵ P.A. Reynolds, *British Foreign Policy in the INTER-WAR YEARS* (London: LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO LTD., 1954), p. 1.

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⁷ France's overall casualties of 6 million men nearly doubled that of Britain's at 3 million men. For total World War I casualty figures, broken down country by country, see, John Keegan, (ed.), *WARS of the 20th Century (Atlas)* (London: Bison Books, 1985), pp. 248-249.

⁸ Kitchen, *Europe between the Wars*, p. 209.

⁹ See, Mort Rosenblum, *Mission to Civilize: The French Way* (New York; Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1988).

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¹² F. Lee Benns and Mary Elisabeth Seldon, *EUROPE: 1914-1939* (New York City: Meredith Publishing Company, 1965), p. 215.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹⁵ James Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period 1918-1940* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1997), p. 148.

¹⁶ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy Of Great Power Politics*, p. 208.

¹⁷ Granville Roberts, *The Nazi Claims to Colonies* (London: Wyman & Sons, Ltd., 1939), p. 38; Also see this book for a focussed discussion on Nazi Germany's quest for the re-attainment of its former colonial holdings. This book is particularly interesting because it was written in the summer of 1939 when the Nazi threat was ready to unleash itself. The author presciently forewarns a reckoning with Germany is inevitable and appeasement towards Hitler must end.

¹⁸ Pyle, *Japan Rising*, p. 160.

¹⁹ R.H. Haigh, D.S. Morris and A.R. Peters, *Soviet Foreign Policy, The League of Nations and Europe, 1917-1939* (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books, 1986), p. 39.

²⁰ Benns and Seldon, *EUROPE: 1914-1939*, p. 213.

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¹ On the "Stopping power of Water" see, Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy Of Great Power Politics*, chapter 5; specifically pp. 114-119.

² Quote from Sir William Blackstone, quoted in John Keegan (ed.), *WARS of the 20th Century (Atlas)* (London: Bison Books, 1985), p. 270.

³ Roger Parkinson, *Summer, 1940: The Battle of Britain* (New York City: David McKay Company, Inc. 1977), p. 66.

⁴ Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall of the Great Powers*, p. 341.

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⁸ Donald Macintyre, *The Battle for the Mediterranean* (New York City: W.W. Norton & Company, INC., 1964), p. 17.

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¹¹ G. Stewart, *The Struggle for Crete: 20 May-1 June 1941: A Story of Lost Opportunity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 43.

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¹⁴ Pyle, *Japan Rising*, p. 203.

¹⁵ Roland Spector, *THE EAGLE AGAINST THE RISING SUN: The American War with Japan* (New York City: The Free Press, 1985), p. 54.

¹⁶ Akira Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (Harlow, Great Britain: Longman Group UK Limited, 1987), p. 2.

¹⁷ Gordon Rottman, *World War II Pacific Island Guide: A Geo-Military Study* (Westport, Connecticut: GREENWOOD PRESS, 2002), p. 33.

¹⁸ Spector, *THE EAGLE AGAINST THE RISING SUN*, p. 82.

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that the Japanese naval strike force that's aim was to attack a naval base located on a small island geo-pivot (Hawaii) set sail from another small island geo-pivot chain, the Kurils. For the reason why this island chain was chosen as the staging and launching pad for the Pearl Harbour strike force see *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²⁰ On the origin and explanation behind the phrase "two repugnant alternatives" see Pyle, *Japan Rising*, pp. 200-204, particularly see p. 203.

²¹ Donald Macintyre, *The Battle for the Pacific* (London: B T BATSFORD LTD, 1966), p. 15.

²² For in-depth analysis and detail on Operation Cartwheel and more generally the U.S. Navy's "Island Hopping" strategy during World War II, see Spector, *THE EAGLE AGAINST THE RISING SUN*, chapter 11.

²³ Quote from General Matsuichi Ino, quoted in John Keegan (ed.), *WARS of the 20th Century (Atlas)* (London: Bison Books, 1985), p. 424.

²⁴ Quoted in Keegan, *WARS of the 20th Century*, p. 482.

²⁵ Kerr, *OKINAWA*, p. 472.

²⁶ Johnson, *BLOWBACK*, p. 39.

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¹ Quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *THE LONG PEACE: Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 25

² For Alexis de Tocqueville's and Halford Mackinder's great power prognostications see first, Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (George Lawrence, trans.; J.P. Mayer, ed.; New York: Perennial Classics, 2000); and second see, Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York City: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1962).

³ Quoted in Gaddis, *THE LONG PEACE*, p. 48.

⁴ On the new emerging power centers during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the fissuring of the bipolar system see Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers*, pp. 395-437.

⁵ Max Frankel, *High Noon in the Cold War* (New York City: Ballantine Books, 2004), p. 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷ Dov Zakheim, "The South Atlantic Conflict: Strategic, Military, and Technological Lessons," in *THE FALKLANDS WAR: Lessons for Strategy, Diplomacy, and International Law*, ed. Alberto R. Coll and Anthony C. Arend (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, Inc., 1985), p. 159.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁹ Lawrence Freedman, *Britain and the Falklands War* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), p. 95.

¹⁰ [Italics mine], *Ibid.*

¹¹ Gordon Lewis, *GRENADE: The Jewel Despoiled* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 113.

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¹³ On America's keen interest and paternal ownership attitude regarding the Caribbean from the 1850s to the early 1900s see, Kagan, *Dangerous Nation*, chapters 8-11; more specifically pp. 304-324.

¹⁴ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy Of Great Power Politics*, p. 41.

¹⁵ Hugh O'Shaughnessy, *GRENADE: Revolution, Invasion, And Aftermath* (London: Harnish Hamilton Ltd., 1984), p. 4.

¹⁶ For an excellent chronology of the major events in Diego Garcia's history since the 1960s with links and citations see, US-UK-Diego Garcia (1770-2004),

<http://www.historycommons.org/timeline.jsp?timeline=diego_garcia> (accessed February 4, 2009). Most of the historical information in this section comes from this informative website.

¹⁷ For an excellent documentary chronicling that plight of the Chagos people see, *Stealing a Nation*, prod. Christopher Martin, dir. John Pilger, 56 min. (London: Granada Television, 2004), DVD. It can be viewed free via google video, see link: <<http://video.google.ca/videosearch?q=stealing+a+nation&hl=en&emb=0&aq=f#>>.

¹⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York City: The Penguin Press, 2005), p. 124.

¹⁹ "Diego Garcia: 'Camp Justice,'" Global Security.org: <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/diego-garcia.htm>> (accessed February 10, 2009).

²⁰ Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows Of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, And The End Of The Republic* (New York City: Henry Holt And Company, 2004), pp. 221-222.

²¹ John F. Burns, "C.I.A. Used a British Island to Transport Terrorism Suspects," *New York Times* (online), February 22, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/22/world/europe/22britainweb.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=diego%20garcia%202008&st=cse> (accessed February 4, 2009).

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Chapter Eight

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¹¹ Ibid., p. 48.

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¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Elsina Wainwright, "Responding to state failure—the case of Australia and the Solomon Islands," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 57, no. 3 (November 2003): 487.

¹⁵ "Time to helpem," *The Economist* (online), August 7, 2003.

¹⁶ "The Judgement of the Solomons," *The Economist*, July 24, 2003, pp. 40-41.

¹⁷ Raymond Bonner, "Philippine Camps Are Training Al Qaeda's allies, Officials Say," *New York Times*, May 31, 2003, <<http://www.hvk.org/articles/0603/49.html>>.

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¹⁹ "Indonesia confirms al-Qaeda presence," *BBC News*, December 12, 2001, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1705861.stm>>.

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Chapter Nine

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³ On China actively considering promulgating an anti-secession law that justifies the use of force against Taiwan see, Richard Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy And The Future Of East Asia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 170-171.

⁴ Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, p. 150.

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⁶ "Afghanistan's northern neighbours: Road Blocks," *Economist*, March 7-13, 2009, pp. 50-52.

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