Churchillian Geopolitics: Mackinder, Mahan and the Preservation of the British Empire

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ABSTRACT

Winston Churchill was a prolific historian, military strategist, and statesman who played major policymaking roles in the three great global conflicts of the twentieth century. During the First World War, as First Lord of the Admiralty, he armed and readied the British fleet for conflict with the Central Powers. In the Second World War, as Prime Minister and Defense Minister, he rallied Britain and the Allied powers to defeat the Axis powers. In the early years of the Cold War, he joined the United States in a grand coalition to contain Soviet power. Churchill brought to each of these tasks an understanding of global geopolitics based on his reading and writing of history and his familiarity with the geopolitical works of Alfred Thayer Mahan and Halford Mackinder. This paper will examine the intellectual roots of Churchill’s geopolitics and show how his understanding of geopolitical realities shaped both his writing of history and his decisions as a statesman.

Keywords: Churchillian, Geopolitics, Politics