The Atlantic World in the Antipodes: Effects and Transformations since the Eighteenth Century

Edited by

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CHAPTER SIX

KARL HAUS HOFER’S

G E O P O L I T I C S  O F  T H E  P A C I F I C  O C E A N

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Over the 1920s and 1930s, the ocean named for peace came to be deeply shaped by war. The Versailles Treaty thrust the Pacific into a new kind of global visibility, for one of the problems on the table at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 was the question of the German colonies. And one of the more curious outcomes of the new world order was the “South Seas Mandate,” whereby the German Micronesian islands—the Carolinas, Marianas, Marshall and Palau groups—along with Tsingtao in China, came to be administered by Japan. By the same process New Guinea and Nauru, both of which had been German colonies since the 1880s, were allocated as an Australian mandate, while Western Sāmoa was mandated to New Zealand. From an Atlantic viewpoint, the geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean looked very different in 1920 than it had in 1914. One decade on, the political Pacific was reshaping again. During what the Atlantic world came to call the “interwar period,” the Pacific world was already at war. Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, an imperial expansion that resulted in its withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933, and that escalated into the Sino-Japanese war from 1937. This all led, of course, to alliance with fascist Europe, and to what was to become known as the Pacific War. For Americans, Australians, Papuans, Sāmoans, and for people right across the Micronesian archipelago and beyond, the already complicated colonial and nationalist politics of the Pacific were being layered again by Japanese imperialism, and its changing relationship with Imperial, Weimar, and Nazi Germany over the first half of the twentieth century. This Japanese-German relationship was first one of close exchange in the early twentieth century, then of formal conflict in World War One, and finally of alliance from the late 1930s.

In the middle of all this, in faraway Bavaria, appeared one of the strangest books ever to be written by a European about the Pacific. The
German General Karl Haushofer, idiosyncratic to say the least, wrote his massive *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans* in 1924. That year, as the Munich professor tried to organise his complicated and confused thoughts, he visited on occasion two inmates of Landsberg Prison. One was his student and scientific assistant, Rudolf Hess, already deeply tutored in geopolitics. The other was Adolf Hitler. A result of these encounters was another large book written over 1924, *Mein Kampf*. Haushofer always minimised and later denied his influence on Hitler, via Hess. But that ongoing question aside, their books clearly had the same intellectual provenance. Hitler was developing his ideas about *lebensraum* in Europe, partially justified by loss of the Pacific colonies. Haushofer, for his part, was thinking through “living space” in the Pacific, a space that for him always had Japan as its centre of gravity. The strange thing is that Haushofer ended up articulating not just self-determination for Pacific nations in this book, but a particular version of anti-racism as well.

**Karl Haushofer, Geopolitics, and Natural History**

Karl Haushofer (1869-1946) was born into the ideas of the early *Geopolitiker*. His father, a Munich economic geographer was a close friend of the foremost scholar of the new geopolitical thought in late nineteenth-century Imperial Germany, Friedrich Ratzel. This early intellectual shaping—territory, competition, states, and organisms the stuff of daily talk—was heightened by Haushofer’s subsequent military experience, first in the Bavarian Army from 1887 and then, during the First World War, as a Major General on the western front. In between, he spent several years in Japan. His particular mission from 1908 was to work with the Japanese Army, and he became an important cultural-political mediator, introducing the expansive terms and ideas of “geopolitics” and, relatedly, *lebensraum*. His doctoral thesis, stemming from this work, was on Japan, and he published extensively on the nation’s geopolitics between 1910 and 1914. In the light of his military and scholarly expertise, Haushofer entered the academy in 1919, teaching geography and military science at Munich’s Ludwig-Maximilians University. From this new base he established *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, its first issue appearing in 1924. He developed and institutionalised the theoretical bases of geopolitics and its implications for the deeply unsettled “new world,” as his US geography colleague Isaiah Bowman framed the postwar global context in 1921. Bowman’s book was subtitled “Problems in Political Geography,” signaling the extent to which “geopolitics,” later almost exclusively tied to German intellectual traditions, was in fact widely and deeply part of an
Anglophone tradition too, from British Halford Mackinder to American Alfred Thayer Mahan to Bowman himself, and indeed from Manifest Destiny to the Monroe Doctrine and beyond. To some considerable extent, Haushofer’s *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean* (and even parts of *Mein Kampf*) were of a conceptual and intellectual piece with this Anglophone tradition, and all of these scholars were cited throughout Haushofer’s book.

Both “geopolitics” and “lebensraum” were concepts derived from natural history as much as political history. It was the German zoologist turned anthro-po-geographer Ratzel who had coined the term *lebensraum*, developing it in his 1897 *Politische Geographie* (one of the works that Haushofer brought to Hess and Hitler during their imprisoned year). In this work, Ratzel began to write specifically about Germans needing new land and soil, but Ratzel’s first book had been a popularisation of Darwin’s ideas, in which he was also strongly influenced by German Darwinist Ernst Haeckel, who coined “ecology.” Ratzel’s work, in other words, was part of an already long Malthusian-Darwinian tradition of thinking about organisms in limited space, including human organisms and human organisation. It is no coincidence that Chapter 16 of Haushofer’s book was titled “Imperium Pacificum: The search for self-determination and Darwinian Imperialism.” What scholars of geopolitics have come to call the “biologization of global space,” stemmed, then, from Ratzel’s zoological training, via Darwin. Accordingly, *lebensraum* should not be understood as simply a spatial idea. As I argue elsewhere, the “geo” of geopolitics was as much about life as about earth; biopolitics and geopolitics were conceptually entwined.

It was Ratzel’s student, the Swedish historian and political scientist Rudolf Kjellén who invented the actual term “geopolitics,” and wrote about states as organisms, an idea sometimes analysed as if meant metaphorically. Like *lebensraum*, though, the idea of the state as a living organism, was far more literally conceptualised, where space, people, and land (blood and soil in one version) were connected. Hans Weigert, later explained to Anglophone readers that geopolitics, as understood by the Germans, “contemplates space and mankind as one inseparable unit.” Within this idea, what constituted the state was the land and the people who grew from that physical environment. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* that the aim of future German foreign policy should be “to bring the soil into harmony with the population.” As scholar of geopolitics Klaus Dodds has summarised, “the search for living space was in effect a fundamental and unchangeable geopolitical law—quite literally a fact of life on earth.”
Karl Haushofer’s *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean* 123

**Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean**

Haushofer sub-titled his book on the Pacific, “Studies on the Relationship between Geography and History.” In the tradition of (but not as monumental as) Carl Ritter’s nine-volume *Die Erdkunde im Verhältniss zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen (The Science of the Earth in Relation to Nature and the History of Mankind)* or Alexander von Humboldt’s five-volume *Kosmos,* it began with “nature;” the geology of the Pacific, and what Haushofer called its “surface margins.” He set out the “garlands of islands” spread across the region, its great corals, and its location as the most tropical of the oceans. The circumference of the Pacific—what an early twenty-first-century translator took liberties to call “the Pacific Rim”—is defined by volcanoes, and the Ocean’s air currents, like its sea currents, are peculiar to the region. The monsoon climate—its “super-powerful regularity” combined with the irregular phenomena of tidal waves, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions—all shaped the Pacific region, and therefore its people and politics. “Monsoonia” was for him a special and particular part of the world. The whole Pacific is different from the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, he wrote, because of its overwhelming size. “It is thus, in its gigantic triangular shape absolutely the largest unified living space on earth.”

As with the very ideas of *raum* and *lebensraum,* nature and culture, geography and history, were not separable. This was the whole point of geopolitics. More broadly, this was a period when historians were thinking in large geographical scales (Févrel’s *Geographical Introduction to History* is an example). Conversely, geographers were conceptualising their spatial projects in terms of linked geological and historical time (Halford Mackinder’s “Geographical Pivot of History,” or Ellsworth Huntington’s *World-Power and Evolution*). Haushofer, too, was writing in this tradition of anthropo-geographical thought (which might be thought of as one antecedent of world history) that understood humans—and human differences—to be from the Earth. “Man is a product of the earth’s surface,” was how US geographer Ellen Churchill Semple opened her translation and interpretation of Ratzel’s *Anthropogeography,* a book she retitled, and to a large extent rewrote for a US audience, as *Influences of Geographic Environment.* She (and Ratzel) continued, “Man can no more be scientifically studied apart from the ground which he tills, or the lands over which he travels, or the seas over which he trades, than a polar bear or desert cactus can be understood apart from its habitat.”

The *Geopolitiker* argued that history, culture, and people derived organically from their particular environment, and that is why they
belonged to it. But if *lebensraum* in the German context was about soil, in
the Pacific it was about water. The Pacific needs to be understood not as
an empty space, but as “a political living space,” thought Haushofer,
where the sea, indeed “the greatest of the seas,” has historical meaning:
“From coast to coast, history grows over the sea.” Haushofer thought
that, in contrast to the Atlantic, there was in the Pacific a naturally induced
geropolitical synthesis; the ocean is a unifying force, he claimed. He noted
the long history of Polynesian sea crossings that helped him imagine the
Pacific as a uniting and united, not a dividing or divided, space, even as he
detailed in characteristically elaborate, confusing and confused detail
layers of human history and human difference. Despite its size, he wrote,
in the “early history of mankind [it] never exercised a separating function
to the same degree as the Atlantic.”

Haushofer took some time, early in his book, to nominate and describe
a “Pacific Sociology” that built anthropo-geography on top of bio-
geography. It was no mere chance, Haushofer wrote, that Darwin, Wallace
and Lubbock were all experts on “Pacific Affairs.” They were
“sociologists who were influenced by natural science and introduced
sociology as a science into England.” This Pacific sociology, which he
sometimes described as emerging out of a political oceanography, dealt
with “the social experiment before the arrival of the white race.”
Communism as a “Great Power principle,” he decided, had belonged to
Peru before it was tried in Europe, and had been experimented with and
rejected in China and Japan. On the other hand, some “island worlds”—
Riukiu is his example—he nominated as almost perfect in their social
structure, before the intervention of Europeans. Much Pacific social
structure was determined by limited space and gave rise to any number of
methods for the “conscious handling of the population problem.” Far more
than people in the Atlantic, people in the insular Pacific were conditioned
by “absolutely more limited inhabitable areas for settlement in contrast to
the huge area,” and this gave rise to particular forms of trading.

Chapter Five of his book was titled *Tragende Unterschichten im
Rassenbau*, translated in the 1930s as “Influential Sub-Strata in the Racial
Structure,” and in 2002 as “Basic Beliefs of the Aborigines.” This chapter
dealt with indigenous “primitive races,” of particular interest to Haushofer
for their remnant or latent political potential. While anthropology does not
concern him, he wrote, geopolitics does, and this “sub-strata” would be
ignored by contemporary statesmen at their peril. He documented “the
extent to which these primitive races force statesmen today to take account
of them.” He imagined indigenous people in two kinds of literal and
polity-social spaces; first, those who had territorially retreated inland
from various coasts, and second, those who had intermarried. He was interested in (what was translated in 1938 as) "admixtures." In both cases, the possible "resurfacing" into political prominence was the issue; and he asked whether the political pattern over time was simply one of rise and fall, or whether what he sometimes called "rejuvenation" might take place. At the very least, regional reliance on labour, he thought, made indigenous people an important factor, significant because of the human-environment fit of "the sub-strata." This is what might make them a powerful political force in the future. "This labour is supplied by the primitive sub-strata, who can, therefore, be assured of their resurrection in the new racial mingling and consequently deserve attention in a geopolitical account of the Pacific." Haushofer acknowledged the work of von Humboldt, Ratzel and Griffith Taylor in helping him formulate ideas about the "Malay-Polynesians" who peopled the region; what he called at times the island type, or the "sea-nomads."

Characteristically (and like all of the Geopolitiker as well as that generation of Anglophone environmental determinists) Haushofer conceptualised his object of inquiry geologically. Over the "influential sub-layers" of indigenous people was "the migratory stream" that couldn't quite swamp them. Haushofer documented centuries of European exploration of the Pacific, and various colonial "intrusions," under the chapter-heading "The Irruption of the White Race." But he kept returning in his book to US activity at the end of the nineteenth century, especially its takeover of the Hawaiian Islands and then the Philippines. The year 1898 he pronounced to mark "the end of the purely Atlantic Age" and the beginning of the Pacific Age. He wanted the Pacific Age to be translated into a new kind of global cartographic vision, expressing his regret for the conventions of Central European cartography that consistently divided the Pacific, and thus failed to recognise it as one region, let alone the region of an Age. Even British cartography of the Pacific disappointed him. During 1925, his wife, Martha Haushofer, translated James Fairgrieve's Geography and World Power (1924) into German and Haushofer considered that its 67 charts and sketches revealed "how uncomfortable the graphic comprehension of the dawning of the Pacific Age is for the imperialism of the old British Empire." He sought, and indeed offered in the multiple maps in his books, "the Pacifically-centered image of the earth" (Fig. 6-1).
The Pan-Pacific: Japanese Lebensraum

Hauhofer was one of the key theorists of “pan” regions, developing Halford Mackinder’s expansive ideas about heartlands and world islands. The Pan-Pacific was one of Haushofer’s favored versions. “We can see the old history of the Far East opening out into the greater ‘living-space,’ the Pan-Pacific.” From here,” he ventured to claim, “perhaps world organisation may begin in economics, civilisation and politics, in a way which Europe and the Atlantic have not discovered.” He was interested in the process by which the “sea-nomads” carried states and “tribe formations” from one island to another, and imagined the great Pacific empire that might have been, had European colonialism not intervened. Indeed, in the future, a self-determining global entity, “the great Island Empire of the Malayan Mongolian Archipelago,” might still come to pass. Such an Empire might already have been created if Japan “with due regard to Asiatic self-determination” had entered the Great War alongside Germany. Ultimately, Haushofer thought that the Pan-Pacific region would and should be led by Japan. In this sense, Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean was essentially a sprawling thesis on Japanese Lebensraum, though in no straightforward way. Like Germans, the Japanese hold a “metaphysically rooted love of country,” and he called for direct and open...
communication between Germany and Japan, “from ‘living space’ to ‘living space’.” Such communication, he thought, “is more easily done now that we have not the power,” meaning that Germany was no longer a coloniser in the region. It is no wonder his person, ideas, and books were so popular in Japan.

*Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean* was early translated and published in Japan, and energised groups like the Japanese Geopolitics Society and the Pacific Society, which sponsored both the translations, and Japanese commentary on them. The term “geopolitics” was first used in Japan in 1925, and thereafter strongly shaped Japanese policy and colonial practice, with population pressure arguments strongly justifying expansion. Haushofer’s reliance on a Darwinist/Spencerian notion of struggle having a biological base was widely upheld, and his assessment of the process of Japanese imperial expansion was often cited, for example by Professor of Public Administration at Tokyo Imperial University Masamichi Royama in the Japanese submission to the Institute of Pacific Relations meeting in 1929. As a colleague had put it to an earlier meeting of that Institute, “the energies of the whole nation were being called forth ... the consciousness of the dawn of a new era—the great era of the Pacific.” Such terminology owed not a little to Karl Haushofer; “energy” was by no means a neutral word.

This particular discussion took place at the 1927 meeting of the Institute of Pacific Relations held in Honolulu. For their part, the Americans, Australians, and Canadians present were well aware of the energetic Japanese consciousness of a new era, with or without German prompting. This was why the Institute of Pacific Relations had been invented in the first place. Japan as well as China and their specific population problems were core issues for the Institute that had been established in 1925, to improve “mutual relations” between peoples of the Pacific. By its own terms, it was an unofficial Institute that engendered conversation without expectation of consensus, with strong support from the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations. It was one outcome of the new Pacific circumstance, post-Versailles, embodying a particularly American vision of internationalism deriving from Woodrow Wilson. Its founding principle was not to presume the inevitability of war, but rather to engage key players in unofficial round-table discussions based on a new vision of international interdependence that included recognition of “the rights of the weak.” In a new age that had reduced time and space as factors in international relations, the Pacific Ocean needed to become a bridge not a barrier, it announced. The Institute of Pacific Relations emerged from a Hawai‘i-based recognition of Pacific uniqueness, in which the interracial
Hawaiian microcosm (people lived, apparently, “with mutual respect and understanding”) might be upscaled. Such an idea stemmed from philanthropist Alexander Hume Ford’s earlier Hawaiian-inspired Pan-Pacific Union. Haushofer was slightly more tolerant of this, but still assessed it as “cleverly veiled imperialism.”\footnote{45} If such a community is possible in the island world, why not in the larger area? At least that was the rationale of the Institute’s founders.\footnote{46} It held its initial conferences in Honolulu in 1925 and 1927, a third in Kyoto in 1929, a fourth in Hangzhou and Shanghai in 1931, after which Japanese delegations withdrew from the process and the Institute. Round-table discussions of mutual relations between China and Japan had proved impossible.\footnote{47} Even earlier, round-table discussions between Australia and Japan on race and immigration had proved almost as divisive.

Karl Haushofer, who had almost single-handedly developed the concept of the “Pan-Pacific,” was deeply suspicious of the Institute of Pacific Relations. He thought it was driven by US and Australian anxiety masquerading as internationalism and friendship. Any number of US-led Pan-Pacific unions, associations, and institutes were clever incorporations and diffusions of the new Pacific living force, he warned. As leader of the Pacific living space, Japan should not be participating in the Institute for Pacific Relations, which he saw as Wilsonian-inspired, US-funded, internationalist colonialism. Rather, Japan should be turning to Germany, who would defend not undermine its bid for Pacific lebensraum.

Ironically, the Wilsonian idea of self-determination was precisely what Haushofer used throughout his book.\footnote{48} In “Imperium Pacificum and Self-Determination,” he constantly defended national self-determination against European claims over Pacific people and territory. The French speak too easily of “notre domaine pacifique,” he dismissed. Since Japan represented “[t]he last remnant of self-determination” in the colonised region,\footnote{49} it should lead Asiatic self-determination. The language of right to territory and right to (national) life emerged in his book. Germany could be counted on to defend “the true right of self-determination of all those worthy of life.”\footnote{50} The Filipinos, for example, had lost their independence “but have a right to their own life.”\footnote{51} In Haushofer’s hands, geopolitics and self-determination almost become the same concept: “Self-determination and full personality, the working out of destiny according to a true, inner law of nature in their “living space,” is a right of the people, and is justified geopolitically.” This is why Haushofer was so interested in anti-colonial nationalists like Sun Yatsen, citing him in his book, and contributing a preface to the 1929 German book, The Legacy of Sun Yatsen.\footnote{52} Haushofer’s map on “Political Space Distribution and Self-Determination
in the Pacific” that ended his chapter on “European Intrusion,” marked areas “robbed of self-determination by foreign [non-Pacific] lebensraum” (Fig. 6-2).53

The sticking problem for Haushofer was misplaced Japanese alliance in the Great War. Much German scholarship urged onto Japan an increasing identification and alignment with Germany, seeking to extend pre-war intellectual and political links. And of course this materialised; over the 1930s, both nations developed and then implemented extensions of their “living spaces,” energetic nations whose borders should and would expand. In his 1934 article, “Fascist Tendencies in Japan,” German economist and sociologist Emil Lederer wrote: “Probably nothing in a nation’s consciousness is more disturbing than the knowledge that population is growing quickly in a small country.”54 Over the 1930s, such population-based geopolitical argument translated into formal expansion in Manchuria, with war ensuing from 1937, and with alliances first with Nazi Germany and then with fascist Italy. It was, indeed, Karl Haushofer who helped broker the Anti-Comintern Pact between Japan and Germany in 1936.55 Years earlier, in Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean, Haushofer was

Fig. 6-2. “Karte der politischen,” from Karl Haushofer, Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans (Heidelberg-Berlin: Kurt Vowinckel, 1938).
already imagining the dream alliance between the Germans and Japanese, as the folk both downtrodden at Versailles. Indeed this was the thesis of his 1913 Dai Nihon, one of the books that he had taken to Landsberg prison in 1924 for Hess and Hitler’s edification.\(^56\)

**Ressentiment in the Pacific**

If ever there was a book with a subtext, it was Haushofer’s *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean*. The entire document was really about Versailles and emasculated German power. “The Pacific Ocean for us is associated with painful loss,” Haushofer wrote in 1924, “but nowhere with shame.”\(^57\) The loss of the Pacific colonies—to Australia, New Zealand and Japan—was especially painful, he wrote, because of Germans’ “love of the South Seas.”

This book might have been subtitled “Ressentiment in the Pacific.” “Triumph of the weak as weak,” is how political theorist Wendy Brown has summarized *ressentiment*, the Nietzschean concept.\(^58\) In Haushofer’s hands, disenfranchised Germany was emotionally aligned with disenfranchised Pacific peoples who were kept dependent by British, French, and US imperial rule. After the US takeover of Hawai‘i, and then again after Versailles, Haushofer wrote, the great independence of the Pacific Islands came to a close: “the period when the ocean was free as a fied for migration; the sea-nomads were ruined after the loss of their self-determination and the loss of their smaller islands.”\(^59\) Yes, Germany had been one of the colonial powers, but now it was the only Atlantic nation without Pacific possessions. This meant that Germany was also “without the hatred of the peoples robbed of their self-determination” and was now joined in the struggle against Pacific colonisation. Indeed, Germany is “suffering with them.”

We are struggling to break the same chain as two-thirds of humanity on the Indo-Pacific margins ... More than half mankind accompany the recovery of German honour and equality in the Third Reich with sympathy and understanding arising from the painful experience of their own associated suffering.\(^60\)

What he called the provisional peace conference’s agreements “do not a priori allow of the conclusion that Atlantic methods are always to be preferred and that temporarily suppressed sub-strata minorities or majorities should be exterminated.” For Germans, suffering that had been initiated at and by the Versailles Treaty was carried on by the League [of Nations] in Geneva.” One of his maps marked in solid caps those areas...
around the Pacific that were “Gegen Genf (Against Geneva)” (see Fig. 6-2). As with the Institute of Pacific Relations, Geneva represented a profoundly anti-German enclave.

German and Japanese ressentiment was deeply shared, and similar positions were being put by Japanese commentators. All territorial frontiers are up for question, no matter what had been said at Versailles and no matter what goes on in Geneva, announced one Japanese delegate at the Kyoto meeting of the Institute of Pacific Relations in 1929. And so, Western insistence on present national boundaries is entirely spurious, the delegate went on, conveniently but problematically overlooking centuries of European colonialism: “The present national boundaries are mostly the result of occupation or conquest. They have been changing throughout the centuries. Nobody can say that the Versailles Treaty is the last word spoken by God.” Such a statement might have come direct from Haushofer’s later book on Frontiers, in which both legal borders and the idea of natural borders were rejected: current boundaries were merely temporary pauses in a vital nation’s expansion. And so the disenfranchised of the Pacific, Haushofer wrote, have the “same struggle for self-government against the same oppressors as Germany.”

Such positions against the Versailles Treaty came to form a curious kind of interwar anti-colonialism, but one only arguable from a disenfranchised position, from the position of weakness. The Pacific sphere, Haushofer wrote, needs to proceed according to its own laws, not those of the British Empire or “super-national political forms” (Versailles and the Peace Treaty; Geneva and the League of Nations; New York and the Institute of Pacific Relations). German ambitions for living space, he concluded, do not overlap Japanese, and so he was (and Germany as a whole should be) in full support of the idea of Asia for the Asiatics. Germans can create an alliance of equality “without ... being caught red-handed everywhere in acts betraying racial animosity and suppressing the right of the peoples of Asia to self-determination.” Unlike, he added bitterly, “our neighbours”, the British.

Hitler, too, held this resentment of US, French and British colonialism: “All are spatial formations having in part an area more than ten times greater than the present German Reich.” Unlike Haushofer, though, he did not argue for the self-determination of the peoples who constituted that colonised area. Haushofer (and the work of his son Albrecht) was influential on the Nazi party, but over time the fit became less neat. He put forward some ideas on race that were not to be found in Hitler’s simultaneous work. Haushofer was opposed to certain race doctrines, and thought that Germany should be too: “For Germany, the possibility of
symbiosis with the high cultures of the coloured peoples always existed and does still exist ... [W]e Germans must reject the systematic jingoism directed against the Far East and the East Asiatic races as such.” When Haushofer wrote of the “high cultures of the coloured peoples,” he meant Japan, and although eventually an expedient Nazi theory of “greater Aryanism,” as it were, managed to include the Japanese, Haushofer was direct in naming European bigotry. He wrote of a “White Peril in the Pacific” for example, countering the specific discourse of a Japanese “Yellow Peril” threatening the white spaces of the region. In so doing, he was aligning with Asian anti-colonial nationalists like Sun Yatsen.

Haushofer was, of course, referring to the proliferation of race-based immigration restriction policies, a squarely Pacific phenomenon. The “global colour line” had its mid-nineteenth-century beginnings in Australian and Californian responses to the Chinese diaspora crossing the Pacific, but by Haushofer’s period, the global colour line included the Japanese as well. Notwithstanding their alliance, the British, Americans, French and Australians rejected the proposal put forward at Versailles by the Japanese delegation for a racial equality clause. The right for any nation to determine its own racial constitution through the regulation of immigration was affirmed. Haushofer wrote in Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean of the great tension in the region “which must be overcome before a proper distribution of ‘living-space’ for population can be established.”

“Einwanderungs verbot (immigration prohibited),” one of Haushofer’s maps marked over Australia and California (Fig. 6-3). While another clearly marked the migration barriers, separating “white Australia” (in English) from South East Asia, and “Panamerica” from the western Pacific, along a line doubling as “Monroe Doktrin” (see Fig. 6-2). He quoted Isaiah Bowman’s New World: “will Japan take its claim to racial equality to the point of demanding equal treatment of Japanese and Americans in California and for Japanese and British in Australia, New Zealand and British Columbia?” Japan, with a “proud record of freedom” nonetheless now “finds its mission in Asia blocked and hemmed in.”

### Australia in Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean

Part of the reason that Haushofer was so interested in Australia (and Australia was so concerned about immigration) was its status as an island-continent. There was a long geopolitical tradition of inquiry into islands.
Ratzel had written an early book on island races and island nations, himself most interested in Polynesian islands. Small islands—like Japan or Britain—fascinated him since it was the limitation of space experienced by island people, he thought, that made them think about population and density. When space is limited, attention is directed to the relation of area to population, Ratzel argued. “The question arises early, therefore, on islands and in other confined regions. They soon lead either to emigration—voluntary or compulsory—and colonization.” This was Malthus’ insight as well, and it was no accident, Ratzel claimed, that the *Essay on the Principle of Population* emerged from an island country. Without a territorial outlet, confined countries could shift from a “wholesome” urge to expand, to unwholesome population checks, leading to “the evils of a redundant population … and especially the fundamental evil, the low value put upon human life.” The British Isles was a fine example of the former, the islands of Polynesia and Melanesia were Ratzel’s examples of the latter. Small territory in these instances encouraged ways of minimising population, forms of cannibalism, brutal killings of population, self-sacrifices, restriction of births, infanticide, and segregation of sexes on different islands. Haushofer claimed that Japan sought extra territory (to reduce population pressure) through more vital means; hence the significance of colonizing Manchuria.
The great island of Australia, trying to form itself into a kind of new island race as part of the Great Ocean, certainly intrigued Haushofer, and he addressed it in his chapter, “The South Sea Fringe and Australasia.” It represented a peculiar inversion of Ratzel’s geopolitics of small-space islands; enormous space, few people, and an island requiring immigration, not emigration. Australia is “Germany’s antipodes.” It is the largest continent, with the smallest population, the antipodes of “the confined space and often cramping historical heritage of Europe.” The British themselves might be an island race, Haushofer wrote, but they’d sure made a mess of colonising their big island in the Pacific. That huge continent was painted red on the map, and then left more or less empty; this “sea-fringe settlement” seemed inconceivable to him. The tropical north was especially empty. Why is it supporting a few thousand, when it should “nourish 30 millions,” he asked. Still, Australia was worth watching. It is the “natural science methods of the Australian oceanic world” that was interesting, “its cool and collected way of solving geopolitical problems biologically.” These are originally Atlantic impulses, he suggested, “strongly modified by the Pacific environment.” Australia was for him “[t]he first continent organized along uniform racial lines,” revealing nothing less than a “geopolitical consciousness ... the most advanced on the planet.” But Australia had also had a hand in the undoing of Germany in the Pacific. Not only was it now administering New Guinea, it had early scuttled German phosphate ambitions in the region. Haushofer cited an Australian government white paper on the discovery of phosphate in Nauru, “the most decisive one to bring ruin on the German South Sea Island Empire!” Nauru and other ex-German colonies were now forming part of the Australian Pacific, “the Australasian transitional region.” In 1938, one translator was unsure whether to render this as the Australian-Mediterranean (the original choice) or the Australian “Middle-Sea” (to which the typescript is corrected).

In general, though, and despite these forays into Pacific imperialism, Australia was a hopeless piece of colonisation, failing abysmally to exploit the land it claimed. It might do better, Haushofer suggested, if it induced New Zealand to join its community, but the “double-island” is disinclined, wanting to retain its independent status in the “Anglo-Saxon League of Nations.” New Zealand was also of interest to Haushofer, populated about 1200 CE from Sāmoa, “a Malayan settlement,” he claimed, and then by the British. And now, it is characterised by “two population strata, both descendants of master races from far over the seas.” Both Māori and “Anglo-Normans” “were the last of the expansive sea nomadic races and showed all the qualities of fine breeding, but also unmistakable signs of
degeneration.” Māori—about 46,000, he said—are in possession of large areas of land. He described a revitalisation of Māori, a doubling of births in the last decade, spurred by the “Ratana reform movement.” By contrast, the story he told of indigenous Australia was of extermination, “destruction of the original inhabitants.” With exclamation indicating disapproval, he noted that Australia’s own “pacification” by the British was attained when “the natives were exterminated!”

In one of the most unlikely sections of *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean*, Haushofer wrote about Canberra, the new capital of Australia. Its founding was nothing less than a geopolitical stroke of genius, he thought. But that’s not all: Canberra will “light up here and there the dark future picture of the racial field on the South West Pacific.” Precisely what was impressing Haushofer so much is hard to discern. He liked that one of the earliest decisions on the part of Australia’s new Commonwealth government was the establishment of a military college, and that the siting of Canberra, the inland capital, was accompanied by a coastal military zone at Jervis Bay. But, equally, he did not want his readers to get too excited, adding in a later edition that “The typically Pacific sober choice of the site for a new capital has, it is true, not yet fulfilled its final purpose.” It had proceeded more slowly than might be expected, he wrote; the capital in 1927 “counted more construction workers than permanent citizens.”

The only reason Canberra ended up in this book was because Haushofer had found an intellectual soul mate in Griffith Taylor, Sydney’s own Ratzelian anthropo-geographer and later Chicago urban ecologist. It was Taylor who had surveyed the site for Canberra in 1912, and it was from his shamelessly self-publicising writings that Haushofer gleaned most about the island nation. It’s clear that much on Australia that ended up in *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean* was drawn from Taylor’s grandiose study, *Environment and Race* (1927), and via the book’s prior journal versions in the German press—indeed, in Haushofer’s own Munich-based *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*. Cementing the connection, Taylor himself became an associate editor of *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*.

*Environment and Race* was reviewed and translated all over the world, including into Japanese. It received a particularly rave review from Haushofer in 1928. Taylor, much pleased, translated from the German himself: “It shows a bold grasp of views and conceptions which are just coming to the front in these problems.” Such lines of thought, Haushofer wrote, and Taylor translated, were first set forward by Ratzel. Now a generation of Pacific observers, like Taylor, were taking them up. Scholars in the Pacific, Haushofer claimed in the light of Taylor’s book, were far more conscious than Europeans of the significance of environment and
race and their connection to politics. If these questions are being avoided in Geneva, he wrote in this review, "they are being sought and discussed freely by the peoples of the Pacific spaces: in Honolulu, Sydney and Pacific America... In the Pacific, recognition of racial problems is growing and is not denied." Haushofer and Taylor spoke the same geopolitical language.

Haushofer's review of Taylor appeared in the pages of the latest Munich monthly, *Volk und Rasse*, the journal that was to become an important vehicle for Nazi ideas, and that was later to publish sections of *Mein Kampf*. It is all the more surprising, then, to find in its early pages Haushofer and Taylor objecting to race-based immigration acts in the Pacific. Taylor was well known as one of the few public opponents of the white Australia policy, which incorporated the exclusion of Japanese people and other "colored aliens." He was an advocate, indeed, of Asian immigration to Australia, as well as intermarriage between white Australians and Chinese especially, but also Japanese. Not all Taylor's readers appreciated these aspects of his monumental studies. Ironically it was Karl Haushofer, soon to be linked to Nazism, who did; he offered fulsome praise for what he called Taylor's "daring opposition" to the nonsense white Australia policy. He wrote that they were both advocates of "Pan Pacific justice to races," standing together in opposition to this particular racial policy, declaring it unjust. Also, in Haushofer's view, it was unwise: "[Australians] are beginning to feel too homogenous to notice the incipient danger of in-breeding."

Of course, the key to understanding at least Haushofer's expressed anti-racism was precisely that it was about Japan; anti-racism, like anti-colonialism, was not a generic principle, but particular to circumstance. For Haushofer (and for many Japanese) it was precisely the superiority of the Japanese vis-à-vis other peoples in the Pacific that made the white Australia policy abhorrent, and that justified *lebensraum* in the region. That said, Haushofer also compared Taylor's work favorably to the problematic generalisations coming out of American scholarship, nominating and critiquing both Lothrop Stoddard and Madison Grant because they were dismissive of Japan. For Taylor's part, he was also deeply critical of the Grant/Stoddard school of Nordicism, and the derivative Nazi version of Aryanism. There were, then, complex cross-cutting arguments about race, anti-colonialism, and nationalism produced in and by the Pacific context. Haushofer, so influential on the broad geopolitics informing Nazism, was at the same time forcefully agreeing with an opponent of "white Australia." That this should take place in the pages of the *Volk und Rasse* is unexpected, to say the least.
Conclusion: Geo-Pacifics

The first and second editions of Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean were books produced out of Weimar Germany. The third edition emerged from Nazi Germany, on the cusp of war, and it included reference to the work and ideas of the Führer. By that time, Haushofer had written more books on oceans, including the 1937 Weltmeere und Weltmächte, “Oceans and World Power.” German authors by no means had a monopoly on the term “world power,” but certainly by wartime the terms Weltmächte, geopolitik, lebensraum and their equivalents in any language were exclusively attached to the Nazis, and Haushofer was being re-read as the intellectual source of Hitler’s policies of territorial expansion in the East. An Anglophone reconstruction of Haushofer as Hitler’s General was pursued by a suite of US émigré authors and by the popular American press. By 1942, Haushofer was virtually synonymous with Nazi bids for world power. He was called “Hitler’s Tutor” or else, by the Office of US Chief of Counsel in 1945, “Hitler’s intellectual godfather,” and was accused of maintaining a thousand-strong secret Institute to plan geopolitical world domination. Politically though, as the 1930s and then the war moved on, there was a gap between Haushofer and the Nazi party. Haushofer never joined the Nazi party, claiming that his work from the period was written under pressure, in part to protect his Jewish wife. His son, Albrecht, was close to Nazi power, a position largely secured by Rudolf Hess, and Haushofer himself certainly remained very close to Hess. This meant that after Hess’s flight to Scotland, the whole family was under suspicion. Albrecht Haushofer was later imprisoned and shot by the Gestapo on charges of a plot to assassinate Hitler. Haushofer himself was imprisoned briefly and after the war was interviewed closely by US officials in anticipation of the Nuremberg trials. He and his wife committed suicide in 1946.

By then, for Anglophone commentators, it was all but impossible to recall, let alone to argue, that Karl Haushofer had opposed at least one nation’s racist policies, and defended the idea of self-determination against colonial rule. Griffith Taylor, who had so proudly translated Haushofer’s review of his magnum opus, keeping the offprint carefully in his records, now had to distance himself from Haushofer in particular, and geopolitics more generally. Indeed geographers across the globe had to do so, even though, or really because, they deeply shared Haushofer’s intellectual pedigree. Taylor’s reassessment of Haushofer was characteristically grandiose. He countered “Geopolitics” with a new conceptual invention, “Geopacifics.” This idea would put forward not the relationship between
environment and world war, but the “geographic aspects of the path towards world peace.” Writing in 1943 to Isaiah Bowman, whose own work on *The New World* featured throughout *Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean*, Taylor suggested that geopolitics would be an “antidote to Haushofer,” the next big idea for the next new world. That world, he agreed, might well centre on the Pacific Ocean.

**Notes**

1. Hitler’s political autobiography was written in 1924, volume 1 published in 1925 and volume 2 in 1926.


15. Haushofer’s writing is notoriously convoluted, making translation an even more difficult exercise than usual. I have relied here largely on a 1938 English
translation, and the 1938 German edition, rather than the more recent 2002 translation: the former catches 1930s idioms more directly. I have also quoted Haushofer extensively in this chapter (more than I would ordinarily) to offer some sense of his idiosyncratic style in this sprawling book.


23 Ibid., 41.

24 Ibid., 80.

25 Ibid., 82.

26 Ibid., 88.

27 Ibid., 56.


29 Haushofer, *Geopolitics* (1938 edn), 60.

30 Ibid., 63-65.


32 Ibid., 389, n. 7.

33 Figure 6-1 “Skizze der Meeresströmungen, Juli-September,” Karl Haushofer, *Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans* (Heidelberg-Berlin: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1938), 46.

34 Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire*, 5-8.
35 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 10.
36 Ibid., 8.
37 Ibid., 67.
38 Ibid., 165.
45 Preface in Condliffe, Problems of the Pacific, v.
46 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 84-85. For the Pan-Pacific Union, see Fiona Paisley, Glamour in the Pacific: cultural internationalism and race politics in the women’s Pacific (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 31.
50 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 78-79.
51 Ibid., 248.
53 Figure 6-2, “Tafel III: Karte der politischen Raumverteilung und Selbstbestimmung im Pazifik,” in Haushofer, Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans, 95.
54 Emil Lederer, “Fascist Tendencies in Japan,” Pacific Affairs 7, no. 4 (1934): 378. Like Haushofer, Lederer had spent several years in Japan, lecturing at Tokyo Imperial University, but unlike Haushofer was not absorbed into Nazism, rather escaped the Nazi regime to Japan in 1933.

55 Heske, “Karl Haushofer,” 142.

56 Herwig, “Geopolitik,” 34.


59 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 78.

60 Ibid., 124.

61 Cited in Condiffe, Problems of the Pacific, 45.


63 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 374.

64 Ibid., 8.

65 Ibid., 165.

66 Hitler, Mein Kampf, 589.

67 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 116.


70 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 386.

71 Figure 6-3, “Tafel IX: Wehrgeopolitische Skizze des Pazifik nach dem Stande vor der Konferenz von Washington” (Military-geopolitical Sketch of the Pacific according to the Status before the Washington Conference), in Haushofer, Geopolitik des Pazifischen Ozeans, 247.

72 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 166.

73 Ibid., 358.

74 For the significance of Australia’s island status, see Alison Bashford, Imperial Hygiene: a critical history of colonialism, nationalism and public health (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004); Suvedrini Perera, Australia and the Insular Imagination: Beaches, Borders, Boats, and Bodies (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009).

75 Friedrich Ratzel, Island Nations and Island States (Allgemeine Seitung, 1895).

77 Ibid.
78 Haushofer, Geopolitics, (1938 edn), 83-88
79 Ibid., 189-190. Australia was characterized as having an “envy felt towards German colonial success.”
80 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 188.
82 Three typescript copies exist of this 1938 translation into English. It is not clear whether this is the work of Professor Stephen Roberts or of University of Sydney history lecturer Duncan MacCallum.
83 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 195.
84 Ibid., 201.
85 Ibid., 202-3.
86 Ibid., 193.
87 Ibid., 102.
88 Ibid., 210.
89 Ibid., 189.
92 In 1934 Taylor was asked by Baron Von Eickstedt to become Associate Editor of Zeitschrift für Rassenkunde. Taylor to Mater, 16 November 1934, Taylor Papers, National Library of Australia, NS 1003, Box 20, Series 9, item 1629.
93 Handwritten translation of Prof. Haushofer, Review of Environment and Race, 1928, Taylor Papers, NS 1003, Box 9, folder 5, item 103.
94 Translated typescript, Karl Haushofer review of Environment and Race, Volk und Rasse, 3 September 1926, Taylor Papers, National Library of Australia, NS 1003, Box 18, Item 918.
95 See Strange and Bashford, Griffith Taylor, chapter 3.
96 Translated typescript, Karl Haushofer review of ‘Environment and Race’, Volk und Rasse.
97 Haushofer, Geopolitics (1938 edn), 200.
98 Karl Haushofer, Weltmeere und Weltmächte (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte-Verlag, 1937).
99 “Hitler’s Tutor Freed,” Canberra Times, 19 September 1945, 1.
100 Herwig, “Geopolitik,” 218.
102 Griffith Taylor, Typescript, “Our Evolving Civilization 1,” Taylor Papers, Fischer Library, University of Toronto, MS 20Box 3 (08).
103 Taylor to Bowman, 28 March 1943, Taylor Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 1003 Box 20 Series 9. See also Taylor’s sweep through the intellectual history of geopolitics in “Geopolitics and Geopacifics,” in Geography in the Twentieth Century, ed. Griffith Taylor (London: Methuen; New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 587-608. For Bowman and Haushofer, see Smith, American Empire, 281-84.