

GEOPOLITICS

AND THE QUEST FOR DOMINANCE



..... JEREMY BLACK

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Jeremy Black

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For Jane Hayball and Mark Ormerod

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Preface

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY DEFINE THE OPERATION OF POWER, not only its range but also the capacity to plan and the ability to implement. The study of power in time and space—and, more specifically, foreign policy and military action—is therefore an important element in the understanding of international relations, military history, and the development of states and of state systems. This study is the subject of this book. It provides a significant angle on strategy and policy, the spatial angle, and relates this angle to the changing perceptions of commentators. These perceptions throw light on the understanding of power and the international system. These perceptions also prove an important aspect of the soft power and related practice of acceptance (if not compliance) that are so important to the reality of power, both on the international scale and within states.

Thus, geopolitics, although claiming in some hands a scientific precision, is as much about ideas and perception as it is about the actual spatial dimensions of power. Moreover, the latter themselves are not as precise as they might appear. Indeed, the real, latent and possible, spatial sources and degrees of strength are all open to debate. Certainly that helps explain why the subject of geopolitics is both fascinating and valuable, for it throws light on how ideas have developed and on the varying political resonances of control over space. As such, the subject repays consideration.

History and geography: this book also reflects two linked interests of mine. As a historian, I have always been fascinated by geography; indeed I nearly took the subject as a university student. Subsequently,

I have pursued the interest with a number of books on maps and also in my teaching. This concern with geography is relatively unusual among British or American historians, which unfortunately helps impoverish the subject. In this book, I am in part troubled by not only the lack of engagement with geopolitics on the part of most historians, but also by the modish and somewhat politicized account of geopolitics provided from within the discipline of geography. Thus, this book can be understood, in part, as a sequel to my *Maps and Politics* (1997).

In addition, while writing in the mold of classical geopolitics, I take the opportunity to introduce various understandings of geopolitics and to probe them over a longer chronological range than is conventional. The purposes of the book are, first, to bring up to date the scholarship in this area; second, to create a much broader temporal and conceptual framework for envisioning the subject; third, to consider several new methodologies and disciplines in the field; fourth, to appraise leading geopolitical thinkers, as well as governmental figures tapping into their doctrines; fifth, to assess the consequences of incomplete and opportunistic geopolitical theorizing and execution; sixth, to recast geopolitics and its policy implications in the era that followed the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union; seventh, to demonstrate that the fluidity, indeed mutability, of geopolitics is conceptually both an opportunity and a problem; and last, to suggest that only through incorporating all possible inputs can geopolitical thinking be a liberating force in the world order. Geopolitics emerges as most useful as a sphere for consideration, and not as a formal analytical doctrine. Moreover, the historical dimension is crucial. While geopolitics provides a valuable way to study influences and pressures, it risks a serious ahistoricism unless sufficient weight is placed on contemporary understandings of these processes.

I have benefited from teaching a maps and history course at Exeter and from lecturing at the Strategy and Security Institute there, while opportunities to give outside lectures also helped me clarify aspects of my argument. These venues included the 2002 History Institute for Teachers, on “Teaching Geography and Geopolitics”; the Carls-Schwardefeldt lecture at Union University; and lectures to the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI), the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, Waseda

University, a Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre-Mackinder Forum Workshop at Shrivenham, the Japanese National Institute of Defence Studies, the Japanese Press Club, RUSI's Japanese branch, a conference on the Limits of Empire in the Early Modern World, held in Columbus, Ohio, and another titled Maritime Security in the Twenty-First Century, held in Copenhagen.

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Abbreviations

ADD – Additional Manuscripts

AE – Paris, Ministère des Relations Extérieures

ANG – Angleterre

BL – London, British Library

CP – Correspondance Politique

FO – Foreign Office

LH – London, King's College, Liddell Hart Archive

NA – London, National Archives

SP – State Papers

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Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance

Geography provides strategy with an underlying continuity.

HEW STRACHAN¹

Introduction

EMPLOYED FROM 1899, GEOPOLITICS IS AN AMORPHOUS concept, both efficacious and misfiring, and a plastic or malleable (as well as controversial) term. Different working definitions have been advanced, and there is no universally accepted definition and, indeed, no agreed definition in English. All definitions of geopolitics focus on the relationship between politics and geographical factors, although that relationship has been very differently considered and presented. In this context, politics is approached principally in terms of the composition and use of power. The geographical factors that are treated vary, but space, location, distance, and resources are all important. Geopolitics is commonly understood as an alternative term for all or part of political geography² and, more specifically, as the spatial dynamics of power. In practice, there is a persistent lack of clarity about whether geopolitics—however defined—and, more particularly these dynamics, should be understood in a descriptive or normative sense. Moreover, what in 2002 the American geopolitical commentator Harvey Sicherman termed “the facts of geopolitics—the resources and locations of various peoples and states”³—involves subjective as well as objective considerations, and the significance of the former is commonly downplayed. This is true across the varied dimensions of geopolitics.

Four levels of assessment can be differentiated although, in both theory and practice, they interact to a considerable degree. At the first level, geopolitics can be considered as both concept and practice, each of which can, in turn, be classified. At the second level, it can be approached as a malleable doctrine heavily dependent upon the

casuistries of leaders and politicians conducting statecraft. At the third level, the roles and approaches of professional intellectuals and commentators command attention—roles and approaches that have been, and are, very different. Whereas a geographer has a formal qualification, usually a university degree, anyone can be a geopolitician, including ardent polemicists without any in-depth knowledge. This situation can be related to the dynamic between political geography, which seeks scientific-style precision, and geopolitics which is, in part, political practice and journalism—both based on concepts in political geography. At the fourth level, geopolitics has emerged as a durable mindset and a set of doctrines that have outlasted major changes in ideology and international power. This durability reflects the plasticity of geopolitical doctrines and the extent to which fundamental concepts have remained intact, even though they are changeable, not least with major shifts in the understanding of spatiality—these concepts even bridging the large differences separating certain geopolitical doctrines from one another.

Varying definitions, contrasting usage, and the extent of subjectivity involved in the assessment of power do not mean that there is no objective reality or, indeed, no useful concept. As far as reality and perception are concerned, a human environment may be defined in terms of the human needs, desires and capabilities for satisfying them from the materials at hand (or, rather, apparently at hand). This definition depends in part on the conscious awareness of the situation and, thereby, on perception. However, no amount of desire and will can enable the production of steel from coal and iron deposits if those deposits do not exist, or if it is impossible to transport the raw materials, and at a reasonable cost.

Nevertheless, any subjective appreciation of what is objectively available lends itself to historicizing.⁴ Coal deposits exist in France and Germany, but from 1870 to 1945 the location and real significance of coal and iron deposits played a role in the territorial aspirations and strategic planning of those nations. From a different angle, responses to, say, the possibility of nuclear power or to France's interests at any time, involved, involve, and will involve ideological, cultural, and political assumptions.

Politics has, indeed, played a role throughout human geography. For example, in France during the early decades of the nineteenth century there were initial ideas for creating an integrated rail network

based on grandiose economic needs, but a more political rationale came to prevail, with a national plan, imposed in 1842, that led to a rail system radiating from Paris and linking it to all parts of the country, especially the frontier regions. Transverse links that did not focus on Paris were not part of the Second Empire (1852–1870), but in 1879 the need to consider parliamentary constituencies under the Third Republic (1870–1940) produced the Freycinet Plan, which led to the building of what were termed “lines of local interest.” This designation was, in turn, a clear sign of the hierarchy and usage of political space.

To take another example, the US government has recently found the notion of “ungoverned spaces” useful as a way to classify the world. This notion was centrally linked to discussion in the 2000s about so-called failed states, notably Afghanistan—discussion that was linked to an alleged need to intervene in them. The Pentagon’s “National Defense Strategy,” issued in 2008, referred to “ungoverned, under-governed, misgoverned and contested areas.” Yet, in practice, definitions on this point are difficult. Failure as a state occurs in different ways, and with varied consequences. There are contrasts between domestic and international perception and different mechanisms at play that might help us in understanding something called “state failure.” There may be a failure at the level of national government, but effectiveness at the level of some, or all, regional governments within a particular state. Moreover, as an instance of the role of perception, a murder rate that in Denmark would be seen as a sign of societal collapse is not perceived the same way in Brazil or South Africa. Not all the supposedly weak states are centers for terrorism. Indeed, this issue underlines the problem of thinking geopolitically in terms of states, as the key spaces in terms of instability are often parts of states, for example, dissident regions and communities. Since the fall of the Taliban government in 2001, instability and opposition have been more pronounced in eastern and southern Afghanistan than in the north. This point demonstrates a concomitant need to think of geopolitics, at least in part, in terms of the spatial imprint and geographical shaping of ideologies, an imprint and shaping that may not reflect national boundaries. Geopolitics reflects the extent to which space is a reality, a process, and a perception,⁵ with a dynamic and contested character to each.

Geoffrey Sloan, a student of classical geopolitics, drew attention to different approaches in 2007 by considering geopolitics as a policy science and as an appendage of political propaganda.⁶ This is not, however, a clear classification. In practice, such a use of geography for propaganda is long-standing. For example, Augustin Fitzhugh's map of Newfoundland in about 1700 makes a political point, with the small area for "English fishing boats" appearing to be entirely shut in by the huge part of the sea controlled by their French counterparts.⁷ The 1930s Nazi map that showed Germany to be threatened by Czechoslovakian air power was a piece of propaganda, as there was no such threat. However, not all maps are easy to define. A map depicting the utility of the Suez Canal for British shipping might be propaganda or mere description, depending on the use to which the map is put, how it is drawn, and the accuracy of the data on which it is based.⁸ Moreover, the criteria for propaganda and description cannot always be readily distinguished.

In the longer timescale, alongside the objective criteria discussed above—criteria that play a key role in military, political, and economic strategy—geopolitics, like other forms of geographical analysis and expression, can, in part, be seen as a belief system. This is not least due to the symbolic weight attached to methods of depiction, whether symbols on maps or geopolitical phrases, such as "natural interests." Furthermore, as a more general point, the perception of power, as of success, is centrally involved in issues of power.⁹ Even place, its constraints and relationships, is a matter of perception, as much as an element that can be objectively measured and displayed in terms of coordinates. As geography is a means by which political entities, including their populations, make sense of their situation, specifically (but not only) their territorial setting and interests, so are these perceptions of key importance. As a related point, it is troubling to see the extent to which there is limited, or no, formal discussion of geopolitics in some of the synoptic literature produced by major experts in politics and international relations.¹⁰

Perceptions of space are particularly significant for new states as they seek to define their interests. This point can be readily illustrated from history. For example, alongside "realist" issues of the inherent strength of the Brazilian state, perceptions of the space necessary for the state to operate, its real geographical identity, play a role. Alongside contingent

political circumstances, this can be seen in the contrast between Brazil's ability to retain cohesion after the Portuguese link was broken in the 1820s and the strongly fissiparous character of former Spanish America in the same period. The definition and perception of space took place in a highly competitive fashion. Thus, in the late nineteenth century, the definition of the interests of the newly unified states of Germany and Italy was complicated by assumptions that derived from readings of the past, not least those of vulnerability to hostile neighbors that had allegedly prevented earlier unification, notably France and Austria. There was, and is, a broad social dimension to this issue of perception and to consequent attitudes and actions. For example, in the newly independent United States geographical literacy played an important cognitive, symbolic, and pedagogic role.¹¹

Yet, to indicate the variety of directions in which geopolitics can be taken, the question of making sense of the spatial setting of states (whether or not this "sense" is discussed in terms of realism, perception, or both) is made more complex when the understanding of geopolitics is expanded. This is the case in particular when geopolitics is expanded from a simple notion of debating military strategy (now often termed geostrategy) to consider, in addition, domestic policy and its multiple locations as key aspects of geopolitics and strategy. Indeed, part of the value of "critical geopolitics," a significant development in the subject over the last two decades, is that discussion of practical and popular geopolitical culture plays a prominent role in some of the literature.

DEFINITIONS

It is the very drive of the political system that is at question when domestic policies, the processes of identity, and the pressures for obedience and order, are all considered; and these factors all have spatial dimensions. Moreover, to take the political aspect further, geopolitics and strategy can be understood in terms of a process of policy formulation, execution, and evaluation, to which military purposes are frequently both instrumental and secondary. In part, the definition and discussion in recent decades of a separate operational dimension to war and policy—a dimension very much understood in military terms and with reference to military

organizations and goals—provide, in contrast, a key opportunity for emphasizing a political approach to strategy, one in which geopolitics plays a major role.

An emphasis on the significance of domestic political issues and drives offers a possibility of dispensing with analytical models of international state and military development that assume, at that level, some mechanistic search for efficiency and for a maximization of effectiveness. One traditional strand of geopolitical argument can be located in this context by seeing it as designed to help secure such effectiveness and efficiency, and such claims are at least implicit in much of the conventional discussion of geopolitics. Such ideas, however, can do violence to the inherently controversial nature of efficiency and effectiveness, and to the complex processes by which interest in new ideas and methods interact with powerful elements of continuity.

Thus, replicating, and overlapping with, the situation in which geography, geographical relationships, and maps can all be variously defined and presented, geopolitics has a range of meanings and can be understood in different terms. These meanings can be grouped in terms of the geography of politics and, as significant, the politics of geography. These meanings, moreover, relate as much to how each is discussed as to what is being considered. In part, this range reflects the porosity of geography as a subject, especially once the public discussion of geographical factors is also considered. Analysis of the range of meanings of geopolitics in terms of a typology of meanings would not be terribly helpful, as there is a sliding and elision between them. Furthermore, what to a practitioner may be an objective geopolitical analysis may be a subjective, rhetorical, politicized use of geopolitical ideas to commentators or other practitioners. Such a contrasting understanding of geopolitics is well-grounded.

However overlapping, conditional, and contested, definitions are still valuable. As a field upon which policymakers rest (or even unthinkingly base) their decisions, and in which they seek to implement them, geopolitics most frequently calls attention to the context in which national security decisions are made and issues of war and peace are decided and, more particularly, calls attention to the relationship between strategy and geography. Thus, classical geopolitics discusses

the key importance of geography for statecraft.¹² In doing so, classical geopolitics defines the relevant relationships between, and among, the exercise of power, notably the changing geographical constraints and opportunities for success and failure. Classical geopolitics does so as those constraints and opportunities are perceived by actors engaged in conflict, as well as with reference to the capabilities of adversaries, such as population and critical resources, their perception of their interests, the available technology for war (and now also terrorism) and economic competition.

Geography is deployed by commentators in a number of respects. In particular, power in geopolitics is frequently positional, often focusing on a particular location or pivot (real or apparent) that may lend itself to weakness or strength, such as the possession of “choke points”—for example, the straits of Hormuz and of Malacca. Similarly, the idea of a drive for warm-water ports and for access to the oceans is an established theme in geopolitical literature, the former in the case of Russian history and the latter in that of modern Chinese politics.

Moreover, geographical factors are deployed in particular conceptual and methodological ways. For example, whereas both realism (as an approach in international relations) and geopolitics contain balance-of-power theories, their descriptions and use vary by subject. For realism, the relative physical strengths of nations and coalitions are measured in terms of physical-balance relationships. In contrast, for geopolitics, balance-of-power relationships come, in part, in terms of spatial positions or patterns.

At the same time, what these and other relationships meant to contemporaries—and what they also can be said to mean to subsequent commentators—varied greatly. These variations need to be borne in mind. This point provides a vital role for the historian, reflecting, as it does, the tension between a desire on the part of many social scientists to look for universal entities that can then be analyzed and, on the other hand, historical reservations about such an approach.¹³ These reservations tend to focus on the nature of changing meanings and of altering implementation, not least as a consequence of the specific discursive contexts within which entities and concepts exist and are to be understood. In the latter approach, geopolitics is historicized.

A historical placing of geopolitics as a subject throws a valuable critical light on some of the geopolitical analysis that has been produced across time. At present, geopolitics viewed as an academic subdiscipline reveals the problems created by the recent turn toward “critical” social sciences as well as by the nature of much contemporary social theory. Indeed, geopolitics offers a valuable case study, precisely because it is a field where history ought to be deployed but rarely is, except in a crude way. Moreover, in some of the literature, determinism is often favored over freedom in explanations, changing values and understandings of terrain and other physical factors are too rarely considered, and the ambiguous and uncertain nexus of power, violence, and strategy is (or ought to be) revealed, but is often obscured in a rush to judgment on political terms.

Nevertheless, it is important not to criticize geographers in general when critiquing “critical geopolitics.” Indeed, skepticism about the latter has been expressed by geographers.¹⁴ Some regard writings on “critical geopolitics” as trying to reinterpret recent history from a contemporary left-wing viewpoint. More generally, the term *critical* is misused by academics, and not only in the veiled polemical sense. No academic would want an audience to read an *uncritical* text, and the term is redundant if applied in its literal meaning.

However expressed, an ahistorical approach is unhelpful because, across time, there is a general tendency to adopt a politically partisan approach to the present rather than to attempt to engage with the complexities of a long-term historical dimension. There is the related but different risk in the replacement of common sense by a particular jargon or discourse, as well as of self-referential and self-reverential patterns of verification and endorsement within their own fields. Such a replacement can be seen to undermine common action based on fear, interest, and glory, the triad of motives taken from the history of the Peloponnesian War (ca. 460–400 BCE), written by Thucydides, a major founder of the subject of history. This triad can be noted across history, and these motives condition attitudes toward spatial factors.

In practice, whatever the weight to be given to perception, objective reality cannot be wished away. Political and cultural contexts are both crucial (as this book seeks to demonstrate), as are subjective

assessments, but alongside these assessments objective factors counted and count: for example, the nearby presence of coal really mattered for industrialization, as did the availability of rail links to move that coal. Industrialization had a clear spatial component linked to resources, and this was true not only of the classic British Industrial Revolution, but also of the earlier location of water-powered industry, a topic that interested Ellen Churchill Semple, a key figure in the development of American geographical thought in the early twentieth century. Resources have repeatedly affected military capacity. For example, on December 18, 1861, in the early stages of the American Civil War, Richmond's *Daily Dispatch* lamented the lack of involvement on the part of the Confederate government in the development of full industrial production: "[L]ook after these interests, for the question of independence [for the South] may soon become no other than the question of an abundant supply of iron and coal." Moreover, across the world, the later shift to oil and gas has had key consequences for power politics. These points affect, and thus underline, the capacity for action on the world stage—although they do not necessarily determine the decision to act or not.

Geopolitics can historically be seen as a way to help clarify assumptions—for example, the imperialist creed of many policymakers in the late nineteenth century—while assumptions also help clarify geopolitics. This process offers an argument for employing geopolitics today to discuss international relations. Yet, in doing so, it is necessary to employ the appropriate caution if such decoding is to be successful in throwing light on the spatial aspects of power.

HISTORY AND GEOPOLITICS

Moving from a geographical perspective, it is instructive to consider the very writing of history from a geopolitical angle. The geopolitics of historical study includes the extent to which there is writing for national audiences and, indeed, in particular languages. This approach, with its stress on the contingent spatial character of historical approaches, is inherently problematic, if not political, when addressing the histories or present situations of once-contested or contested lands, such as those of Silesia, Lithuania, Israel, and Sri Lanka. National identity

was, and is, asserted and contested through historical works, as are territorial claims.¹⁵ While drawing attention to the role of perception in geographical terms, and of politics in geopolitical discussion, it is appropriate to note that there are similar issues for historical works. History, historical consciousness, historical relationships and the periodization of events can be variously defined and presented, also ensuring a range of meanings.

The historicism of geopolitics can turn in two different directions. It is conventional to focus on the period since 1899, in which geopolitics was discussed as a distinct subject. This is the approach taken here in chapters 6 to 9. However, geopolitics can also be considered both as an issue throughout the history of organized human society and moreover as a means of analysis that is highly pertinent across time, irrespective of the lack of a formal language for the subject. These are themes pursued in chapters 2 to 5. To do so moving boldly across time poses risks, but does not necessarily entail a failure to note the specificities of particular contexts. These specificities cover both very different relationships between power and space and the need to vary the means of analysis in order to take note of the cultural dimensions of these relationships.

THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTS

For example, although not employing the term, a good illustration of geopolitical thought is provided by one of the great successes of eighteenth-century political theory, *L'Esprit des Lois* (The Spirit of the Laws) by Charles-Louis Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755). Published in 1748 and reprinted 22 times in its first 18 months, this book, which was to have a considerable impact on contemporaries, was a comprehensive account of government systems. Montesquieu had a strong sense of the constant changes brought about by time in the fortunes of states. He also believed that human society, far from being constant, was affected by environmental circumstances such as climate, as well as by social forces: for example, education and religion. Montesquieu therefore proposed an interaction of geography and peoples.¹⁶

The sense that a tropical climate affected, if not determined, society with heat-inducing torpor and lasciviousness was a key aspect

of Western triumphalism, as well as of differentiation within the West, notably with the Protestant rejection of Mediterranean culture and society from the sixteenth century. In the case of general Western attitudes, this analysis of the impact of climate was closely linked to the slave trade. Montesquieu, Georges-Louis, Count of Buffon (1707–1788), the author of *Histoire Naturelle* (1748–1804), and others explained skin color as a function of exposure to the tropical sun, but the ability of Africans to cope better than Europeans with disease in the tropics was believed to exemplify an inherent difference between the races, a difference that was alleged to be the result of a closeness to the animals of Africa. Thus, crude geographical determinism was related to a form of anthropology, and both served to justify slavery.¹⁷

Without going to this extent, there were also firm and persistent beliefs that particular environments, such as mountainous regions, had clear consequences in terms of their social organization and political control.¹⁸ Halford Mackinder, the leading British political geographer (he did not call himself a geopolitician) of the early twentieth century, was to contrast the “rooted provincialism” of island or peninsular provinces with the attitudes allegedly found on the vast plains.¹⁹ The notion of provincialism is inherently bound up with the cultural and political consequences of spatial relationships. Modern counterparts include discussion of Afghanistan and the mountainous northwest of Pakistan in terms of the physical context of their societies and the recurrent problems these pose for attempts to control them. Indeed, political geography has played a key role in defining the parameters and contours of society, as with borderlands (on which there is extensive literature in geography) and their very different characters.²⁰

Moreover, as a variant on “provincialism” or, rather, as an instance of geographical specificity, the external policies of states have often been traced to geographical concerns and interests, and these have been emphasized alongside, or instead of, ideological factors. This approach is not only the case for small states. For example, much Cold War geopolitics rested on the attempt to make sense of Soviet policy. Arguing a pronounced continuity with pre-Soviet Russian expansionism, and thus emphasizing political geography at the expense of ideology, was a frequent theme, and one that has been continued in subsequent

scholarship.²¹ Similarly, while allowing for frequent “tectonic, apparently nonlinear, shifts in the geopolitical context,” a distinctive geopolitical pattern to American national security has been discerned, with a focus since the 1940s on an anti-hegemonic policy toward Eurasia.²²

The value of geopolitical concepts can also be seen in the discussion of Chinese policy. This is markedly the case with the relationship between East China, which can be presented as part of the “rimland” (a term used by Nicholas Spykman in the early 1940s²³) and Chinese Central Asia which, in contrast, can be discussed as part of Mackinder’s “heartland.” Thus, Hsiao-Ting Lin argued that China’s reassertion of its sovereignty over part of Central Asia in 1937–1945 was in part a response to Japan’s success in overrunning much of China’s coastal rimland, a challenge that also led to the reshaping of relations between the Nationalist (Kuomintang) central government and regional power-brokers in West and Southwest China. In turn, this process was seen by Lin as altering the geopolitical context by transforming modern China from a maritime economy rooted in East Asian trade, to a continental one based on overland trade routes through Asia.²⁴ Thus, Japan’s ability to take much further the maritime-based territorial pressure applied by Western powers from the 1830s changed Chinese geopolitics, with political and cultural consequences that subsequently were to be seen, from 1949, under Communist rule. At the same time, ideology played a key role alongside geography. The ideological drive of Chinese Communism was against a commercial engagement with free-market maritime economies, while alliance with the Soviet Union in the 1950s further enhanced a continental approach.

Thanks in large part to political factors, however, the “Heartland” as well as China was changed. Opposition to the Soviet Union from the 1960s and, in addition (after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976) economic liberalization from the 1980s each greatly reduced the continental draw on Chinese policy and, instead, led to closer political and economic relations with the United States. In the 1990s, however, as a cross-current or additional factor, the Chinese geopolitical drive into Central Asia was renewed, as Russia ceased to dominate the region.²⁵ Partly as a result, the ideas of Mackinder and Spykman have been reconsidered in the context of present-day Central Asian affairs.²⁶ Alongside such parallels, however,

the geopolitical characterization of analysis for one period is likely to be challenged, if not negated, by a characterization adopted in the period following. Politics has played a key role in this changing characterization and in the resulting analyses. China, for example, shifted from a continental strategy to an autarchic one, and then to a global one. These strategies also had important regional implications within China.

Some of the geopolitical literature (for example, the Lin article) while arresting and instructive, suffers from a disinclination to hedge the use of geopolitical arguments with caution. In practice, aside from the repeated difficulties of demonstrating the influence of geopolitical perceptions on policymakers, there is the problem that more than one conclusion can be drawn from particular examples. Thus, for example, a “rimland” approach to modern China can be seen alongside “heartland” interests within the interior of Eurasia. Such a rimland approach would focus on transoceanic trade and resource links, as well as on: the greater Chinese world in the Southeast Asian diaspora; on maritime and naval ambitions; and on strategic concerns with Taiwan, Japan, and the United States. There is nothing implausible in arguing that both drives can, and do, coexist.

GEOPOLITICS BEFORE THE TERM

Accepting these cautions, it is appropriate to employ the term geopolitics to discuss such aspects of political geography, despite this frequently being a case of using a term when discussing a period in which this term was not employed. Such usage can be controversial, as is also seen in the application of concepts such as strategy, or descriptions such as class and the Enlightenment. Distinguished historians, notably Hew Strachan and Nicholas Rodger, have expressed reservations about the use of strategy to analyze warfare in periods prior to the nineteenth century, as they are worried about “backfitting” a modern conception of strategy upon eras that did not use the term. However, even if the word, or a synonym, is absent, the function of strategy—the relationships between ends, ways, and means in power politics—was present.²⁷

So also with geopolitics: a practice exists before a concept, and a concept exists before a term. Western statesmen read and reflected on

Thucydides in order to hone a geopolitical sensibility, even if the term itself was not in use.²⁸ Moreover, geopolitics can be combined with strategy. Thus, Sylvia Hilton has lately written, with regard to the late eighteenth century, “geopolitical factors weighed heavily in Spain’s imperial defense strategies.”²⁹

Terms used at the time could have a geographical component. To give an instance of one such term, much employed at the time, it is reasonable to ask what *Christendom* meant as a geographical space. There was certainly a dynamic character to the understanding of the term. This dynamism initially owed much to Christian proselytizing, which was very much a process with a spatial component, and to resisting the attacks of non-Christian powers. Subsequently, it is pertinent to consider how Protestants and Catholics understood Christendom after the sixteenth-century Reformation, during the Wars of Religion and thereafter. It is also instructive to note how the understanding of Christendom altered with transoceanic Western expansion from the fifteenth century. This expansion led to the extension of control over non-Christian peoples, to new possibilities for proselytizing, and to transoceanic settlement by Christians. The value of a spatial dimension, in the shape of English confessional geography, understood by the study of travel books, was indicated in Tony Claydon’s study of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.³⁰ Such studies help to establish the range and limits of religious concern, and this religious dimension was a key aspect of geopolitics, both before the term appeared and thereafter. Moreover, the argument that the modern international rules-based system derives from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 encourages a search for long-term roots and patterns that are at least partly linked to the limited *de facto* religious tolerance linked to, and stemming from, the Peace.

GEOPOLITICS AS A SUBJECT

It is also pertinent to consider why geopolitics developed as a self-conscious subject at the close of the nineteenth century, a topic considered in chapter 6. This is a subject that has been valuably discussed by historical geographers, notably Felix Driver and Mike Heffernan.³¹ There were clearly particular geopolitical

circumstances that encouraged speculation in terms of an explicit geopolitical language. These circumstances can be clarified by modern scholarship.

In turn, on the broader scale, historical scholarship on the late nineteenth century, before the term geopolitics was devised, would certainly benefit from an understanding of the work of historical geographers. For example, without mentioning the geopoliticians of the 1890s on, a recent account of “the geopolitics of war in the mid-nineteenth century” repeated Mackinder’s central theme of a binary difference between land-based and sea-based powers. Michael Geyer and Charles Bright argued that “a new breed of imperialist wars” drew on advances in technology in communications and transportation, especially telegraphy and steam-powered shipping, and the resulting enhanced capabilities. They inscribed this general shift in terms of the pattern of power politics, with Britain allegedly having invented “a politics of global power which no longer depended exclusively on the occupation of territory and the surpluses that could be squeezed from the land but aimed at controlling global lines of communication and exchange and living off the surpluses of this circulation.”

As with many broad-brush approaches to imperial geopolitics, this account can be queried, especially with reference to the earlier and highly successful Portuguese and Dutch empires in the Indian Ocean. Nevertheless, Geyer and Bright captured the extent to which power in the late nineteenth century gained what they termed a new liquidity, so that “what mattered was no longer the force at hand but the force that could be generated and put into place.” Geyer and Bright suggested that “the imperial premium on the control of space was replaced by a premium on the control of time.” This is a reminder that geopolitical considerations should not solely be understood simply in terms of varied accounts of the distribution of resources, opportunities, and threats across space and, moreover, that all three can change chronologically, not least with technological developments. These considerations were seen by Geyer and Bright as pertinent for both land and sea powers, but with important differences: “Properly understood, the ability to sustain a global presence was the maritime equivalent of the newly acquired capabilities of military mobilisation on land by the new national states[;] . . . the

new nationalising land mobilisations moved along the inner lines of geopolitics, outward (and thus faced problems of dispersal), while the globalising maritime mobilisations moved along the perimeters, inward (and thus faced problems of concentration)."

Germany was presented as able to command the interior lines of global geopolitics but unable to transcend the landed nature of its power. In contrast, in the twentieth century the United States could "fuse the capacities of the national state for mobilisation with the logistical capabilities of maritime power," combining land-based and seaborne power to become a "global superpower."³²

THE BOOK'S APPROACH

Geopolitics can be described as both the policy and the study of using geography and any factors attendant upon it, to understand, or influence, or, outright govern inter-state relations, and international relations more generally. Long before the term geopolitics was invented at the close of the nineteenth century, those conducting national and imperial relations had employed geopolitical thinking and functioning in their statecraft. Moreover, as modern theoretical approaches need to be historically based in order to be accurate, so it is mistaken to restrict those approaches to the periods when a given term is actually used.

This argument guides what follows. It begins with three chapters on the understanding and role of geopolitics prior to the use of the term. These are lengthy because the contention here is that this period—most of human history—should play a key role in the discussion. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on frontiers, a significant concept and practice in geopolitics, and also on maps, crucial tools in the understanding and presentation of geographical information, the analysis of geopolitical issues, and the propagation of geopolitical arguments. Chapter 4 uses the case study of British power to assess the role and understanding of geographical factors in strategy, with particular reference to the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) known in British North America as the French and Indian War. The Seven Years' War was the key struggle in which Britain became the major world power, and what was to be called the Anglosphere came

to dominate the Western world. The chapter closes with a brief discussion of methodological points. Against this background, chapter 5 considers the geography of nineteenth-century imperialism.

In chapter 6, we consider the classic age of geopolitical thought and, in particular, the work of Ratzel, Kjellén, and Mackinder. Their arguments are related to the power politics and geographical thought of the period 1890–1932. Chapter 7 adds Nazi geopolitics and World War II. Chapter 8 takes us forward to assess the Cold War from 1945 to 1990; chapter 9 considers developments since 1990, including the work of Fukayama and Huntington, and the “War on Terror”; chapter 10 looks from present to future, a process frequently seen in geopolitical works, and chapter 11 offers some conclusions. It will be shown that geopolitical arguments, both particular ones and general ones, in large part respond to the particular requirements of specific conjuncture. For example, after the Cold War, geopolitics played a role when considering how to define, discuss, and plan for security in a globalizing world, as in 2012 when President Obama sought to redirect America’s overall strategic commitment to the Pacific and Asia.

Readers will not agree with everything that follows, but I hope that, in disagreeing, they will define why they think I am wrong. That is one of the great benefits of contributing to debate. At present, there is valuable, but insufficient, debate between historians and geographers. In part, this is because historians, chary of what they see as geographical determinism and often ill-informed on the geographical literature, tend to ignore the first-rate literature by historical geographers. In addition, on the part of historians, there is only limited awareness of “critical geopolitics.” In turn, geographers do not always appreciate the nature and complexities of historical evidence. I hope this book contributes to a debate that will be conceptually fruitful as well as of value in public discussion.

Geopolitics before the Term: Spatiality and Frontiers

ONE SET OF TRAMLINES IS THAT OF PAST UNDERSTANDINGS of the geographical context and spatial nature of power, while another is that of the application of modern understandings to the many past centuries under discussion. Although different, these approaches—historic and historical¹—are not completely separate, because an aspect of the second rests on the ability to appreciate the cultural perceptions of the past. Indeed, there are profound differences between modern understandings of spatiality and past perceptions.

THE POWER OF DIVINE SPACE

The most fundamental difference between past and present relates to the treatment of sacred space and the religious dimensions of power. The pertinence of this issue is enhanced by the degree to which, today, religious considerations cannot be accurately treated as an anachronistic legacy of past superstition dispersed in a Whiggish fashion by the rise of knowledge. That approach seriously underplays the continuing role of religious senses of space, and perceptions of religious space, in international and domestic politics.

As a related point, an approach that underplays religious considerations today also underrates the earlier extent to which the shaping of space and the understanding of power both owed much to the strong belief in the existence of extraterrestrial forces operating consistently and effectively in the here and now. For example, the sense of a porous boundary between the world of deities and that of humans ensured

a shaping of the latter that very much overlapped with ideas of the supra-natural and its potency.

This overlap was made more complex because particular sites on Earth were strongly resonant of the supra-natural, not least due to the presence of potent oracles, as at Delphi in Greece and Cumae in Italy. Shrines added further locations for an intercessionary interaction with deities. In some cultures, such as the Pacific Island of New Caledonia, there were also subterranean countries of the dead, and therefore entrances to the underworld, which were spatially specific, as well as understood as spiritual and/or psychological. Pantheistic beliefs added a further, and more widespread, dimension to the overlap between the human and the supra-natural. This overlap ensured a particular geopolitics in terms of the value of specific sites and the hierarchy of importance involved. The human response, both to the natural and the human landscape, captured this overlap. In Mesopotamia, where city states developed from about 3500 BCE, the sacred enclosure of raised mud-brick temples was an important feature in each city, not only because the priests provided sacral power, but also because the temple administered much of the city's land while the priests could record production and store products.

The move in the first millennium CE (AD), and, more specifically, in the fourth to the eighth centuries (across part, but certainly not all, of the world) to monotheism and to a more powerful but also distant God, one not located at a particular site, did not end these potent overlaps. Medieval Christian thinkers, like many other religious commentators, saw inherent connections between the world and their salvation—indeed saw God in their world, as well as their constant connection with, and dependence on, Him through the world.² St. Augustine's book, *The City of God* (412–427), with its presentation of good and evil as distinct and yet competing spheres, encompassing both the extraterrestrial worlds and human society, very much captured the geopolitics of spiritual power, and not only for Christians. Indeed, the book demonstrated the extent to which religious and philosophical texts could lay out basic ideas of space, frontiers, and spheres of influence (divine, human and territorial) on some intellectual level. *The City of God* reflected, and developed, a pattern for the understanding of human society as a lasting competition between larger forces, each of which was located in and across time and

space, and gave this pattern meaning and authority in Christian terms. Both Christian *mappae mundi* (maps of the world) and Aztec maps, bridged human and sacred time and place, as well as running together episodes from very different periods.

At the individual level, the sense of direct Providential intervention, of a daily interaction of the human world and wider spheres of good and evil, of heaven and hell, of sacred places and saintly lives, is one that is today heavily constricted by secularism and science. However, for most of history, life and public morality were explicitly framed in terms of a continual struggle between good and evil, each of which was understood in religious terms. Moreover, good and evil were physically placed in terms of particular locations. They were treated as being able, indeed keen, to intervene in the human world. The consequences were both individual and collective.

Thus, the key spatial sense was of these relationships between good, evil, and humanity, and of such aspects as the routes for humans to salvation or damnation. This was a spatial sense that was collective as much as individual, and this can be seen in the iconography of Buddhist art as much as its Christian counterpart. These relationships were depicted visually, for example, in church wall paintings. Scenes of the Last Judgment, with the wicked condemned to a grisly fate in Hell, while the righteous ascended to Heaven, had a clear spatial component. So also with the alignments of sacred sites, notably churches and mosques, as well as with the role of *feng zhui* in the location and alignment of East Asian cities and buildings, including Kyoto, the home of the Japanese emperor from 784 to 1868. More commonly, the relationships between good and evil encouraged a metaphorical, spiritual, and physical segregation, one that matched the walling of settlements.

Relationships were also shown aurally, in religious services, and in the tales and conversation of oral culture; as well as being acted out. Such acting symbolized visually moral relationships that had a strong spatial component. So also for morality plays in other religions. The Coopers' pageant in the 1415 York Corpus Christi play depicted: "Adam and Eve and a tree between them, a serpent deceiving them with apples, God speaking to them and cursing the serpent, and an angel with a sword casting them out of Paradise."

The impact of printing, combined with the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, ensured that, at least in some areas, the understanding of good and evil became more literary, and less oral or visual. That change, however, did not diminish the need for people to understand their world in terms of the struggle between the two, and the resulting spaces of, and for, good and evil. One such spatial alignment was that between night and dark. The latter was a world of uncertainty, danger, and menace, especially for the traveler literally unable to see his route:

The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:
Now spurs the lated traveller apace,
To gain the timely inn. (*Macbeth*, III, iii)

More generally, the dark was a world outside human understanding and control. *Macbeth*'s evil, in William Shakespeare's 1606 play of that name, is measured by his willingness to call on the dark to cover the murder of his rival, Banquo:

Come, seeling Night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful Day. (III, ii)

Thus, there was a moral and physical difference, one expressed in terms of a spatial dimension that changed totally over a 24-hour cycle. Moreover, the natural contrasts of night and day and, over a longer but also regular pattern, of the seasons, provided a time-space matrix within which past, present, and future could be understood as a continuing process. The parameters were set by more fundamental sacral indicators of time and space. This was notably the case of foundation myths and indicators that were often of cataclysmic impact: for example, the Christian belief in the Apocalypse, which would mark the divinely decreed end of human time.

Ideas of the source, nature, and goal of being influenced, at several levels, relations between humans. As a consequence, religious accounts and animosities were highly important in international relations. This is a somewhat tame and permissive description of the imperatives of belief—imperatives, moreover, that had a major impact. Thus, the concept of geopolitics held by the Mongols in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries essentially came down to the argument that Heaven

had decreed that Chinggis Khan (d. 1227) and his descendants were to rule the world. Sacred endorsement and support tended to be seen as requiring proselytism (conversion) at the point of the sword, as well as support for religious activity within the state.³

Religious commitments and concerns, however, did not exclude other drives, nor did they provide the sole way to understand and represent space. Jerusalem was at the center of medieval European “T” maps, with the depiction of the world in terms of Europe, Asia, and Africa, all contained within a circle, the O, with the horizontal bar of the T representing the rivers separating Asia from the other two continents. The T was a symbol of the Christian cross, and *mappae mundi* inscribed the Biblical story as a central theme in the depiction of the world. Medieval Indian cartography focused on astral bodies.⁴

That, however, did not mean that the Crusaders of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries had no understanding of the spatial geography of the Near and Middle East, nor that the Lodi Sultanate of Delhi in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had no understanding of the geography of North India. Indeed, the location of Crusader castles suggest a very good appreciation both of the geopolitics of localities and of their broader relationships. However, alongside practical issues of control, especially over communication routes and nodes, such as mountain passes and bridges, there are also questions about the role of political symbolism in castle-building.⁵ The same is the case for non-Western fortifications, for example, in India and Japan. This symbolism encouraged the choice of prominent locations.

FRONTIERS

Castle location, like that of walls, was a sharp edge of geopolitics. The topic also serves as a demonstration that the geopolitical approach can, and should, be taken toward phenomena at a scale below that of the struggles of major states, the scale that has most frequently attracted attention. Indeed, geopolitics may well have been unduly limited as a subject because of this standard approach while, as a separate issue, this approach frequently lent itself to a form of commentary that a critic might regard as a higher form of journalism.

The example of the castle underlines the difficulties of readily applying modern concepts of space because, in this case, the idea and practice of the frontier have varied across time as well as varying geographically. As a result, the notion of the castle, as a form of frontier consolidation and defense, has to be seen in a changing context and, frequently, a contested one. These variations throw considerable light on the importance of geopolitics and on its changing application. The prominence of frontier consolidation, as with new settlements, and defense as a topic, also serves as a reminder of the difficulties of distinguishing geopolitics from geostrategy. Indeed, it is not clear that such a distinction is helpful.

Frontiers are a key site of concern in the study of geopolitics. However, like most of the vocabulary employed and applied by geopoliticians, that of frontiers is neither unique to them nor shaped by them. Indeed, frontiers, originally and primarily a legal concept (as a place locating sovereignty and authority) as well as a geographical idea, now provides a basic language for linguistic and social studies. This is because of the interest, in these studies, in concepts of control and contention. The linguistic interchangeability of frontiers and borders contributes to this situation. In a point that is of wider relevance for the study of geopolitics, linguistic, and social studies demonstrate a central point about frontiers: they are places of compliance as well as control, and of opportunities for eliciting cooperation and ensuring interaction, as well as for demonstrating hostility. They are places for asserting power and for achieving peaceful success, as well as for waging war. Indeed, for geopoliticians and others, there is an essential typology at stake, one, moreover, that covers both external conquest and internal rule. This typology encompasses two key understandings of the idea of force as an enabler of power, each of which is crucial to geopolitics: one of force as an assertor of control, the more usual emphasis; and the other of force as an expression and product of cooperation.

In practice, of course, there is a continuum of circumstance, and also an overlap of definition, between these understandings. This overlap, furthermore, adds a powerful element of complexity to geopolitical thought and the consequent use of geopolitical language. Indeed, the resulting ambiguity should encourage a probing of the complex reality

and understanding of terms such as control, dominance, and expansion, let alone imperialism, and of the general preference in geopolitical consideration for binary divides and antagonistic relationships. It is the case that cooperation often rested on an asymmetrical relationship based on the stronger force of one power. However, force is not the sole active element. In particular, control required compliance. Alongside these elements, the typology advanced in the previous paragraph offers a model that can be widely applied.

The model is particularly valuable as it also addresses the internal (or domestic) dimension of control and contention. This is a dimension that is generally ignored in conventional accounts of geopolitics and frontiers because internal lack of control rarely had (or has) a jurisdictional expression. Similarly, although not to the same extent, such lack of control rarely excited the attention of geopoliticians unless it extended to a large-scale insurrection, or a civil war between regular, or mostly regular, forces—in the manner, in particular, of the English (1642–1646, 1648) and American (1861–1865) civil wars. The majority of civil wars did not, and do not usually take such a form. In practice, moreover, the denial of obedience short of large-scale insurrection was (and is) common. Nevertheless, this denial greatly lessened the authority and power of the state. Overlapping with the issues posed by peoples who remained essentially stateless,⁶ variations in authority and power within states led to internal frontiers⁷ that were important. Such frontiers often marked the division between sedentary agrarian societies that were largely under control, and regions, often forested and/or mountainous, where the agriculture was less intensive and the control far less.⁸

The significance of internal frontiers was particularly the case for large states, but not only for them. Indeed, a crucial aspect of empires was that they had to be able to adjust to the roles of such internal frontiers. This remains a problem for their successor states in the modern world—for example, for Russia in the northern Caucasus. Yet, as a reminder of the need for commentators to confront conceptual change, the modern context of internal frontiers is scarcely identical with that in the past.

Internal frontiers had varied consequences for geopolitics. Irrespective of whether they were characterized by rebellion, they were a challenge to the authority and, even more, to the power of states. These frontiers

could be the site of large-scale military activity, as with the sustained and unsuccessful Mughal conflict with the rebellious Marathas in India in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Ironically, internal as well as external frontiers could also be the site of military strength, as the frontier relationship was frequently mediated, even defined, by the recruitment of auxiliaries for service with regular imperial forces, for example, by Imperial Rome, as well as by Britain in India from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. This service was a key aspect of the rule of European and other imperial powers; although the recruitment of auxiliaries was not restricted to this method nor to these regions. To illustrate the complexity already referred to, auxiliary recruitment was an aspect of both strength and weakness. It was an expression of the need of the imperial power to negotiate for support and, yet, also a product of its ability to do so. Taking this further, the military service could be on terms, explicit or implicit. This conditionality was another aspect of internal and external frontiers, and was a further reminder of its complexity and, therefore, of the mistake of thinking (or presenting power) in terms of undifferentiated blocs. The latter characteristic is widespread in maps and in some of the writing on political geography and geopolitics.

The relationship between the Nazi German Empire and Vichy France in 1940–1942 provides an instance of such conditionality, most obviously in the case of limited German control over the French fleet and the French colonies in North Africa. Another example is that of the Soviet Union and Romania in the 1960s to 1980s; or the exclusion until 1918, of Ireland from conscription when it was introduced in Britain in 1916 during World War I. The habit of thinking in geopolitical blocs, notably, but not only, during the Cold War, rested on a serious underplaying of the extent of conditional support within these blocs.

Both conditionality and complexity can also be seen at the level of frontiers between apparently hostile powers. These elements serve as a reminder that interpretative geopolitical models that seek to simplify rivalry and conflict and make them unidimensional are flawed: for example, models of the European state system of the nineteenth century and of the supposed “clash of civilizations” discerned in the 1990s and 2000s.⁹ For an earlier period, much revisionism, indeed, has come

from work on frontiers between civilizations and those deemed to be barbarian, notably the frontiers between both China and Rome and their neighbors. This work is pertinent for classical geopolitics with its standard emphasis on binary divides, as well as because of the interest by geopoliticians, from Halford Mackinder on, in the idea of a Eurasian “heartland” pressing outward on other societies in what would later be termed the “rimland.” In 1904, Mackinder wrote: “Through the steppe . . . there came from the unknown recesses of Asia, by the gateway between the Ural mountains and the Caspian Sea, in all the centuries from the fifth to the sixteenth, a remarkable succession of Turanian nomadic peoples. . . . The Huns . . . dealt blows . . . against the settled peoples of Europe. A large part of modern history might be written as a commentary upon the changes directly or indirectly ensuing from these raids.”¹⁰

The geopolitics of the medieval centuries was to be cited anew by Mackinder when reconsidering the genesis of his seminal 1904 paper on geopolitics. Revealing an interest in “deep history,” he went back in two successive leaps. The first was from the Boer War (1899–1902) and the war between Russia and Japan (1904–1905), to Vasco da Gama rounding the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 en route to India, and to the Cossacks crossing the Urals into Siberia in 1581, and then to the long succession of raids made by the nomadic tribes of Central Asia upon the settled populations of a crescent of subcontinents from Europe to China.¹¹

The Eurasian steppe has, indeed, for over a century been a key area of geopolitical discussion, notably as the dynamic basis for Mackinder’s “pivot” and “heartland.” Prior to the formal development of geopolitics, the divide between “heartland” and “rimland” had been of long-standing interest to commentators. This was notably so with Edward Gibbon’s highly influential *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788). Both Rome and China could be presented as key “rimland” powers that were under pressure from the “barbarians” of the “heartland.”

CHINA

This pressure was not a case of unproblematic, anti-civilizational violence. Indeed, analysis of raids on China by steppe people (a subject where research bridges military and nonmilitary history, indicating

the tenuous character of the distinction) has emphasized the latter's quest for politically useful luxury goods, rather than for subsistence. This was a quest also seen with Native Americans negotiating with Europeans in North America in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. More generally, the steppe people raided China to build alliances and to force the acceptance of commercial links. The relationship between the Russian princelings and the Tatars from the thirteenth to the late fifteenth century has also been presented in symbiotic terms.¹²

Rather than separating hostile blocs that were internally undifferentiated, frontiers were generally zones of interaction. Conflict was only one part of the interaction, and was itself linked to aspects of political and economic developments. Trade and other features of symbiotic behavior were also very important.¹³ Furthermore, nomadic attacks frequently arose because the commercial and other relationships had been disturbed, or the terms were no longer acceptable to one party. In short, these attacks were not the "natural" characteristic of the relationship, but a product of its failure. This argument represented a key qualification to ideas of geographical determinism or, even, explanations. Most of the nomadic rulers who controlled the northern borderlands wanted to extract resources from China rather than to conquer it. This extraction was most efficient if relations were peaceful, and intervention was usually a response to political fragmentation within China.

Instances of failure occurred in the Ming–Mongol conflict of the 1440s, and in the refusal of the Ming to trade with the Mongols in the mid-sixteenth century. This refusal has been traced to Ming xenophobia and to a determination to appear strong. Both of these elements play a key role in international relations and need to be incorporated in the geopolitical analysis. Partly as a result of poor relations with the Mongols, Ming China abandoned the voyages to the Indian Ocean from 1433, and focused on conflict to the north and not with other potential targets, for example, Japan or the states on the southern borderlands.¹⁴ This geopolitical "tasking" was highly significant to not only military goals but also to the pattern of Chinese military development and, more importantly, to China's interaction with the outside world. As a consequence of this tasking, the Portuguese faced a relatively benign situation when they entered the Indian Ocean from 1498, as they did not need to confront

Chinese naval power, although they were to face serious challenges from Mameluke and Ottoman naval forces. Nor did the Chinese intervene when Portugal went on to attack places with which they traded, notably Malacca in 1511. In terms of Mackinder's analysis of the relationship between the oceans and the "heartland," this change in Chinese policy was highly important, as it situated China as a continental power, rather than an oceanic one.

From one perspective, geopolitics relates to the extent and range of politics with which a state interacts, and these change. Thus, earlier in China, the Northern Song Empire (960–1126) dealt with the Tanguts in the northwest and the Kitan in the northeast. These ensured a much more extended sense of politics than some previous dynasties but, in turn, one that was much less extended geographically than that of the conquering Mongols.¹⁵

When the steppe people or China resorted to war, a relationship between means and ends affected the nature of the frontier and the character of the resulting geopolitics. Thus, China's building of defensive walls altered the expression of the frontier.¹⁶ To turn, conversely, to the most prominent attacker, the Mongols in the thirteenth century, they tended to invade and devastate a large region before withdrawing. This policy created a buffer zone that made it impossible to attack them and that also weakened the enemy's resources. This allowed the Mongols to fight on multiple fronts without overextending themselves.

Military imperatives greatly influenced the way China sought to understand her borderlands. The resultant mapping was ad hoc and episodic. For example, the plan for an ambush or a fort might be drawn with a stick in the dirt. The degree of spatial depiction at the strategic level is less clear, but it may well have been significant. Armies in China, as elsewhere, carried out complex operations that would have required a foreknowledge of terrain.

ROME

Similar points to those raised in a discussion of China can be made about Imperial Rome. This was an empire that has attracted geopolitical discussion that is more widely relevant. The nature and impact of frontier

structures and ideas have been topics for discussion. Not all parts of the empire had walls such as Hadrian's in Britain or the wall between the Rhine and the Danube, the roles of which are anyway debated, with uncertainty about the extent to which military purposes should be stressed, rather than the delimitation of a frontier. More generally, it has been argued that the Roman frontiers should be understood as permeable and characterized by shifting frontier zones that were significant for interaction.¹⁷ In addition, although the expansion of Roman power is invariably shown in historical atlases in terms of a series of provincial "annexations," this approach is misleading since it has little connection with contemporary perceptions of the *imperium populi Romani*. The notion of a political boundary for the Roman Empire has itself been questioned.¹⁸ It is also unclear to what degree the *provinciae* were thought of as territorial entities or with clearly defined boundaries.¹⁹ Moreover, Byzantine frontiers (those of the Eastern Roman Empire) have been presented as best understood as the shifting consequence of a number of dynamic elements that include the regular movements of people and animals arising from the role of tribal transhumance.²⁰

There is uncertainty about the nature and scale of the Roman usage of maps, not that maps defined, or define, spatial awareness. The value of show was captured by the large-scale plan of the city of Rome, the *Forma Urbis Romae*, which was incised on a wall for public view. Julius Caesar and other leaders used the display of maps in Rome to demonstrate their furtherance of Rome's destiny for imperial expansion. The Peutinger map, a twelfth-century copy of a map originally from between 335 and 366, indicates that the Romans felt the need for cartographic sources, rather than merely written lists, with the map also placing accurately the main junction settlements on the roads. Yet, in practice, this map would have served travelers, administrators, and generals poorly. Instead, it should be considered as an idealistic, not to say propagandistic, item for display. Flavius Vegetius, the author of the fourth-century CE *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, a summary of the art of war that was much reproduced over the following millennium, stated that a general must have tables drawn up establishing the distance and quality of routes, including accommodation and the need to cross rivers and mountains. Vegetius represented the attempt to bring order to war, an attempt that was moral in intention as well as functional.²¹

Points about the understanding of frontiers need to be borne in mind when assessing geopolitics and strategy, especially as there is a risk of ahistorically ascribing a modern understanding of these concepts. Geopolitics and strategy are centrally linked to frontiers, as they classically provided definitions of threat and opportunity as well as sites for concern or advance. Debate over the alleged character of the “grand strategy” of the Roman Empire is in part a discussion of geopolitics. This is, however, a debate that is problematized by two historical issues, each of which is relevant across the range of historical examples and into the present: first the limited nature of the sources, especially (but not only) as far as intentions are concerned; and, secondly, the difficulty of determining to what extent modern analytical approaches are appropriate.

The latter has been a vexed issue in the discussion arising from Edward Luttwak’s influential, but also controversial, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (1976), a work that was followed by another by Luttwak on the Byzantine Empire.²² Luttwak influenced John LeDonne’s *Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire, 1650–1831* (2004), an important work that, in trying to shape and analyze Russian strategy, made much use of the idea of a geopolitical background and the concept of the “heartland.”²³ In an interesting guide to how geopolitical arguments can be regarded in a contrasting fashion by different specialists, military historians have found Luttwak more helpful²⁴ than have other historians of the Roman world. The latter have assumed that a systematic plan should be in evidence and, in its absence, that there was no grand strategy.

In contrast, drawing on Luttwak, there have been attempts to classify Roman policy and link apparent changes in policy to broader geopolitical issues. In particular, a shift has been discerned toward a strong frontier defense based on permanent border garrisons, which became the norm from the late first century. This defense had become more important when the Emperor Hadrian (r. 117–138) abandoned the Mesopotamian conquests of his ambitious predecessor, Trajan (r. 98–117), whose war with Parthia to the east in 114–117 had exposed Rome’s overreach: there was to be no repetition for the Romans of the success of Alexander the Great of Macedon (r. 336–323 BCE) in expanding the Mediterranean world into southern Asia. That Alexander was able to do

so, advancing to the Indus valley in 326 BCE, whereas the Romans were not, raises questions about the extent to which military opportunities were determined by the physical environment. Instead, the strength of opposition and the range of other requirements emerge as significant.

Alongside the requirement for a movement of Roman forces from other frontiers to fight specific eastern wars, between the mid-70s and the mid-second century there was a permanent shift in the distribution of legions, particularly from the Rhine to the Danube and the East. Manpower, a term and analysis that Mackinder employed and developed,²⁵ was therefore a key element in geopolitics (a term he did not favor) and, more specifically, in responding both to the opportunities of the physical environment and the threats from multiple challenges. The limits on Roman manpower exposed Rome's weakness if faced by war on two fronts, which events, indeed, were to force on the empire in the third century. The problem offers an instructive prefiguring of current US problems about relating force structure and strategy to the number of geopolitical commitments. Luttwak was to go on to write and advise on US geostrategy.

In turn, this prefiguring of current US problems can be inscribed onto recent and current debates about priorities, as with the argument that Rome fell due to "barbarian" attack, and not war with empires, such as Parthia, to the east; and, therefore, that the United States should focus on the "War on Terror" and not on symmetrical great-power conflict with China and Russia. Such a rereading of history into present and future can be instructive, opening up ideas, but only if it is not prescriptive. At any rate, the rereading of the past in light of the present has proved, and will continue to prove, significant for geopolitical analysis and is very attractive to publishers and to commentators who find ahistoricism a positive release. Moreover, there is a significant tradition in US political and academic discussion, as earlier in that of Britain when it was a great power, of looking to Roman examples.

In about 235, the frontier system of Imperial Rome was abandoned in favor of a defense in depth, relying on mobile field armies as the key element providing a strategic reserve in a system that included fixed fortifications. Cavalry played a greater role in these armies than hitherto in Roman warfare. A scholarly focus on patterns of troop movement

indicates that imperial decision-making about grand strategic issues did occur. As so often, prioritization among objectives and the resulting allocation of resources were key factors.²⁶ This allocation was inherently spatial, as both challenges and opportunities were seen in terms of particular frontiers. The same was true of other empires, such as Philip II's Spain,²⁷ Imperial Russia²⁸ and Britain, and led to questions about overstretch.²⁹

Geopolitics and strategy have to be understood in their political as well as military context, insofar as the two were separable. The ostensible purpose of the Roman field armies was to move out to meet invaders, a purpose that was frequently necessary. However, their primary function often became the protection of the emperor from internal rivals. This emphasis ensured that, in order to mass the necessary forces, provinces could be left vulnerable to invasion from non-Roman attackers. This was a situation that sapped both resources and political support for Roman rule, and that indeed can be seen as a form of negative geopolitics, a concept that would repay development. Moreover, the political role of the army was such that many of the emperors in the third century, for example, Diocletian (r. 284–305), were Illyrian soldiers from the western Balkans, a region that was a major recruiting ground for the army. Thus, the geopolitics and strategy of the Roman Empire became in large part a matter of the geopolitics of power within the empire. This is a point more generally true of states, and one also relevant to the question of strategic overreach.

TYPES OF RULE

Rulers' perceptions of the world around, both similar and different, were important to their practice of power,³⁰ and the relationship between the understanding of frontiers, geopolitics, and warfare clearly varied. This variation draws attention to controversies over the causes of war, not least the respective role of, and relationship between, structure and agency, as well as between the determination to fight and the specific factors that can cause war. For example, the nature of geopolitics and boundaries in early-modern African states, those in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries (a contentious subject) helps explain a key context of

the conflict there. In the approach of John Thornton, African law did not recognize landed private property, and states did not assess land taxes. State jurisdiction became critically important in defining who was taxable and who not, and the key goal of control was over labor rather than land. This goal involved concepts of frontiers and boundaries and purposes of conflict that are different to the conventional European ones. Nevertheless, in early-modern Africa, jurisdiction was ultimately territorially bounded, so that subjects of states could, and often did, cross borders to escape taxation, although usually this only put them within the taxable boundaries of another similar state.

This situation was an aspect of the equation of force and labor control that was so important to the slave trade within and from Africa. This was a trade that very much reflected a type of geopolitics, namely the spatial dynamics of control over labor. In Africa, the emphasis on labor control was related to another aspect of the use of force: that by larger political units, ones which typically agglomerated mini-states, either by charging them tribute or by interfering in their institutional, judicial or leadership functions. As a reminder of the value of a broad working definition of frontiers, the point at which such a state lost sovereignty and became a part of a larger unit is problematic: it is unclear whether it was when one state recognized the supremacy of another with nominal presents, or when significant tribute was assessed, or when judicial functions or leadership positions were taken over and appointed from outside or when boundaries were completely redrawn.³¹

Moreover, the notion of a transforming interference by a more potent force is one that can, in part, be understood in terms of the concept of informal empire. Again underlying the potential value of historical scholarship for geopolitical work, this concept is one that was insufficiently deployed in the early twentieth century age of classical geopolitics. Its absence or weakness then affected the character and validity of geopolitical analysis, and often seriously so. In contrast to the concept of “informal empire,” with the ambiguities and “shared space” it offers,³² the idea of US imperialism has been employed more frequently since, notably (yet not only) in critiques of US power. However, this description has not always been employed with sufficient care, nor with adequate knowledge of the extensive literature about informal empire.

The concept of informal empire is an important qualification to ideas of boundaries and frontiers as clear-cut. The latter have generally been seen as an aspect of the Western spatial imagination and territorial order. It is, indeed, all too easy to see Western international history as in some way different to that of the rest of the world, often with some Whiggish reference to the Westphalian system of clear territorial sovereignty that supposedly began in the mid-seventeenth century. Yet, leaving aside the question of the value of this system, both as an analytical construct and as a set of norms, the Western mind-set was centered for long on an approach to territory in legal/feudal terms, rather than on more modern, spatial terms; or, rather, space. As a consequence, frontiers and the goals of conflict, were considered in these legal/feudal terms.³³ This situation pertained both before and after the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, the settlement at the end of the Thirty Years' War that is usually presented as transformative in international relations or, at least, Western-based relations.

THE MIDDLE AGES

This emphasis on legal and feudal claims and issues was linked to a situation in which there were areas of transition from one authority to another, often via several stages, as with the medieval Welsh March, which was militarily important to the English Crown and the politics of England. The March was the result of late eleventh-century Norman invasion and conquest, but it remained part of Wales, and not a kind of no-man's land between Wales and England.

As territories and their relationships were the building blocks of spatial consideration and geopolitics, so the difficulty of assessing them is worthy of note, as it underlines the point already made about the need to handle terms with care. For example, Marcher lordship has been seen as essentially Welsh political authority exercised by Anglo-Norman lords by right of conquest—in short, Welsh royal rights in baronial hands. Marcher lordship, however, has also been presented as compact feudal lordships, with much in common with lordships in northern France (whose lords made war and peace, and exercised “high justice”), and with the “castleries” of early Norman England, and with conflict organized accordingly.

A chronological dimension in judging spatial identities and related values is of great value. Marcher lordships would come to look increasingly odd as the March stayed outside the orbit of the developing common law and centralized government in England; but that was not yet the case in the eleventh century. However, although the March had its own law and Marcher lordships were part of Wales rather than England, they came to be regarded as held of the English Crown, which exercised rights of wardship, marriage, and escheat over feudal vassals. Indeed, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries many lordships spent lengthy periods in the king's hands, or were pushed toward his supporters through marriage to heiresses.³⁴

The widespread medieval practice within the West of overlapping jurisdiction and divided sovereignty challenge an approach to their territorial considerations in modern terms. As a result, the territorial divisions of the period are difficult to represent clearly on modern maps. This point is worth bearing in mind when trying, without qualification, to employ modern methods of exposition in order to explain, let alone analyze, geopolitics in the past or, indeed, to read from the past to the present. As Jonathan Riley-Smith, a prominent expert on the Crusades, pointed out:

[I]t is well known that even when the course of a frontier can be accurately plotted—and that is rare for the Middle Ages—it meant less than it does now, being more often than not simply the boundary between the lands of the villages which owed returns to lords who were the subjects of different powers. In some regions, indeed, frontiers were characterized by broad belts of *condominia*, in which lords of different nationalities, and in Palestine and Syria of different religions, shared the ownership of great swathes of villages. Customs posts were sometimes to be found[,] . . . but they were often not on the border itself.³⁵

The same was true of many other cultures.³⁶ Even in the Italian states of the early Renaissance, then the epicenter of Western, that is, European, intellectual development and scientific and geographical discourse, mapping was not a common conceptual tool. This point was important to the understanding of what frontiers meant. At the same time that mapping was developing in the West, even before the impact of the Age of Western (i.e., Christian European) Exploration,³⁷ subjects such as the division of ownership of open-field farmland or directions for a journey

“continued to be expressed through verbal details of boundaries and topological lists of travel days.”³⁸

Nevertheless, despite the limitations of cartography, medieval and Renaissance states had a concept of the spatial dimension of power, a key element in geopolitics. For example, the rulers of the House of Aragon, which dominated eastern Spain and eventually the western Mediterranean, displayed such a concept both in in-house type statements among the royal family and officials and, in public, political statements meant to persuade. Among the in-house statements, a remark of Pere III (r. 1336–1387) to his heir in 1380 is typical: “If Sardinia is lost, Majorca, without its food supply from Sicily and Sardinia, will be depopulated and will be lost, and Barcelona will also be depopulated, for Barcelona could not live without Sicily and Sardinia, nor could its merchants trade if the isles were lost.”

Pere was trying to convince his heir to keep up the dynasty’s long and intractable effort to conquer Sardinia, as well as to persuade him to seek a bride among their own cousins in Sicily. Part of this geographical awareness certainly came from the dynasty’s long Mediterranean involvement in the islands and its strong ties to merchants and sailors. The famous cartographic school in Majorca, which came under royal patronage after Pere conquered the island from the Moors in 1342–1343, was an aspect of this involvement. This school focused on the production of portolan maps, some of them luxury presentation-type items made under royal commission.

The dynasty also showed as much geographic awareness about its landward side in Spain. Thus, in 1363, Pere told an assembly that the neighboring Castilians were about to conquer the whole Crown of Aragon:

Now we give ourselves to great disaster and great misadventure, and what we have striven to conquer for five centuries, we lose in fifteen days. And we consciously tell you fifteen days, and not more, because according to the news we have had today before the meal, the king of Castile comes to these parts with great power, and we understand that he will come to [the city of] Zaragoza. . . . If it [Zaragoza] is lost in consequence, we do not reckon that he will stop until [he reaches] the sea, even to Barcelona, and Barcelona is not a city that can withstand a long siege, because it is not in a place that has or can have much food, but instead it would be lost in a long siege through lack of food.

This kind of domino-effect statement was very frequent: Pere often told captains that they had to defend a castle at a ford because of what the enemy could reach if they gained the ford; or he lamented the fall of one castle because that made specific other castles extremely vulnerable; and so on. Likewise, Pere would argue that it was better to attack in one place or another because of terrain or logistics. Pere's chronicle was also meticulous about tracing the stages of his itinerary around his kingdoms; this was in accordance with the king's instructions to the secretaries who wrote the chronicle for him. He appears to have thought of the chronicle in part as a book of advice for future rulers. The Aragonese court, moreover, displayed a sort of chess-like sense of power and power-rankings, which offer an aspect of spatiality. Thus, in one letter, Pere tried to persuade the king of Portugal to abandon his alliance with the king of Castile by arguing that the latter was reaching for domination of the whole Iberian Peninsula. Similarly, Pere tried to persuade the counts of Foix to stop attacking him, reminding them that their nearby enemies, the Armagnacs, were always watching for an opening. This geopolitical awareness, however, existed alongside more stereotypically "medieval" features, as when Pere, looking for funds to fight in Sardinia, treated an assembly to a long scholastic discourse on all the meanings of "ingratitude."³⁹

In China, from the twelfth century, maps were used frequently in documents such as administrative works and histories, which probably reflected a move toward a spatial rather than a cosmological definition of how China was envisaged. Much information was certainly available for the production of maps: the government was assiduous in collecting reports.⁴⁰

Separate to medieval attitudes, there is the question of the value today of using geopolitics to discuss developments in the Middle Ages, the period from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries. This millennium indeed repeatedly demonstrated the significance of what can, at least in part, be seen in terms of geopolitics. Instances include the movement of Germanic tribes' thrust into the Roman Empire by the Huns coming in from the steppes, and then the Huns themselves entering in the fifth century; the Muslim conquests from the seventh century; the Magyar invasion of Eastern Europe; the Viking expansion; the advance of the Seljuk Turks into the Middle East; the Crusades; the Mongol explosion

of activity; the Ottoman conquests; and also the geopolitics of trade that propelled the Silk Road and then the investigation of alternative routes from Europe to East Asia once that path was closed. Geopolitics was closely linked to communications, such as the ability of the Vikings to make and travel by ships capable of crossing the North Atlantic, and the use of horses by the Mongols. These horses were suited to the steppes, but were thwarted, in part, by the lack of grasslands in Western Europe and the Middle East. Within Europe, geopolitics played a major role in warfare. Relatively few armies passed over the Pyrenees, while the Alps were also a major factor affecting campaigning. Because of their geography, Southern Italy and Sicily were difficult to control, while malaria from the swamps of central Italy proved a significant impediment in campaigning. Geography played a major role in most military decisions. Problems affecting the German-based Holy Roman emperors helped the northern Italian cities to flourish, although more than the obstacles presented by the Alps played a role: it was also significant when Germany was in political turmoil, which it frequently was.⁴¹

What is, by modern standards, the jurisdictional and territorial fragmentation of the medieval Western world poses problems for the uncritical modern usage of geopolitics. In contrast, the collision of the Crusades provides an opportunity to think in more conventional geopolitical terms. Such terms are also pertinent for the Mongols. It is appropriate, moreover, to adopt a geopolitical approach if studying the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, once it came to occupy a vast space. Without an understanding of the varied commitments of that wide-ranging empire, we have a very Western view based on the response to only part of it: that in Christian Europe. At the same time, the struggles of medieval empires entailed more issues than those of competing commitments. For example, the Muslim advances of the seventh and eighth centuries were cultural as much as military, and established an important and lasting cultural realm. Some Muslim lands would pass under non-Muslim control, especially under that of European colonial rulers from the mid-nineteenth century, but Islamicization was reversed in relatively few areas, principally Sicily, Iberia, the Volga valley and Israel. This constitutes a geopolitical element that is not explicable in terms of the fundamentals of physical geography.

THE EARLY-MODERN PERIOD

Western geographical knowledge greatly increased in the “Age of Exploration” that began in the late fifteenth century, a period in which transoceanic voyages to South and East Asia and the Americas brought not only information, but also a sense of new prospects and urgent opportunity. These voyages were not the sole source of information and, more particularly, of the need and possibility of its organization. The rediscovery of Classical knowledge in the European Renaissance of the fifteenth century was also significant. Ptolemy’s second-century *Geography*, a gazetteer that displayed the range of the ancient world and made no concessions to religious geography, proved a particularly significant source of ideas and images.⁴² In the 1482 *Septe Giornate della Geografia* (*The Seven Days of Geography*) the Florentine Humanist Francesco Berlinghieri produced a poem describing the world that followed the order of Ptolemy’s *Geography*, and also expounding his cartographic science, all illustrated by twenty-six engraved maps. As with other geographical works, Berlinghieri offered a morality he deemed appropriate, providing Christian moral perceptions that looked to Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.⁴³ Indeed, boundaries continued to be not only functional in intention but were also an aspect of a larger universe that was given purpose by divine intention.

While global geography, as a result of transoceanic exploration, was rethought and presented anew by Western powers creating new economic and strategic opportunities, the pursuit of more immediate territorial interests was of greater concern. The nature of frontiers was linked to the conceptualization of territory, a key element in geopolitical thought.⁴⁴ This conceptualization was related not only to issues of sovereignty but also to the goals of conflict. In Western Europe’s medieval and early-modern periods, the essential unit of diplomatic exchange and strife was jurisdictional-territorial, and not geographical-territorial. This focus was reflected in the dominance of succession disputes in the international relations of the period. For example, most of the major wars in Western Europe in the pre-Revolutionary eighteenth century were succession conflicts—the Spanish (1701–1714), Polish (1733–1735), Austrian (1740–1748) and Bavarian (1778–1789). Moreover, the Seven

Years' War (1756–1763) can be seen, at least in Europe, as an attempt to reverse the principal territorial consequences of the War of the Austrian Succession, the Austrian loss of Silesia to Prussia, and thus as an extension of that war.

For the pre-Westphalian period, there was, in contrast, a major emphasis on ideology in the shape of the 1540s to 1648 Wars of Religion, although the territorial building-blocks under dispute in these conflicts were jurisdictional–territorial. In addition, succession disputes were important in this period, for example, with the War of the Mantuan Succession (1628–1631) which, in practice, involved France and the Habsburgs as a result of a complex dispute in northern Italy, or indeed with the French royal succession in the latter stages of the French Wars of Religion in the 1590s.

A focus on succession issues serves as a reminder of the prominence of dynasties. They were the key players in international relations, rather than the abstract concept of states. Indeed, it is unclear how far subsequent theories of international relations are really appropriate when considering the geopolitics of dynastic interests and of *gloire* in past societies. Moreover, the modern resonances of the geopolitics of *gloire* (a term only partially translated as glory) repay consideration.

For premodern societies, a grasp of the spatial understanding and bounding of notions of honor is problematic, other than in dynastic terms, which tended to equate with legal and feudal considerations and with a competition for superior prestige and ranking. The dynastic dimension, itself, was extremely varied, not least because of the tensions between opportunistic and legitimist dynasticism. Dynastic aspirations and claims can be discussed in terms of the geopolitical goals of particular rulers, but there was this tension between opportunism and legitimism. In pursuing goals and interests specific to particular ruling families, the historical legacy was a difficult one. Aside from the emphasis on territory as a jurisdictional entity, frontiers, such as that of France in Alsace from those agreed under the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 to the French Revolution, were frequently highly complex, and remained characterized by divided sovereignty. This point can be appreciated if it is stressed that abstractions such as France and, even more, Spain, described the patrimonies of ruling dynasties and went on doing so until

the eighteenth century, when a more national vocabulary came to the fore. The possessions and pretensions of these dynasties extended as a result of, and in the context of, feudal overlords, ⁴⁵ rather than from a situation of “natural” linear frontiers, such as rivers. Thus, the medieval experience remained very relevant in the understanding of authority and its spatial characteristics.

Honor was bound up in other issues such as confessional conflicts. Yet, religious wars offered a different context for geopolitics, in that the issues at stake were less subject to compromise than were disputes over dynastic concerns. Thus, the Western Wars of Religion of the 1540s to 1648⁴⁶ created and reflected a geopolitics that did not propose jurisdictional boundaries. Instead, the geopolitics at stake was the product of an ideological worldview and urgency that transposed into the West rivalries hitherto seen when confronting the infidel outside. This was notably so of rivalry with Islam in the long series of conflicts that began with its rapid expansion from the seventh century. This argument of transference is similar to that which presents the energy and attitudes characteristic of colonial conquest by the major powers in 1815–1914 as subsequently seen in conflicts involving them in 1914–1945—more particularly with Germany apparently displaying in Europe policies and norms developed in Africa, although the linkage between the two has been greatly contested.

The phrase “created and reflected,” applied above to the Western Wars of Religion, presents the analytical problem of determining the agency involved in geopolitics. This is a problem that is latent in the literature but not always explicitly discussed. To what extent do issues create a geopolitics, or to what extent does whatever is understood to comprise the latter lead to particular issues becoming important, and in a specific fashion? A nonlinear approach to the past, one that notes discontinuities in policy and circumstances, would suggest the former, but some of the literature emphasizes the formative power of geopolitical factors.

There are parallels between the Wars of Religion and late twentieth-century Cold War confrontations, or the “War on Terror” of the early twenty-first century, not least in terms of the frequently complex relationship between ideological clarity and the particular strategies of rulers and ruling groups. Thus, there could be cooperation

with the outside group against coreligionists, as in medieval Spain (for both Christians and Moors), or with the Crusader kingdoms (again for both sides), or in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with rulers of France allying with German Protestant princes and, separately, with the Ottoman Turks against the Habsburgs. Most prominently, Francis I of France (r. 1515–1547) cooperated with the Ottoman sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566), in the 1530s and, alongside the more general element of “my enemy’s enemy is my friend,” geopolitics played a specific role. The lack of a port from which to launch attacks into the western Mediterranean affected Suleiman’s strategy, encouraging cooperation with France so that the port of Toulon could be used.⁴⁷ The successful siege of Metz by Henry II of France in 1552 was designed to gain benefit from confessional conflict in Germany. Cardinal Richelieu, the leading minister of Louis XIII of France, was to pursue a similar policy, notably in subsidizing Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden to attack Austria in 1630. Such cooperation offers a qualification to attempts to argue for the centrality of ideological division, a qualification which therefore directs attention to more conventional geopolitical rivalries. Richelieu appeared to encapsulate a *raison d’état* (reason of state) that was the progenitor of what would later be termed realism.

At the same time as this cooperation across ideological boundaries, there was scant attempt, at the general or systemic level, to work out limits or compromises, containment or *détente*. This remained the case until the Wars of Religion essentially ended with the Peace of Westphalia of 1648.⁴⁸ The specifics, again, were crucial, as the wars ended not with a total victory, but with only local and regional victories—victories, moreover, whose results did not align. The consequence was a practice of tolerance through necessity. In the meanwhile, debates within the Western states of the period over policy could not (and should not) be seen solely as part of the ordinary weft and warp of adversarial politics, whether ministerial, court or public. Instead, to emphasize the role of ideology, these debates, given the problems posed by, or believed to be posed by, religious minorities within states, focused on more serious questions of loyalty. While the Wars of Religion dramatized the role of ideological factors in international and domestic power-politics in the early-modern West, and the struggle between Sunni Ottomans and Shia

Safavids did the same in the Middle East, this issue did not exhaust the place of religious considerations in geopolitics at the international, state, and local levels.

For example, sacred space involved fundamental questions of legitimacy, such as that enjoyed by the Ottoman sultans as a consequence of their custody of the Muslim holy places of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. They had gained this custody as a result of the conquest of the Egyptian-based Mameluke Empire in 1516–1517. This conquest transformed the geopolitics of the Islamic world and also of the Mediterranean.⁴⁹ The custody of the holy places strengthened the position of the Ottomans in their bitter competition with the Safavids of Persia (Iran), a fierce struggle between Sunni and Shia, as well as for dynastic prestige and political advantage. The Ottomans had a religious responsibility to protect pilgrims en route to the holy places. This can be seen in the agreements Suleiman the Magnificent made with Venice and France, and also in the costly and difficult Ottoman naval presence in the Indian Ocean. The Sultans also gained great religious prestige and status as a result of Mehmed II's capture of Constantinople (modern Istanbul) in 1453. Earlier Muslim sieges had failed.

Similarly, the dukes of Savoy-Piedmont, in moving their court and capital from Chambéry in Savoy to Turin in Piedmont in the 1560s, also moved the Holy Shroud, a relic of Christ's death that gave the dynasty particular prestige. Moreover, the dukes sought to patronize shrines whose saints could be seen as working for the state as a whole and not for only part of it. The cult of relics was a long-standing aspect of the pursuit of status, as well as of the ranking of places and institutions within the state.⁵⁰ Status rested on control over particular sites.

The absence of ideological triumph in the Western Wars of Religion led to a different tone in the geopolitics of international relations in the second half of the seventeenth century, as well as to looking toward a new definition of Europe (understood as the West or Christian Europe). This moved away from a Christian understanding of goals, external limits and internal organization and, instead, toward a secular geopolitics. Moreover, as a result of the decline of the religious rift between Catholics and Protestants as a key element in European international relations, there was a stronger concern, thereafter, with

the specific and regional than with that which had characterized the previous century, the Wars of Religion—although, even then, this element had been highly important. With time, and notably from the 1720s, this secular geopolitics came more frequently to encompass relations with the Ottoman Turks.

Returning to the important earlier role of dynastic patrimonies, and the values thus expressed, serves as a reminder that the long-term character of spatial elements that is a key point in geopolitical literature is not a continuity necessarily restricted to the physical environment nor to resources. Looked at differently, claims to territory are an important aspect of legitimacy as well as spatial resource. These claims were, and are, not necessarily swept aside by, or subordinated to, ideological considerations. This point is relevant to disputes in the 2010s over Chinese claims in the East and South China seas, and over the future of Crimea.

In Eastern Europe, geographical–territorial issues played a larger role than did their jurisdictional counterparts in Western Europe. The major states in the region, notably Russia and Sweden, lacked good historic claims to the areas in dispute. The texture of sovereign polities was less dense (and increasingly less dense) than in Western Europe, not least because hitherto autonomous regions, such as Ukraine, were brought under greater control.⁵¹ Dynastic succession was not the major diplomatic idiom in the region, nor generally a means by which large areas of territory changed hands and through which relative power could be assessed. For example, succession disputes were not generally the issues at stake between Russia and its rivals, let alone as far as the Ottomans were concerned. The idiom of disputes in Eastern Europe, instead, was geographical–territorial. This emphasis put a premium on spatial considerations and on the framing of senses of opportunity and challenge in spatial terms.⁵² International relations and war became in part measures of the pursuit and impact of such considerations. The successive southward extension of Russian defensive lines in the seventeenth century was an aspect of this emphasis on territory.

The implication of this contrast between Western and Eastern Europe, for geopolitics, military tasking, and the planning and conduct of operations, was significant. A focus on jurisdictional–territorial

goals led to an emphasis on the gain of particular territories (rather than territory as a whole, let alone the destruction of the opponent's army), and may well also have encouraged sieges of the cities that were the centers of jurisdictions: for example, in the seventeenth century, Besançon (over Franche-Comté), Lille (over what became French Flanders), or Perpignan (over Roussillon), irrespective of their abstract military value. Grasping control symbolically, as well as practically, was significant, not least in terms of the international response that would register and legitimate a transfer of territory. Concepts of decisive victory in battle are not terribly helpful here and, instead represent an unwarranted extrapolation of a particular type of conflict and, specifically, the reading back of the views of a distinct period. Modern counterparts suggest themselves, particularly the importance of symbolic factors in wielding control and exerting influence, and also the abiding difference between military output, in the shape of activity, and outcome, in the form of success: notably the other side accepting defeat.

Alongside the issue of goals came that of means. Spatial considerations were particularly important in terms of communications and logistics, notably routes used for movement and supply. Thus, the "Spanish Road," the route along which in 1567 10,000 Spanish troops marched north from Italy to the Low Countries, enabling the Duke of Alba to reimpose the authority of Philip II, was a key factor in strategy and strategic capability. Maps of Franche-Comté were produced in order to help plan the route for Spanish units moving through Habsburg-ruled regions between Italy and the Low Countries in the late sixteenth century. The maps showed relief features, which crucially affected the choice of routes and timing along part of the "Spanish Road." The Valtelline Pass was also a factor in strategy. Once through it, Spanish troops could march from Milan to Austria, and Austrian troops in the opposite direction, as they did during the War of the Mantuan Succession (1628–1631). The ability to cut these routes threatened the articulation of Spanish power and, in the latter case, the relationship between the Spanish and Austrian branches of the Habsburg family. Thus, France and its allies sought to attack them in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵³ Fortresses such as Luxembourg became more significant because of their linkage to such routes.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A more spatially territorial approach to frontiers developed in Europe, particularly Western Europe, in the eighteenth century, although this process remained incomplete at the time of the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. The process was related to the consolidation of territorial sovereignty, the increasing state monopolization of organized violence, and the mapping of frontiers. All of these can be seen as crucial preparations for the stage of international relations that was to give birth to modern concepts of “realist” international behavior, including geopolitics as classically understood. This process extended to the Turks in the 1760s, with Ahmed Resmi, mapping the frontier province of Wallachia, the control of which had been contested with Austria earlier in the century.⁵⁴

There was an important military component in Europe, as the implementation of firm frontiers was bound up with the existence of more assertive states and with growing state bureaucracies, which sought to know where exactly they could impose their demands for resources, including recruits, and where they needed to create their first line of defense. At the same time, the control of frontier zones by states enhanced their military capability, not least by strengthening the provision of supplies, which was so crucial for operating in and beyond these zones. Geopolitical capacity thus involved governmental as well as military strength. There was a widespread symbiotic relationship, with resource mobilization by government used to the benefit of the military, as in Russia.⁵⁵

International competition was a key factor in driving governmental development, including the integration of disparate elements in order to produce a more coherent strategic vision. This process was also seen with China.⁵⁶ As a related factor—but also as a consequence of the interaction of geopolitics, war, and governmental development—international competition led to pronounced differences between states, including Western states. These differences related as much to internal structure as to apparently objective measures of strength in terms of territory or population. Indeed, the capability for effective governance suggested by these factors of internal structure and political culture helped determine the benefit, in terms of revenue and troops, that could be obtained from

these measures of strength.⁵⁷ To separate out the domestic from the international, and to focus on the latter when considering geopolitics, would be inappropriate.

A lack of uniformity in governmental effectiveness was important and ensured a geopolitics of real or apparent opportunities and threats. Differences between states created possibilities for expansion, notably by Prussia, Russia, and Austria in the three Partitions of Poland in 1772–1795. These partitions led to the extinction of Poland as an independent state, a dramatic geopolitical change, and one that lasted until the end of World War I.⁵⁸ Part of the discussion of international relations was a matter of considering how best to respond to differences in political systems between states, and also how to secure their continuance to the benefit of particular states. This goal encouraged intervening to ensure the continuation of a political system that was of benefit. Both ideological and practical issues played a role in this discussion of how best to preserve or replace particular governmental systems in individual states, for example, the Swedish Age of Liberty in 1719–1772 or Hanoverian rule in Britain from 1714 to 1760.

In turn, ideological developments became a more significant dynamic within the West in the late eighteenth century. The geopolitical context within the West changed with different political assumptions. For example, in France in the second half of the century, honor as a theme of policy was increasingly attributed by critics to the nation, and not, as hitherto, to the royal government.⁵⁹ This shift, and a related nationalization of attitudes to foreign policy,⁶⁰ looked toward the more abrupt discontinuities produced from 1776 with American independence and, more starkly, from the 1790s as a result of the territorial ideology of the French Revolution and its nationalism without the Crown. The habitual bases of legitimate rule in territory, whether inherited or conquered—dynastic right, feudal law, and the laws of conquest—were to be renounced by Revolutionary France from 1792 in favor of popular will and the ideology of “liberation.” This ideology provided a potent claim for control and transformation.⁶¹

The impact of the Revolution and then, from 1799, of Napoleon led to the creation of new states and empires, which helped to make necessary new concepts and analyses of international relations. These eventually

provided a basis for the development of formal ideas of geopolitics. To assess the geopolitics of the age, both prior to the French Revolution and thereafter, in terms of power politics without integrating these ideological dimensions is seriously mistaken. Moreover, as this chapter indicates, these dimensions varied geographically and changed through time, notably under the impact of politics.

Geopolitics before the Term: Maps

IN THE INTERACTION BETWEEN GEOPOLITICS, WAR AND STATE formation in the early-modern period of the Western world, geographical information became increasingly prominent and was regarded as important by contemporaries. The development of maps and cartographic skill went hand in hand with notions of force projection and control capabilities. These notions interacted with technological change, particularly in warfare, and also with bureaucratization, leading to a strategic evolution that reconceptualized, on a global level, the relationship between physical geography and policy. This reconceptualization provided a new context for the more common assessment of the situation at more regional, and thus detailed, levels.

MAPS

The role of information-gathering techniques in geopolitics was of particular significance. This role, both in collecting and in depicting spatial information, introduced a dynamic component in the understanding of geopolitics. Change occurred at a number of levels, but the use of maps was a common element. At the global level, reasonably accurate projections and representations of the entire world were an important development.

A key element was the national one, as it was especially at this level that governmental efforts to acquire information operated. A bureaucratization of spatial knowledge was increasingly apparent from the seventeenth century. In the case of Sweden, for example, there was a

marked change between the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth with the start of military mapmaking and naval cartography, both by collecting maps and by the training of professional mapmakers. The Swedish war archives contains a collection of maps from the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648, which Sweden entered in 1630) and later, reflecting the army's need of maps for planning and information during operations in foreign countries. Moreover, the National Land Survey of Sweden, which began in 1628 under the guidance of Anders Bureus, mapped not only Sweden at a large scale but also lands occupied by the Swedes. In France, provincial officials were ordered in 1663 to send all available maps and geographical information to Paris. This knowledge was then used by Nicolas Sanson, the *geographe du cabinet*, to devise a series of maps of France.¹

The varied potential of maps as information systems repays consideration because it throws considerable light on the extent to which geographical knowledge could be involved in the formulation and execution of policy. The background was of a major development in the way in which the world was seen. The linear perspective, which became important in Western painting from the fifteenth century, mirrored cartography in its attempt to stabilize and reify perception. In both landscape and maps, there was an emphasis on accurate, eyewitness observation, faithfully reproduced. The use of mathematics to order spatial relationships provided a visual record of measured space. In place of the idealized and formulaic representation of cities—the norm in the medieval period—came a desire for topographic specificity.

Western advances in trigonometry and, critically, the dissemination of practice and perception, and across a broad range, were intertwined with the ability to use maps and to understand spatial dimensions without necessarily seeing the physical object. More broadly, humans were stimulated to learn and visualize more, and a self-reinforcing link was established between these processes and book- and map-learning. This situation was linked to the application of knowledge. In the seventeenth century, applied knowledge as a process responsive to changing information became more common in the West. This was linked to interest, both governmental and individual, in the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge.

A map presented knowledge at a distance. War was the prime focus for such knowledge, and General Henry Lloyd argued in 1766 that the “most important object of any, to those who aspire to the command of armies, is geography.” For Lloyd, this was a matter, not only of topography and natural resources, but also of the “form of government” and its consequences for the society in question.² Lloyd influenced Clausewitz.

To be effective tactically—in short to have power over a locality—it was necessary to understand the terrain. Maps could help in this,³ and terrain was already being mapped in manuscript in the mid-1540s, as in John Rogers’s technically advanced plans of the environs of Boulogne, which had been captured by Henry VIII of England. By the late sixteenth century, the mapping of terrain was commonplace in manuscript mapping, although such mapping did not need to be precise in order to meet contemporary needs. The mapping of topography was to be more common and more precise by the late nineteenth century, by which time the surveying and mapping of elevations had improved, not least with the use of contour lines. Nevertheless, there were useful devices prior to that: for example, using numbers to indicate the relative height of the ground. Important to placing artillery, this technique, termed “relative command,” was taught by François Jarry, a French émigré who in 1799 became topographical instructor at Britain’s school for staff officers, which soon would become the Royal Military College. Jarry influenced the teaching of reconnaissance to the Royal Engineers, as can be seen in the reconnoitering sketches that were used by the Duke of Wellington to plan his successful dispositions at the battle of Waterloo in 1815.

Maps were particularly important for the employment of artillery, not so much at the tactical level (because of the problems of mapping height), but at the operational level, as maps provided indications of where artillery could be transported. Maps could be unhelpful in their depiction of roads,⁴ but by the 1530s there was an awareness of the need, and this need was increasingly catered for. In England, Thomas Elliot’s *The Book Named the Governor* (1531) praised the utility of maps. More generally, the requirement for information on where cannon could be transported was a product of the operational issues posed by the greater scale of war and by the need, despite this scale, to retain mobility. Thus,

an understanding of routes was crucial to war, and maps provided a key aspect of this.

Although this was scarcely a new feature, the eighteenth century featured conflicts in which operational theatres spanned hundreds of miles. Notably in North America, British and French forces had to traverse vast distances, often through wild, inhospitable terrain, making large armies vulnerable to enemy tactics of *petite guerre*, by which small, highly mobile, detachments carried out fleeting attacks and ambushes on the flanks of their larger adversary. Commanders therefore required maps that conveyed very practical knowledge that would allow their forces to move quickly without being over-exposed to enemy action. A needs-based account for more geographical information can, however, only be part of the equation as other militaries with the same requirements—for example, the Ottomans—did not have a comparable cartographic culture.

The Western requirement for spatial information in North America in the eighteenth century gave rise to what Brian Harley termed “the cartography of military movement,” which included two distinct practices of cartography: reconnaissance maps and route maps. With reference to the former, commanders would dispatch troops, sometimes disguised as civilians, to record observations that were “closely related to the requirements of troops moving through and subsisting in unfamiliar terrain. By means of sketches and written notes, only relevant information was to be collected.”⁵ While such maps and instructions would include details such as major roads, bridges, serious obstacles, and obvious sources of supplies, the maps, although drawn to a rough scale, were invariably crude, being executed with some degree of haste. Such reconnaissance mapping was often not done in expectation of any specific military movement, but rather in anticipation of activity in that general theatre. For example, in February, 1775, just months before the Battle of Bunker Hill, General Thomas Gage, the British commander, dispatched two amateur surveyors to reconnoiter the countryside around Boston, their maps and notes today preserved in the Library of Congress in Washington.⁶

Route maps, the second type of cartography in North American warfare, were usually executed by professional military surveyors, laying out the intended course of a specific armed force under

set conditions: “As a generator of cartographical by-products, such troop movement was a formal activity that had more in common with fortification planning than with reconnaissance.”⁷ While they may have incorporated intelligence gleaned from reconnaissance maps, these maps laid out specific routes for the army to take, often also drawing on information from (sometimes already-existing) topographical surveys conducted under scientific conditions. This mapping was frequently undertaken with specific reference to an intended itinerary, which considered daily progress and the most appropriate sites for encampments and resupply of the force. As a result, an accurate and formal detailing of distances and features of the landscape was critical. Perhaps the finest set of route maps produced during the period are those by the Comte de Rochambeau’s engineers who, in 1781 painstakingly charted the route of the French army from Newport, Rhode Island, to Yorktown, Virginia. This carefully chosen route afforded the army the speed and stealth that allowed it to arrive at its objective at an ideally opportune moment, while avoiding British detection.⁸ Whether or not accompanied by maps, or by maps that have survived, the planning of itineraries was a key element of military activity.

Insofar as warfare provided a central aspect of the expanded use of maps for administrative purposes, as well as of the use of information for geopolitical purposes, it was route-planning that was fundamental. The Hardynge maps of Scotland of ca. 1420–1450 showed military invasion routes. Signot’s map of Italy, which appeared in manuscript in 1498 and in print in 1515, was explicitly an invasion plan for Louis XII and then Francis I of France during the lengthy Italian Wars (1494–1559). This process was not restricted to Western Europe. The first Polish operation to rely on theatre maps drawn up expressly for the campaign was King Stefan Bathory’s successful 1579 offensive to retake the city of Polotsk from Ivan the Terrible (Ivan IV) of Russia. In this case, maps of the Lithuanian–Muscovite border were prepared by Maciej Strubicz, Stanisław Pachołowiecki, and the Wallachian Petr Frankus. The Russians made increased use of mapping in the seventeenth century, especially toward its close. For his march on the Crimean khanate in the unsuccessful campaign of 1689, Prince Golitsyn made use of a primitive wagon-mounted odometer and compiled a *versta* or distance-book that

was intended to be used to prepare a map. This book is preserved in the archive of the Military Chancellery and is useful in retracing the route Golitsyn's army took.⁹

Maps that could aid campaigning were, however, more common further west. Under Henry IV of France (r. 1589–1610), the *ingénieurs du roi* produced detailed manuscript maps of the major frontier provinces, maps that were designed to aid campaigning against Spain and Savoy and that were soon printed. One of the engineers, Jean de Beins, who was also a fortification expert in the province of Dauphiné, drew maps based on his surveys of the different valleys which he then linked into a master map. A map of Ireland survives in the French archives, showing the major military moves made in the campaign there in 1690. By then, the French had established a permanent collection of maps for military purposes, the *Dépôt de la Guerre* being founded in 1688. The records of fortifications there included the *Recueil des plans des places du roi*, also known as the *Louvois Atlas* of 1683–1668, an atlas of fortresses.¹⁰

War led to an increased demand for geographical information. Thus, the silk maps printed for military use in northern Italy at the Milanese press of Marc' Antonio Del Re in the 1730s and 1740s, during the wars of the Polish (1733–1735) and Austrian (1740–1748) successions—for example, *Italiae Septentrionalis* (1735) and *Nuova Carta Corografica, o sia centro del gran teatro di guerra in Piemonte Savoia l'anno 1744* (1744)—were very useful for route planning. These maps also indicated the geographical relationship of the numerous principalities. As war involved the pursuit of military advantage in terms of the politics of this complex territorial world, so it was necessary to understand the geopolitics of the latter, and notably the relationship between places and territories. The war in northern Italy could also be followed in Johannes Covens and Cornelis Mortier's *Le Cours du Po* (Amsterdam, 1735). This map may have helped the nearby negotiators at The Hague seeking (unsuccessfully) to settle the War of the Polish Succession in protracted negotiations during the winter of 1734–1735, or may have been primarily for a public interested in war news. The United Provinces (Dutch Republic) had a large public for such news.

Similarly, it is no accident that Georges-Louis Le Rouge published in Paris in 1768 a *Carte Militaire de l'Isle de Corse*, for that was the year France

purchased Corsica from the republic of Genoa, only to face a rebellion that led to large-scale, and ultimately successful, French military intervention. Le Rouge was a military engineer and cartographer, and his wall-map of Corsica marked the military posts. He was also to publish *Cartes des Troubles de l'Est* (1770) at the time of the Russo-Turkish war of 1768–1774. This was a conflict followed with attention further to the west, where it appeared to usher in the beginning of what became the “Eastern Question”: the West’s concern with the fate of the Ottoman Empire. The activities of Le Rouge were examples of the growing importance in the eighteenth-century West of large-scale military surveys. These were part of a broader economy of knowledge, which expanded considerably, helped by the diffusion of information through print.¹¹

This cartography and literature became more prominent from the 1750s. It seems to be related, at least in part, to the expansion of the zones of Western wars away from an emphasis on positional conflict (and zones), classically sieges of fortified positions, to larger, theatre-wide operations, as well as transoceanic campaigning, which became more important for Britain and France from 1754 as far as North America was concerned. This significance of maps for route planning was particularly true for operations beyond the area of existing Western territorial control. This was the case of Russian advances against the Turks southward into the Balkans, and also of Western transoceanic expansionism. An absence of maps hindered the Dutch in their unsuccessful operations into the interior of Sri Lanka in 1764 and, as a result, Lubert Jan Baron Van Eyck, the Dutch governor, had new maps drawn while his forces operated.¹²

An emphasis on the significance of maps for route planning helped ensure a degree of “non-specificity” that is one of the characteristics of military cartography and, indeed, an aspect of its more general importance to the development and practice of mapping. This non-specificity relates to the extent to which maps were not solely of value for military purposes. A wider geopolitical agenda can be readily grasped in the case of British military mapping, as during the period between the Seven Years War (1756–1763) and the American Revolution (1775–1783), there was an emphasis on the broader needs of colonial government.¹³ The mapping of coasts and coastal waters served

commercial as well as military ends. The Swiss-born Joseph Frederick Wallet Des Barres, who had been trained at the Royal Military College, Woolwich, and served as a military engineer in North America, was instructed to survey the coastlines of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and the Gulf of St Lawrence, which became a basis for his *The Atlantic Neptune*, a survey of the northeast coast of North America.¹⁴ An earlier instance of the ownership of such maps by a key figure is shown in the copy of the *Atlas Maritimus and Commercialis; or, a General View of the World* (London, 1728) by Nathaniel Cutler and Edmond Halley that belonged to John Cleveland, a commissioner of the British Royal Navy in 1743–1746, who became joint secretary to the Admiralty from 1746, and sole secretary from 1751 until his death in 1763. This work included a coasting pilot for mariners, with fine charts of most trading areas of the world. More generally, geographical knowledge was clearly linked to naval and economic power.

Earlier, in the late sixteenth century, there was already much awareness of the utility of charts for warfare, defense and trade. Anthony Ashley, the Secretary to the English Privy Council, sponsored the translation into English of *Waghenaer's rutter* (sailing instructions and charts) in the months before the Spanish Armada conflict in 1588. Established commercial chart publishers were called on in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to meet official needs for charts, as with the activities of the Blaeu dynasty in connection with the Dutch East and West India companies in the seventeenth century,¹⁵ and with the publication of the *Neptune François* and the Dutch pirated version in the early 1690s. In a direct and ultimately successful challenge to Dutch hegemony over the sea-chart market, a challenge that can be linked to the movement of maritime hegemony to England, the initial issue of *The English Pilot, Book Four*, covering American coastlines, was published in London in 1689. Eventually running to four books encompassing the known globe, numerous editions were published throughout the eighteenth century. Although many of the maps dealing with European waters were derivatives of earlier Dutch charts, the work proved enormously popular, not least due to the charts' accompaniment of sailing directions written in English. The project had been conceived in the 1670s by John Seller, but was only realized by the cartographer John Thornton in collaboration

with the publisher William Fisher. Most of the subsequent editions of *The English Pilot* were published by the firm of Mount and Page.¹⁶

Naval operations were heavily dependent on maps. The Swedish navy used Dutch maps of the Baltic Sea until 1645, when the first Swedish map was published by the navy's senior master pilot, Johan Månsson. This map, too, was greatly reliant on the Dutch maps. After extensive surveying operations, a much better map was published by Petter Gedda in 1695, and from then on the navy continually surveyed and updated maps of the Baltic and the Swedish coast. Official hydrographic offices followed in Britain, France, and Spain in the eighteenth century. The pace of development varied by state, but there was a clear direction of change.

As a testimony to the importance attached to geographical material, there were attempts to restrict the availability of maps, and indeed of information, and most especially about distant regions, where new information and novel geopolitical possibilities most clearly combined. In particular, the Spanish government tried to keep other Westerners out of the Pacific, which it regarded as a monopoly, and consistently attempted to restrict information about the ocean. However, in 1680, a band of English buccaneers under Bartholomew Sharp crossed the Isthmus of Darien from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Using a Spanish vessel they had seized off Panama, they attacked Spanish shipping, before navigating the waters south of Cape Horn from west to east (Pacific to Atlantic), returning to England in 1682. The band included Basil Ringrose, who both wrote a journal of the expedition that was published in 1685 and compiled a substantial "waggoner"—a description in the form of sailing directions—to much of the coast he sailed along, as well as to some parts he never visited. This description stemmed from the *derrotero* or set of official manuscript sailing directions, illustrated by a large number of coastal charts that Sharp seized from a captured Spanish ship in 1681 and that he presented to Charles II of England in order to win royal favor. Such atlases had been regarded by the Spaniards as too confidential to go into print. Arrested at the instigation of the Spanish envoy, Sharp was acquitted of piracy.¹⁷

Earlier, Jan Huygen van Linschoten, who had worked as a clerk and scribe for the Portuguese Archbishop of Goa, being involved in map-making, returned to the Low Countries in the 1590s and passed on the

cartographic information that the Portuguese had consistently striven to keep a secret. Captured by the Portuguese in 1509, Goa became their principal base in India. Cartographic information from Goa, as well as work produced there, reflected the extent to which Western expansion helped create a dynamism in the flow of geographical information, one that lent itself to geopolitical speculation. Van Linschoten's commercial espionage helped enable the Dutch East India Company to deploy its naval force in the Indian Ocean. Van Linschoten published his findings in *Itinerario. Voyage ofte schipvaert van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naar Oost ofte Portugaels Indien, inhoudende een corte beschrijvinghe der selver landen ende zeecusten* (Amsterdam, 1595–1596). In turn, the maps of the Dutch East India Company were secret and therefore not printed. Secrecy was also the case for maps of forts, and indeed for detailed maps of important ports, which, for example, the Swedes kept secret. Part of the politics of geopolitics was that access to geopolitical material was limited, and this crucial dimension of secrecy reaches to the present.

STRATEGY

The emphasis on only fractional usage of maps for military purposes or, looked at differently, on the wide parameters of geopolitical information in the Western world, can be expanded by considering two other dimensions of warfare and cartography: the strategic and the public. There have been arguments that strategic planning is not a helpful concept. Certainly, in terms of the institutionalization of planning seen by 1900, with the development of general staffs on the Prussian model, and indeed with strategy as a formal military process, there was scant strategic planning in the early-modern period. However, that is possibly not the most helpful basis of comparison, not least because the issue of allocating military resources between competing commitments was a serious one, and it is difficult to see how this issue can be understood other than in terms of strategy. More generally, information about resources played a role in planning.¹⁸

Furthermore, there are instances of strategic planning, as by the British in 1726–1727 when considering how best for the Anglo–French Alliance of Hanover to resist likely Austrian and Prussian advances in

Germany.¹⁹ In such cases, a sense of place was crucial, as British ministers wished to prevent such advances from threatening Hanover, the ancestral territory of the Hanoverian dynasty that was on the British throne from 1714. To that end, the value to the Alliance of Hanover of seizing and using the Rhine crossing point at Rhinefels, enabling French troops to move forward, was emphasized. If archives, printed primaries and secondary literature were systematically searched for such material, then it is likely that far more would be uncovered.

Maps played a role in planning and exposition. In the early 1760s, the French navy used a map for a planned invasion of England: Britain and France were at war from 1756 to 1763. This showed how particular French squadrons were designed to blockade the naval bases of Plymouth and Portsmouth, while another covered an invasion near Hastings. The location of the invading troops was also depicted.²⁰ This is a rare survivor, but Philip II of Spain must have had something like an invasion plan of England at the time of the Spanish Armada in 1588, while Henry VIII of England appears to have sought maps of the Boulogne area from John Rogers with a view to deciding on the most advantageous boundary line between his and Francis I's forces during their peace negotiations in 1546. In the next reign, that of the infant Edward VI, Thomas Seymour is recorded as trying to use a manuscript map of England in the late 1540s to demonstrate the extent and strategic nature of his support as a means of persuading his friends to join him in revolt against his brother, the Protector, Edward, Duke of Somerset.²¹

Royal and princely collections of maps were a major feature of early-modern courts, notably with the painted maps that decorated audience halls. The use of maps for overlapping utilitarian and symbolic purposes was matched by that of globes, for example, those displayed in the Escorial, Philip II of Spain's major palace. Rulers were particularly interested in maps of their own estates, but they also amassed collections of battle plans and maps. Maps were to record triumphs, for example, those of the French Crown in the seventeenth century, which were depicted by Jacques Callot, Stefano della Bella, Nicolas Cochir, Sébastien de Pontault, and Roomeyn de Hooghe. The Landgraves of Hesse-Cassel amassed an excellent collection of maps²² that are very revealing about the visual depiction of military

operations. Clearly, the Landgraves actively collected information about earlier battles.

There are also examples of the use of maps by ministers in order to understand the military dimension of international crises. In England, in response to the crisis of war with Spain (1585–1604), Lord Burghley's map of Lancashire depicted the seats of both Catholic and Protestant gentry. This was a clear indication of the security problems believed to be posed by the loyalties of the former.²³ Two centuries later, the use of maps can be seen, during the Dutch crisis of 1787, in the advice offered the British cabinet in person by Charles, 3rd Duke of Richmond, the Master-General of the Ordnance, and Sir James Harris, the British envoy in The Hague, and later 1st Earl of Malmesbury, an experienced diplomat. Richmond demonstrated the contrast between the distance allied Prussian troops would have to traverse from their base in Cleve, in order to mount an invasion of the Netherlands, with the greater distance French forces needed to travel from Givet in France in order to intervene on behalf of their Dutch protégés.²⁴ This advice was designed to encourage British support for Prussian action by illustrating the viability of the latter. In the event, the British lent naval backing, the Prussians successfully invaded, and French preparations did not result in action.

In 1792, George III of Britain used a map to follow the Prussian invasion of France.²⁵ In 1800, George Canning, later a successful foreign secretary, wrote to his successor as undersecretary in the British Foreign Office about French campaigning in Italy: "What do you think of the Italian news? And what consolation does Pitt point out after looking over the map in the corner of his room by the door?"²⁶—a reference to William Pitt the Younger, the prime minister, whose responsibilities, expertise and interests were primarily in government finances. Pitt had headed the ministry that received the advice from Richmond and Harris in 1787.

INFORMATION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The public dimension of the use of maps fits most easily with the theme of the development of a public sphere²⁷ in which map consumption was driven by the interaction of public demand and entrepreneurial activity.

Such a public sphere is a commonplace in discussion of eighteenth-century Western Enlightenment culture and, although it may be overplayed,²⁸ the thesis has considerable value. War provided a key issue for the public, which, in part, reflected a different political agenda from that of the modern world, with far less attention devoted to economic management, social welfare, or health and education as public issues. Secondly, despite frequent claims that warfare prior to the outbreak of the French Revolutionary War in 1792 was limited and indecisive, in practice crucial issues were at stake in this conflict, not least fears about hegemony in Europe, as well as the fate of transoceanic power.²⁹

Public interest encouraged the production of two types of maps, first the plans of prominent battles. In 1590, an English account of the defeat of the Spanish Armada two years earlier was illustrated by a set of plans by Robert Adams showing the successive stages of the campaign on a background of scale maps of the English Channel. Illustrative plans and maps were being published with official cooperation in England by at least 1689, when Thomas Phillips published plans of Londonderry in northern Ireland, which was then being blockaded by forces loyal to James II (VII of Scotland). That plans were produced was an instructive variant on the earlier focus on pictures, although the latter remained prominent. Furthermore, there was the important fusion type of map: an illustration of the conflict that included a map of the battle. In this format, the illustration provided the dynamic quality and sense of vigor and could also throw light on the topography of the battle. The map, however, was clearly part of the authority of the scene. Such a fusion was also seen in depictions of naval battles, such as that between the British and a Franco-Spanish fleet off Toulon in 1744.³⁰ The limited number of ships involved in naval battles facilitated this process of depiction.

Secondly, public interest encouraged the production of maps showing the region of contention and hostilities, in short the placing of the contestation of power, which is a key theme in geopolitics. In 1635, a map depicting recent Dutch operations in Brazil and Curaçao was published in The Hague. It provided both details of particular sites, such as the Brazilian city of Recife (captured by the Dutch from the Portuguese in 1630), and a large-scale map of Brazil on which the general campaign against the Portuguese could be followed. More commonly, wars in Europe were

understood with the help of maps such as *A True and Exact Map of the Seat of War in Brabant and Flanders with the Enemies Lines in their Just Dimensions* (1705), a detailed map on which could be charted the moves of Anglo-Dutch-German forces commanded by John, 1st Duke of Marlborough, and his French opponents. This map was followed by the issue, by John Harris, of *A New Map of Europe Done from the most Accurate Observations communicated by the Royal Societies at London and Paris Illustrated with Plans and Views of the Battles, Sieges and other Advantages Obtained by her Majesties Forces and those of Her Allies over the French*. Insets included plans of the battles of Blenheim (1704) and Ramillies (1706), both key victories for Marlborough.³¹ Similar maps appeared for particular battles, enabling readers to understand the general context, as well as the course, of the battle. Thus, the battle of Falkirk in 1746, a major clash in the Jacobite rising that had started in 1745, was soon commemorated in a map showing the general area. It included a plan of the battle of Falkirk and of the subsequent battle at Culloden; the latter was also the subject of a separately published plan.

Sieges were frequently shown in printed maps and had been since the sixteenth century, although not by non-European societies. Fortifications readily lent themselves to mapping, and this mapping provided a ready source of material for entrepreneurial publishers such as the Huguenot exile Abel Boyer who published, in London in 1701, *The Draughts of the Most Remarkable Fortified Towns of Europe . . . with a geographical description of the said places. And the history of sieges they have sustained*. This was a moment in international tension that was propitious for entrepreneurs, as the wide-ranging and lengthy War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714, Britain involved 1702–1713) was beginning. Four years later, there appeared in Paris a collected edition of Nicolas de Fer's fortification plans, *Les Forces d'Europe*, which had first appeared between 1690 and 1695, during the Nine Years' War. Similarly, in 1727 the second edition of Jacques Ozanam's *A Treatise of Fortification* was published in London with the addition of *A New and Exact Plan of Gibraltar with all its Fortifications* by Hermann Moll, the latter plan made topical by the Spanish siege of that year, which was the high point of the unofficial war between the two powers. The relationship between mapping, public interest, and the military was taken further with dedications, as

of Moll's *A New Map of Germany, Hungary, Transylvania and the Suisse* (1712) to Marlborough. Such dedications provided a symbolic aspect to geopolitics.

Naval battles were also commemorated with maps, although, as a static presentation of a more complex and fluid set of events, they generally had only limited value, as for example, with the maps of the Anglo–Bourbon battles of Malaga (1704) and Toulon (1744). The difficulties of the move between the general and the specific was also an issue in naval planning. Difficulties in establishing location at sea accentuated the problems of planning, conducting, and recording naval operations. Thus, in 1708, when a French squadron carrying the so-called James III and VIII, the Jacobite Pretender to the crowns of England and Scotland, succeeded in avoiding the British blockading squadron off Dunkirk in the mist, reaching Scottish waters before its pursuers, the initial landfall was made not, as intended, at the mouth of the Firth of Forth, from which Scotland's capital, Edinburgh, could be attacked, but, as a result of error, 100 miles further north. In turn, seeking, in 1741, to enter the Pacific in order to attack Spanish positions, an instance of power projection designed to create and exploit vulnerability, George Anson of the British navy nearly ran aground on the island of Tierra del Fuego: dead reckoning had put his position more than 300 miles out to sea. He was to succeed in circumnavigating the world.

As a result of the difficulties of mounting blockades, the British navy made major efforts to produce accurate charts of the waters off France and Spain. More problems were encountered in planning or mounting operations further from Western Europe. When, in 1791, the British planned war with Russia in the Ochakov Crisis, they discovered that they had no charts for the Black Sea and had to turn to the Dutch for advice. This was an aspect of the degree to which alliances created and communicated the information and established the information systems necessary for the effective linkage of strategy and geopolitical information. This feature can also be seen in information-sharing during and after the Cold War, notably between the United States and Britain. In 1791, a lack of knowledge, which reflected not so much the lack of detailed contemporary maps of the area as it did the deficiencies of the British information system, left the British unclear whether the fortress

of Ochakov, the crucial issue in the negotiations, really controlled the entrance to the River Dnieper, as was claimed. Ochakov is, in fact, on the northern shore of the Dneprovskiy Liman, a nearly landlocked section of the Black Sea into which open the estuaries of both the Bug and the Dnieper. Ochakov is situated at the narrow strait that forms the seaward entrance of this section of bay, but the British lacked adequate maps and coastal charts to illustrate this location, a deficiency that affected diplomatic discussion and military planning.³² The British government sought to argue, to both domestic and international audiences, that the return of Ochakov to the Turks, from whom the Russians had captured it in 1788, was a key goal, but the limited information at its disposal made this a difficult argument to substantiate. In the event, although unrelated to the issue of mapping, the British government backed down in the face of serious domestic opposition.

The creation of popular printed maps of areas of conflict goes back to the early sixteenth century, with Vavassore's map of Lombardy of about 1515, the year in which Francis I of France invaded the region. Advertisements from the *London Gazette* indicate that war-induced special cartography was thriving by the 1680s. However, the limited nature of the technology available for the printing of illustrations in newspapers, as well as the extent to which illustrations were not expected, were such that few maps were published in a newspaper format, then or in the next century.

The interrelationship of war and cartography was demonstrated by disputes and conflict in North America from the 1740s. In 1749, the presentation of "a map and a written account of the importance of Nova Scotia" were considered by opposition politicians deciding whether to bring the issue up in Parliament.³³ Conflict greatly increased interest in maps of North America. The unexpected British colonists' capture of the new French coastal fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island in 1745 (with the support of a small Royal Navy squadron on patrol) had led to the publication of broadsheet maps in Britain. New maps of North America were announced in the issues of a London newspaper, the *Daily Advertiser*, on August 3, September 5, and September 10, 1755, as large-scale conflict between Britain and France began there in 1755. John Cleveland also had a copy of a series of tracts of 1755–1766 that dealt with

the geography of North America, bound in one volume and supported by maps. These works moreover reflected the contention that maps could lead to. One of the tracts, Lewis Evans's *Geographical, Historical, Political, Philosophical and Mechanical Essays. The first containing an analysis of a general map of the middle British Colonies in America and of the country of the confederate Indians* (London and Philadelphia, 1755), was criticized in New York, especially by the *New York Mercury*, for acknowledging too many French territorial claims, but it was used by General Edward Braddock, who advanced into the interior in 1755.

Maps and the politics of space were closely linked. Criticism of Evans's map led in 1756 to the publication of a second essay by Evans. Cleveland's volume also included Ellis Huske's *The Present State of North America* (1755), which backed the cartographer John Mitchell in his pro-British *Map of the British and French Dominions in North America* (1755),³⁴ and Thomas Jefferys's *Explanation for the New Map of Nova Scotia . . . with the adjacent parts of New England and Canada* (1755), which took issue with the accuracy of Mitchell's map. Public interest can be gauged from the fact that two editions of Huske appeared in Boston in 1755 and two in London.³⁵

The capture of Québec from France in 1759 led to the production and sale in Britain of more maps on North America. A *Universal Geographical Dictionary; or, Grand Gazetteer* (London, 1759) was, the title-page proclaimed, "Illustrated by a general map of the world, particular ones of the different quarters, and of the seat of war in Germany." At the end of the Seven Years' War with France, a conflict discussed in the following chapter, the *Universal Magazine* of March 1763 provided a map of the extent of territory Britain now controlled in North America. This map was both a triumphant display of British achievement and a response to reader interest. Meanwhile, readers of the *London Magazine* who wished to follow the course of the war of 1760–1761 in North America between the Cherokees and British and colonial forces could turn to "A New Map of the Cherokee Nation . . . engraved from an Indian draught by Thomas Kitchin," in early 1760.

Interest in cartography was not, of course, restricted to the public but, instead, overlapped with military concerns. In October 1760, Colonel James Montresor wrote to General Jeffrey Amherst, the

British commander-in-chief in North America, a master of planned, methodical campaigning:

I think it my duty to acquaint your Excellency that I have got in great forwardness a general map of that part of North America which has been the seat of war wherein is distinguished the roads that have been made by the troops, the navigation of its rivers, its carrying places, the new forts and posts constructed, the several hospitals, barracks and buildings for the soldiers, the marches of the army, the places where have been engagements, attacks, sieges and camps, interspersed with useful remarks. The most part laid down by actual surveys with geographical and military observations made in that country from the year 1754 to 1760. As this map will show at one view what has been done in that country, I hope that it will be very acceptable, as well to the ministry as to the military, as your Excellency's march from Albany to Montreal, and Brigadier-General Murray's from Quebec is only wanting to complete it.

Montresor sought information on the details of those successful advances earlier in 1760.³⁶

Postwar British popular interest in North America continued to encourage the publication of maps and strengthened with the War of Independence, which broke out in 1775. Thomas Jefferys published a number of atlases, including *A General Topography of North America and the West Indies* (1768) and, using his maps, Robert Sayers and John Bennett published *The American Atlas, or a Geographical Description of the Whole Continent of America* (dated 1775), with subsequent editions dated 1776 and 1778.³⁷ The first major battle of the American Revolution, Bunker Hill in June 1775, was rapidly followed in London by the publication of maps of the battle, the earliest appearing four days after the report of the engagement reached London. The struggle for Boston was also followed on the Continent, with Samuel Holland and George Callender's *Chart of the Harbour of Boston*, published by J. F. W. Des Barres, being used by Jean, Chevalier de Beaurain, to produce a map. The latter map was soon re-engraved and printed in Leipzig.³⁸ In 1776, detailed maps of New England enabled British readers, anxious about the civil war in the empire, to follow the course of the conflict in its initial theatre,³⁹ while in 1777 William Faden published a large-scale map of New Jersey and, in the following year, a plan displaying the recent campaign on the Delaware River, waged by the British in order to ensure occupied Philadelphia's access to the sea. Faden did the same

for other campaigns and engagements, such as the unsuccessful 1776 British attack on Fort Sullivan, South Carolina, and George Washington's operations at Trenton and Princeton in New Jersey in the winter of 1776–1777.

Several plans depicting the decisive clash of the war, the successful American and French siege of the British position at Yorktown in 1781, appeared shortly after the event, notably including Sebastian Bauman's masterly work, printed at Philadelphia in 1782. An interesting contrast in perspective is evident when comparing two important French maps of the siege, *Carte de La Partie de La Virginie ou L'Armée Combinée de France et des Etats-Unis de l'Amerique a fait prisonniere l'Armée Anglaise* (Paris, ca. 1782), which put much emphasis on the battle between the British and French fleets near the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, whereas Georges-Louis Le Rouge's map closely focused on the action immediately surrounding the besieged town, an approach that led to a stress on the American army's role.⁴⁰

The relationship between war and knowledge was repeatedly seen with cartography. Reviewing Lewis Evans's *Analysis of a General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America*, in 1756, Samuel (Dr.) Johnson wrote that "the last war between the Russians and the Turks [1736–1739] made geographers acquainted with the situation and extent of many countries little known before,"⁴¹ a reference to the lands on the northern shore of the Black Sea. Conflict encouraged both supply and demand: military mapping and the commercial production of maps. Thus, in 1733, Louis Felix Keralio published *Histoire de la guerre entre la Russie et la Turquie, particulièrement de la campagne de 1769*, a book relating to the 1768–1774 war, and *Histoire de la guerre des Russes et des Imperiaux contre les Turcs en 1736, 1737, 1738, 1739* (Paris, 1780), works that included maps. The *Journal Politique de Bruxelles* of February 2, 1788, advertised a map of the northern and northwestern littoral of the Black Sea that would help those interested in the Russo–Turkish war (begun the previous year) follow its course. The ability of maps to serve a political agenda, or at least to make geopolitical points, was seen in the case of Russia. Later critics depicted the state as an octopus spreading its tentacles in cartoon maps such as Fred Rose's *Serio-Comic War Map for the Year 1877*, as well

as Japanese maps produced at the time of the Russo–Japanese War of 1904–1905. This concept may well have influenced Mackinder in his 1904 depiction of Eurasian power politics. He was to refer in 1943 to his recollection of childhood concerns about Russian expansionism, concerns that were particularly strong in 1877–1878.⁴²

In many respects, the use of maps to follow wars, both in the eighteenth century and thereafter, was an aspect of a general map culture, with rising map consumption being focused on particular interests.⁴³ At the same time, this focus involved not only conflicts in which one's own country was a participant, but also others, which provides a reminder of the different audiences for geopolitics. Cartography served as an aspect of the news, and that in a West in which the provision of news was becoming more central and its presentation more clearly scientific and rational, rather than providential and impressionistic. Yet, there is need for care in distinguishing between the popularity of "science" and the reality: while, in the eighteenth century, there was an increasing number of map publishers, like Faden or d'Anville—in London and Paris, respectively—who took accuracy seriously, there were plenty whose considerations remained purely commercial and who disguised a lack of accuracy behind grand claims made in map titles and/or the new austere form of map decoration.⁴⁴

During the Enlightenment, as another indication of change—change, moreover, that reflected and established different criteria in the display of place and power—there was a general shift of cartography from pictorial to book forms and conventions. However, this shift should not be exaggerated: small-scale maps had used conventional signs for centuries, while in the mid-nineteenth century pictorial maps of small areas were still being employed for military planning purposes.

MAPPING AND PLANNING

Encouraging the map culture in the eighteenth-century West, there was also a general downgrading of theory in favor of facts, not least as the notion of applied knowledge acquired definition and prestige, especially thanks to the development of political arithmetic and political economy. This intellectual shift was linked to a situation in which information,

rather than received wisdom, had greater currency, both as a source of authority and as a practical guide to policymaking. This shift is generally treated as an aspect of the history of science, but it was far wider in its sources and application.⁴⁵ Indeed, the deployment of information to support geopolitical analyses and arguments can be related to this process as can, more profoundly, the presentation of these analyses as based on information.

The dynamic relationship between war, geopolitics, and cartography in the eighteenth century can be traced to a developing consciousness about an explicit process of planning, with warfare providing instances of using information both for policy prescription, in the shape of planning, and for policy discussion. Scientific methods entailed not only the concerns of generals with artillery and sieges, but also the use of scientific knowledge at the operational level, with the need to plan foraging and marches requiring an understanding of agronomy, surveying, celestial navigation, botany, and forestry. Military technology and practice were thus influenced by the larger economy of knowledge, which expanded considerably, helped by the diffusion of information through the culture of print. Locational skills were important to the staff planning that was at an increased premium: for example, with the Austrian army during the Turkish war in 1737–1739, a war the Austrians lost.⁴⁶ Under the direction of Field Marshal Lacy, inspector general of the Austrian army, the Austrians took this planning forward after 1748, establishing, during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), what became an effective proto-general staff.

At the same time, the use of the military as the major source for mapping, and indeed as a key basis for map publication, provided another important dimension of military cartography. The long-standing surveying and charting facilities and interests of Western armies and navies varied greatly, but they were certainly important in the eighteenth century. The French *ingenieurs-geographes* had been busy with this sort of mapping, and in an organized way, since the 1600s. However, in terms of scale and, more arguably, of accuracy, the eighteenth-century surveys were in a different class. Drawing on the cartographic traditions of their varied possessions, especially Italy and the Austrian Netherlands (modern Belgium), the Austrians were particularly prominent in this mapping, notably in Sicily, Lombardy,

Austria, Bohemia, Hungary and the Austrian Netherlands. Ruling Sicily between 1720 and 1734, the Austrians employed army engineers to prepare the first detailed map of the island. As an aspect of defense preparations against Prussia, a major military survey of Bohemia was begun in the 1760s and completed under Joseph II in the 1780s. Lower Austria was surveyed from 1773, and an enormous survey of Hungary completed in 1786. The use of the military in this fashion was important in societies where, ordinarily, attempts to gain information were heavily dependent on the co-operation of others. The resulting detail was often considerable. The maps of the Austrian Netherlands—drawn-up in 1771–1774 and supervised by Joseph-Johann-Franz, Count of Ferraris, the director-general of the artillery—were based on military surveys and comprised 275 leaves. As an instructive instance of the relationship between military activity and commercialization (a relationship focused on entrepreneurs), Ferraris was then permitted to produce his own commercial version, which was published in 1778.

Military engineers from other countries were also important. The French military engineers of the period, such as Pierre Bourcet, tackled the problems of mapping mountains, creating a clearer idea of what the Alpine frontier looked like. He also mapped Corsica. This mapping was an expression of the assertion of French control on the troublesome island from 1768, a process which also included roadbuilding. Bourcet's work on the Alps was continued by Le Michaud d'Arcon, and the mapping helped the French Revolutionary forces in their successful campaigns there in the 1790s.⁴⁷ Following the suppression of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, William Roy of the Royal Engineers carried out a military survey of Scotland that served as the basis for more accurate maps. Surveys and maps were designed to help in the British military response to any future rebellion, and to assist in the process of governmental reorganization of the Highlands. As such, surveys and maps complemented both fortification and legislative action,⁴⁸ which was similar to the process that was also to be seen in Corsica. This was a geopolitics judged crucial to control.

The Russians were less at the fore in mapping than the Austrians. Nevertheless, the Russian army was employed to produce relatively good maps of the western provinces. The government regularly dispatched

groups of officers to conduct surveys and prepare maps. This was particularly done in 1810–1812, when the western lands were thoroughly surveyed as part of a process of defense against a likely French invasion, a process that included an improvement to the existing fortifications. In contrast, there was a lack of maps of the empire's eastern provinces, especially beyond the Ural Mountains, provinces that were not threatened by the risk of invasion. This contrast indicated the needs-based nature of cartography and, more generally, of geopolitical information, a situation that is a problem if conflict or interest suddenly shifts, as to Afghanistan in the 2000s. In this case, as earlier with the Falklands War in 1982, the British government scrambled around to gain reliable geographical and cartographic information.

A separate issue for Russia in the 1800s was posed by the shortage of maps for offensive operations, because this shortage reflected a dependence on army sources and the difficulty of securing information about foreign countries through these means. Thus, in the 1800s, the Russian army lacked maps of Central Europe. When an army under Kutuzov marched to support Austria in 1805, he was desperately short of maps of the Habsburg dominions and asked the Russian ambassador in Vienna, Prince Razumovsky, to send any maps of the theatre of war. The prince sent him general maps of the region, which he had purchased in a shop, but he could not find the detailed maps that would have been useful at the operational and tactical levels. This contrast in the availability of the necessary detail was more generally the case.

The role of the military was often more directly entrepreneurial, as with Johann Jaegar, captain of artillery and an inspector of arsenals in Frankfurt, who opened a map shop there in 1762 and, from 1766, published eighty-one sheets providing a map of Germany and its surrounds. There are many earlier examples of soldiers with time on their hands teaching cartography and publishing commercial maps. In addition to an emphasis on entrepreneurial interests, it is pertinent to note continued peacetime military concerns. Long-standing Prussian intervention in the neighboring Duchy of Mecklenburg acquired a cartographic dimension when Friedrich, Count von Schmettau, a Prussian colonel, produced a *Carte Chorographique et Militaire du Duche de*

Mecklenburg-Strehlitz (Berlin, 1780), followed by an engraved survey, *Topographisch, Oeconomisch und Militarische Charte des Herzogthums Mecklenburg Schwerin* (Berlin, 1787). Similarly, on the other side of the Atlantic Lieutenant John Ross of the British army was sent, in 1765, on an expedition up the Mississippi that resulted in his *Course of the Mississippi* (London, 1775). So also with the party sent down the Ohio Valley in 1766, which led to Thomas Hutchins's map of it.⁴⁹ These expeditions reflected the British determination to seize real and imaginative command of the trans-Appalachian territories ceded to them under the Peace of Paris of 1763 with France.

Alongside cartographic interest in North America, military activity elsewhere led to an expansion of the mapping of other areas about which Europeans lacked reliable cartographic knowledge. For example, Napoleon's successful invasion of Egypt in 1798 led to the first accurate map of the country. The French army carried out the trigonometric survey of the Nile Valley and the Mediterranean coasts of Sinai and Palestine, all of which were areas in which it operated. The resulting map, on forty-seven sheets, was designed to help military planning, as well as being part of a geographical enquiry that was intended to ennoble Napoleon in enlightened European opinion. In addition, the French occupation led to the production of a map of Cairo, where the French had a garrison. That French rule of the city included a heavy bombardment in response to a rebellion there, indicated the range of activity that information was designed to further.

More generally, Napoleon regarded maps as a key operational tool. In his numerous criticisms of his subordinates, Napoleon often commented that, if they simply looked at a map, they would see the error of their ways. Describing the emperor's headquarters in 1813, Baron Odeleben wrote:

In the middle . . . was placed a large table, on which was spread the best map that could be obtained of the seat of the war. . . . This was placed conformably with the points of the compass . . . pins with various colored heads were thrust into it to point out the situation of the different *corps d'armée* of the French or those of the enemy. This was the business of the director of *bureau topographique* . . . who possessed a perfect knowledge of the different positions. . . . Napoleon . . . attached more importance to this [map] than any want of his life. During the night [the map] was surrounded by thirty

candles. . . . When the Emperor mounted his horse . . . the grande equerry carried [a copy] . . . attached to his breast button . . . to have it in readiness whenever [Napoleon] . . . exclaimed “la carte!”⁵⁰

In 2014, a French television program *L’Ombre d’un doute*, argued that Napoleon was misled at Waterloo by an inaccurate printed map of the battlefield.⁵¹ In practice, that was not why he lost: his tactical and operational handling of the day were both deeply flawed. The extensive use of mapping and maps seen during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars⁵² was not a new development, as already-existing patterns of behavior continued in a Western society and military culture that were carto-literate.

GEOPOLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Geopolitics was a matter not only of international conflict, but also of the attempt to make uniform both governance and the internal politics of states and, as such, was an instance of the application of knowledge for the service of government, a key theme in the self-image of the latter in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵³ Despite the continuation of internal differences, many of them geographically linked, the increasing demands of sovereign states also helped to reconfigure power relationships within their boundaries, notably in border areas, and thus to take them closer to being blocs of territory. For example, in the Val d’Aosta in 1767–1768, Charles Emmanuel III of Savoy-Piedmont transferred duties and powers from the *Conseil des Commis*, the executive body of the Estates, to royal delegates. The scope of Piedmontese law was extended in the valley, obligatory taxes were decreed, which effectively neutralized the Estates, and the state-appointed office of *intendant* was introduced.

This process made the areas comprehended by state frontiers on maps more real as units, and the crystallization of Western frontiers was both real and mappable. By the end of the seventeenth century, it was common in the case of Christian Europe to distinguish between traditional provincial borders and contemporary international frontiers by marking the latter on maps when they occurred within historically united provinces. The redrawing of boundaries was an aspect and means of power. Thus, in Galicia, the area that is now southern Poland and western

Ukraine that Austria gained from Poland in 1772, Joseph II in the 1780s followed a policy of centralization in which administrative boundaries were redrawn. Moreover, Joseph reorganized the system of Hungarian provincial administration, in part to increase his power as well as to create units dictated by geographical and demographic convenience.⁵⁴

THE BALANCE OF POWER

At the same time, the suggestion of consolidated blocs of territory helped lead, from the late seventeenth century, to a mechanistic concept of international relations, one understood and described in terms of a balance of power. This understanding had a clear geographical dimension, not least as it could be readily transposed into spatial terms, providing a basis for the geopolitical imagery of the age and for much of the related thought. The balance seemed an appropriately modern conception in a West of Cartesian mathematics and Newtonian physics. The concept appeared to offer an apparently rational way to arrive at a scientific analysis of international relations and, indeed, in the case of the United States, in establishing a constitution. Once quantified, power could be understood in mechanistic terms that corresponded to those being popularized for Newtonian physics.⁵⁵ The notion of the balance assumed that hegemonic power would meet with a matching reaction, rather as, in his laws of motion, Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) had revealed that the action of a force created an equal and opposite response. A twentieth-century version, albeit without the scientific gloss, was offered by the idea of containment, an idea deployed against the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

In some respects, the concept of a balance of power was also a radical geopolitical understanding. Taking forward the opposition to the “universal monarchy” supposedly threatened by the Habsburgs in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the concept suggested that the theme of an empire, made normative in the West by the legacy of Classical Rome, as well as the subsequent search there for hegemonic power, was unnatural. Instead, the balance represented an idea and practice apparently appropriate for a polycentric international system. To treat this crucial shift simply in terms of geopolitical thought would be naïve. Key elements in the politics of the day were involved, notably

opposition to the power and expansionism of Louis XIV of France (r. 1643–1715), especially from the mid-1670s, as well as what might be understood as the changing Western political thought of the age about international relations. In part, as so often is the case, conceptualization followed politics as commentators sought to explain the rationale of opposition to Louis and to devise appropriate means accordingly. This was a process later seen with Cold War containment. Yet, to separate out these elements of politics and conceptualization is not overly helpful with regard to the thought of the seventeenth century. There was far less specialization in terms of sub-disciplines than there would be in the late nineteenth century, when geopolitics is generally seen as beginning as a distinct subject. As a consequence, the balance of power can be regarded as a part of the thought of the period without implying that geopolitical thought was a distinct strand.

As a concept, the balance of power indicated some of the issues and problems that were to attach to later geopolitical discussion. For modern commentators, the balance can be presented as a means to encourage restraint, but also as an aspect of a ruthless pursuit of self-aggrandizement involving often short-term shifts in alliance partners. There was a contrast between the pursuit of balance in Christian Europe and that of unconstrained primacy further afield.⁵⁶ In addition, there was the important question of whether the balance was descriptive—explaining what allegedly happened naturally—or prescriptive: outlining what ought to happen but, nevertheless, required human volition to take effect. This contrast was elided in much of the rhetoric that employed the balance. The prescriptive approach was, in part, an aspect of the more general move, also seen in cartography and science, to regarding the natural world as an analyzable, knowable, and controllable structure.⁵⁷ Yet, the role of balance-of-power language in calling for policies supposedly in pursuit of such a balance underlined its place as polemical as much as analytical and, again, markedly pre-figured the similar use of the language of containment during the Cold War. There was also the serious problem that power could not be readily defined or measured, and thus balanced, a fundamental issue for the rationalist use of geopolitical arguments. This issue was to recur with the Cold War.

The balance carried with it the concept of natural interests: goals that apparently stemmed from inherent characteristics. The thesis of natural interests, however, underplayed the extent of serious differences in opinion within states over interests and, therefore, goals. The thesis also raised the prospect that rulers could be criticized for failing to understand national interests. For example, Louis XV of France was criticized from 1756 for allying with Austria. Thus, the thesis of natural interest (and thereby national interest) potentially challenged the idea that governments were best placed to choose policies and to change them.

This approach could be seen as providing an intellectual pedigree for modern “critical geopolitics.” However, as a reminder of the need for caution in looking for parallels, there was, in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a key difference in the belief that there indeed were inherent national interests and, therefore a correct policy, which could be objectively assessed and which governments could be criticized for failing to understand. In contrast, drawing on postmodernist thought, modern “critical geopolitics” is wary of this commitment to objective reality—notably, if linked to government policy. Linked to this, the balance of power has been presented as an ambiguous metaphor transformed into a distorting myth.⁵⁸

As a key aspect of the territorialization of Western states in the eighteenth century, and of the particular geopolitics of the Enlightenment and the revolutionary West, the concept of natural frontiers—readily grasped geographical entities, principally mountains and rivers—became an established aspect of geographical description and political discussion. The concept also implied an apparently more rational territorial practice and international system. The idea of natural frontiers relied on assumptions about clearly differentiated blocs of territory. These encouraged a determination to enforce control in frontier zones, as such zones no longer appeared as valid or desirable as linear frontiers. In the 1790s, it was with reference to this idea that Revolutionary France justified its invasions of its neighbors, including annexing most of Savoy and the left bank of the River Rhine, as France’s “natural boundaries” were said to follow the heights of the Alps and Pyrenees and the mid-channel of the

Rhine. The eighteenth-century anticipations of such ideas of natural frontiers serve as a reminder of the need to see French Revolutionary foreign policy and warfare (1792–1799) in terms of continuity as much as change. Indeed, the Revolution has been presented as “old wine in the old bottles of French geopolitical pride,” as well as a product of geopolitics in the shape of international competition.⁵⁹ At the same time, the emphasis on “natural boundaries” did represent a form of critical geopolitics directed against *ancien régime* practices of territorial control.

GEOPOLITICS OUTSIDE THE WEST

Much of the classical geopolitics with which we are familiar draws on the concepts and practices of clear blocs of territory and readily mappable frontiers. These concepts and practices arose in the West, notably in the eighteenth century. However, the extent to which it is helpful to apply this concept and practice more widely on the world scale is questionable. So, also, is the notion of this situation as a terminus of historical development and/or a best practice for all time. In short, we face the position, familiar with much geopolitical thought and military history, of a desire to apply a chronologically specific descriptive and analytical criteria more widely, and (separately, but linked) to derive notions of state interest and relative military capability as a result. This issue relates to the situation across space as well as time.

Turning, for example, to non-Western concepts and practices of frontiers, geopolitics and war, there is much excellent work on asymmetrical conflict, and it covers much of the world. However, the emphasis in this work is Anglophone, while, at least in relative terms, there is far less on the frontier conflicts and understandings of non-Western societies with, and toward, their counterparts, particularly if neither was, or is, in the first league of power. Thus, the nature and role of warfare and the related geopolitics in Southeast Asia in the eighteenth century, such as the fierce conflicts between Burma and Siam, have not received the attention devoted to such conflict involving China; meanwhile, the latter is modestly covered⁶⁰ compared to the extensive and excellent work on the situation in North America in the eighteenth century.

WESTERN EXPANSION

The discussion of advancing Western frontiers of settlement, and the resulting conflict of land claim, appropriation and clearance, are themes pursued when geography, both as subject and as practice, is treated as an adjunct of imperialism, a theme also considered in chapter 5. Yet, this discussion can underplay the extent to which, alongside conflict, colonies, such as those of British and French North America, involved co-operation with non-Westerners, in this case the Native Americans. Underplaying this co-operation can lead to a simplification of frontier society and thus “the frontier,” with consequences for an exaggeration of the role of warfare there. Frontier society, anyway, is an aspect of Western imperialism that often receives insufficient attention because better records survive for those of the colonial population who lived in port cities, such as Boston or New Orleans, and their linkage with frontier conflict was often indirect. Moreover, the port cities, and their trade with imperial metropolises, engaged most fully the attention of the home governments.

Thus, the Anglo–French crisis of the mid-1750s, which arose from the rivalry over the remote Ohio Valley, a rivalry that led in 1754 to the conflict discussed in the next chapter, was an aberration for the British government. Looked at differently, the extent to which the British government in this crisis was largely responding to developments, in part reflected its earlier lack of attention to the frontier issues. Yet, in what was to be a recurrent pattern, what became a new determination on the part of the government to take these issues into its hands and to enforce its views in the borderlands of empire, clashed with colonists’ assumptions, not least a zeal for land speculation.⁶¹ Indeed, the destruction of the geopolitical bloc of Anglo-America in the War of American Independence (1775–1783) in part rested on significant tensions within that bloc already visible in midcentury.⁶² Such qualifications about coherence and unity in policy and practice are more generally pertinent in the discussion of geopolitics. Some of the literature is prone to underrate political tensions within geographical units or blocs.

The geopolitics of frontier zones, as in the case of North America in the eighteenth century, were complex because their economies and

societies were inherently unstable and prone to be absorbed by the controls, practices, and ethos of more colonized areas, especially as immigration gathered pace. Similarly, changing land use had significant environmental consequences.⁶³ The state of flux created major problems for contemporary cartographers and, notably, if they sought a synchronic display of features involving different cultures.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, however unstable, frontier societies were not some mere *rag-end of empire*. Instead, in North America, the phrase “frontier society” encapsulates complex relationships, both between colonists and Native Americans, and between colonists and their governments. Furthermore, these frontier societies have been presented as providing what has been termed a “middle ground” of shared cultural space between colonists (especially if traders rather than settlers) and Native Americans. In this space, individuals and groups have been regarded as playing an active role in organizing relations, instead of being in conflict or, indeed, simply victims of a distant imperial power. This approach is part of an understanding of empire, and of geopolitics more generally, in terms of processes rather than structures. These were processes in which not only those immediately engaged in colonization played a crucial role but also those affected by imperialism. In other words, Native Americans as well as colonists, had agency. As a separate point, there was also a Native American pursuit of advantage and geopolitics that can be seen as a variant on imperialism.⁶⁵ This point repays examination before focusing exclusively on Western imperialism.

Moreover, there was an ethnic dimension to geopolitics on the imperial frontier, a dimension in both practice and classification. Many individuals prominent in the “middle ground” were the product of Western–Native American marriages, which helped them to act as translators and to play a major role in trade and in raising auxiliary forces. In addition, as more mixed-race children were born, so the prospects of marrying mixed-race women increased. The process of participation in the “middle ground” and, more generally, in the imperial system, however, was both unstable and unequal. Western mores were strongly asserted, which played a role in considering the attitudes of allies, and Native American views were slighted. As a consequence, mixed-race relationships faced opposition to what was seen as concubinage.

The “middle ground” with the Native Americans was central to the reality, if not the concept, of the frontier. The context, however, was to change radically with American independence in 1776. No longer constrained by British power, the newly independent Americans were able to define and pursue a distinctive geopolitics within North America, a process that was subsequently to be seen when the Portuguese and Spanish empires in the New World collapsed in the 1820s. This was a geopolitics that was as much a matter of the specific tone of the relations with the Native Americans as of particular geographical considerations, although the latter affected the pace of expansion. The spatial consequences of US political culture were significant, not least a strong desire for territory and influence that manifested itself as land-hunger. This provided the context within which, in 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner was to discuss the impact of the frontier in American society and, in effect, geopolitics, a topic discussed in chapter 6.

THE CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS OF EXPANSIONISM

As so often with the geopolitics of expansion, there was a gap between the self-perception of the expansionist period and the perceptions held by others. As Robert Kagan pointed out in 2006, Americans have cherished an image of themselves as, by nature, inward-looking and aloof, only sporadically and spasmodically venturing forth into the world, usually in response to external attack or perceived threats. This lack of self-awareness was presented by Kagan as a problem in another way: not only had Americans frequently failed to see how their actions could provoke reactions from others, but they had not even accurately predicted their own responses. Kagan argued that the War of 1898 with Spain, in which the United States conquered Cuba and Puerto Rico and eventually the Philippines (in the Philippine-American War, 1899–1902) and became a transoceanic power, was consistent with his central themes: “[T]he war was the product of deeply ingrained American attitudes toward the nation’s place in the world. . . . It reflected Americans’ view of themselves, stretching back to before the nation’s founding, as the advance guard of civilization, leading the way against backward and barbaric nations and empires.”⁶⁶

In practice, as with so many works, there is a tendency on Kagan's part to simplify American attitudes and politics in order to offer a misleading consistency. His approach depoliticized the national space, which is an instance of a well-established practice of doing so, including, but not only, by geopoliticians. Instead, the reality within the United States was of very different views, as in the War of 1812 and the Seminole, Mexican and Spanish-American wars: There was often significant opposition to expansion in each of these cases. Moreover, this opposition had a geographical component, being strongest in each case in the Northeast. Thus, Kagan's *zeitschrift* approach was (and is) questionable.

Much modern geopolitical theory is concerned with the asymmetries of power, especially (but not only) their spatial dimensions. As already discussed in the previous chapter in the case of China and Rome, frontiers can be profitably understood as zones of asymmetrical interaction. This point leads directly to two issues of geopolitical interaction that locate, and are located, on frontiers and yet are also of wider applicability: the recruitment of native auxiliaries and the diffusion of Western arms, organization and technique. In the nineteenth century, the two overlapped to help produce potent armies, as was the case with the British in South Asia and the French in West Africa. Western success in this respect (like that of the Manchu in China from the seventeenth century) greatly extended what can be seen as another definition of the frontier—that of strategic reach: the frontier of the militarily viable. This is a key issue in modern strategy and geopolitics, as seen with the debate in the 2000s and early 2010s, over the value and practicality of Western power-projection in Afghanistan.

The opposite of strategic reach, strategic overreach is a concept much employed by leading scholars of empire, most prominently Paul Kennedy and Geoffrey Parker.⁶⁷ This concept provides them with an apparent frontier of practicality which, when exceeded, helps to provoke crisis; although the concept is not always employed so mechanistically. The idea is an apparently plausible one, and one that can be readily translated into geopolitical discussion. Nevertheless, the idea of strategic overreach faces the serious conceptual difficulty of assuming a clear-cut measure of strategic reach and geopolitical concern, whether in military or in other terms. The extent to which, however objective resources and

distances may be, overreach is, on the contrary, a matter of perception, both for contemporaries and subsequent generations, should lead to a questioning of any ready application of the concept of overreach. The concept needs to be returned to the sphere of contention in which policy was formulated and discussed. For example, financial problems or a lack of adequate military resources are not helpful as measures of overreach, as each circumstance is true of most combatants.

Moreover, in assessing geopolitical practicalities, it is unclear that restraint (the presumed opposite of overreach, and a description generally applied as praise) can be readily abstracted from the political culture of the age. In early-modern Europe, both Western and Ottoman, there was a strong stress on honor and dynastic responsibility, and a concern with *gloire* and the normative values of combat. Furthermore, in prudential terms, war and expansion appeared possible, successful, and necessary. In contrast, the modern emphasis on restraint in strategic planning not only clashes with the cultural assumptions of the earlier period, but also presupposes that compromise could have been reached and sustained short of large-scale conflict. That is implausible, not only for early-modern Europe, but also in some modern circumstances, for example, for the United States when faced by an expansionist Japan in 1941.

Thus, frontiers of power were inherently unclear and, therefore, unstable, both in practical and in cultural and ideological terms. This situation helped lead to confrontation, if not conflict. There is scant reason to believe that this will not also be true for the future. At the same time, geopolitical discussion needs to take note of the cultural assumptions of particular periods rather than assuming the same set of values, or evaluative criteria, across time. Looked at differently, geopolitical discussion—including early-modern versions, the classic geopolitics of the early twentieth century, its Cold War revival, the “critical geopolitics,” and the post-1990 “revival of geopolitics”—can all be seen, at least in part, as discussions reflecting the cultural assumptions of particular periods. At the same time, it is necessary not to reify and simplify the situation at any particular moment, nor to assume a measure of determinism. Instead, concepts at any given time varied; while there was a degree of autonomy in the relationship between ideas and circumstances.

The problematic nature of the scholarly assessment of appropriate frontiers of aspiration is indicated by the case of the Ottoman Turks in the Indian Ocean. There is the obvious contradiction between the charge of strategic overreach that would have arisen had the Turks projected power there more consistently in the sixteenth century, and the fact that, because they did not do so this policy is taken to indicate limited goals and, in particular, a failure to appreciate the oceanic destiny of empires, or indeed to recalibrate their geostrategy in the face of a new geopolitical situation.⁶⁸ As in other cases, this contradiction exemplifies the need, in advancing geopolitical judgments, to assess cultural norms and to reconcile the military historian's perspective on operational practicality and strategic norms, with the knowledge offered by scholarship on "foreign policy," insofar as the latter can be separated from strategic norms. Whichever perspective is adopted, it is appropriate not to argue the existence of coherent policies in the past simply by tracing them to the choices and actions that were taken, without employing due care in assessing the relationship between policies and actions, and the problems more generally of ascribing cause from effect. This point is pertinent in understanding what frontiers and other geopolitical elements meant to contemporaries in terms of purpose and practicality, norms, problems and possibilities.

NAVAL GEOPOLITICS

The naval dimension of frontier geopolitics has attracted relatively little attention as the emphasis, instead, has been on shifts in naval dominance on a grander scale and on symmetrical conflict between similarly armed fleets. This emphasis, which continues to the present, owes much to the prominence of Western concepts of naval power, as well as to the impact of the writing of Alfred Thayer Mahan in the late nineteenth century, about which see chapter 6. In practice, similar points can be made about the complexities of maritime frontiers, as for their land counterparts. However, the extent to which ships are not a permanent presence like forts and frontier walls also introduces an important contrast. So, also, does the ability of warships to refuse battle by not sailing forth: it is harder to force battle on naval opponents than on their land counterparts.

The standard narrative of naval power and geopolitics focuses on ships of the line and proposes the superiority of Western navies and naval systems from the early sixteenth century. This was a superiority that was only compromised in 1904–1942, when the Japanese used their borrowing of Western systems with considerable success, against Russia, Britain, the United States and the Dutch. This account has considerable force, but underrates the extent to which, in the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, Western warships, with their deep drafts, were unable to bring their force to bear readily upon much of the maritime environment of the world, notably shallow coastal, deltaic, and estuarine waters, let alone rivers and lakes. Along the coasts of Africa, Southeast Asia, the East Indies, New Zealand and Pacific North America, there were polities that controlled shallow-draught boats that enjoyed a local range denied Western warships. These boats were quick, maneuverable, beachable, and inexpensive. Their crews usually fought with missile weapons which, in the eighteenth century, increasingly meant muskets, and some canoes also carried cannon. The ability of such forces to achieve operational goals was seen in conflict between the New Zealand Maori in the early nineteenth century, and, even more clearly, in the unification of the Hawaiian archipelago from the 1790s to the 1810s. In these and other cases, operational goals drew on a capacity for troop transport and amphibious operations.

This situation did not change until the mid-nineteenth century, when steam-driven, iron-bottomed, shallow-draft gunboats gave the West a more varied and extensive capability. At the same time, crucially, there was a strong determination to use this power—the latter a reminder of the need to locate the practical and spatial considerations of geopolitics in terms of the political culture of the age. Shifting frontiers of maritime power then came to be rapidly apparent. Looked at differently, the maritime sphere as an effective restraint on, and thus frontier to, Western power ceased to operate. Instead, Western power could now be projected into the heart of continents, as evinced by the French and Belgian navigation up the Congo River in the late nineteenth century, and the British up the Nile, with British gunboats playing a role in the decisive victory over Mahdist forces at Omdurman near Khartoum in 1898.⁶⁹

Western power could also be projected along new sea routes made possible by the digging of canals. British concern about French ambitions led to the mapping of the Suez isthmus in 1836, and a canal was subsequently dug across it, opening in 1869. The Panama Canal followed, opening in 1914. These canals indicated the malleability of some geographical factors, in this case the presence of marine routes, and thus the extent to which geopolitics should not adopt a deterministic reading of geography as a whole. The opening of the Panama Canal transformed the strategic place of the Caribbean in naval plans and greatly increased the flexibility of the US Navy by making it easier to move warships between the Atlantic and the Pacific. This enhanced the US ability to act in the Pacific and in protection of what would later be termed “the global commons” of maritime links.

Now, as a similar instance of power altering geopolitical structures, there is talk of China sponsoring a canal across the Kra isthmus in Thailand in order to: improve security on the maritime route from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean; to shorten the route; and to further the deployment of Chinese naval power. There is also talk of Chinese sponsorship of a canal across Nicaragua to link the Caribbean to the Pacific. This would be a route at once suitable for bigger ships than can sail through the Panama Canal and less under US influence than the latter.

CONCLUSION

Power-projection into the heart of continents was an important aspect of the reordering of frontiers across the world in the nineteenth century, as the Western matrix of knowledge as well as Western equations of force were employed—in a period of unprecedented power for Western states⁷⁰—in ordering the world on Western terms and in Western interests, a process considered in chapter 5. Force and legitimacy were brought together, for example, in the drawing of straight frontier and administration lines on maps, without regard to ethnic, linguistic, religious, economic, and political alignments and practices, let alone drainage patterns, landforms and biological provinces. The reconceptualization of the frontier, and the redrawing of frontiers, were thus crucial aspects of the expression of Western

power as Western norms and conventions were applied globally. Non-Western states, such as Siam (Thailand), followed if they wished to survive.⁷¹ The development of geopolitics at the end of the nineteenth century as a formal discourse, call for action, and system of analysis can all be linked to this process, even though, as discussed in chapter 6, other elements also played major roles.

The Geopolitics of British Power 1500–1815: A Case Study

THE DIFFERING MEANINGS OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY GEOPOLITICS

In 1791, King George III was told by the French envoy that it was appropriate for the French revolutionary government, pursuing a new radical course, to abolish feudal rights in Alsace, as, “for the sake of public utility, governments should seek administrative uniformity.” This claim led George, who was both temperamentally and intellectually conservative, to reply: “that such uniformity could exist only in small states, and that in kingdoms as big as France any attempt to introduce it would create problems.”¹ The exchange serves as a reminder that geopolitics, as a form of both analysis and policy, like strategy as an aspect of policy, has a strong domestic dimension as well as the more common international one. In the case of the French Revolution, which had broken out in 1789, the exchange also highlighted the risk of systematization. The abolition of these feudal rights was appropriate, indeed necessary, from the perspective of French revolutionaries, with their commitment to uniform modern systems and their opposition to feudalism.² However, this step was to help alienate German support and to encourage a breakdown in relations with German princely rulers, contributing to the outbreak of a lengthy war the following year.

In the case of British geopolitics, the standard emphasis for the period 1500–1815 was (and is) on a narrative and analysis focused on the expansion of the British Empire. This was a course that led toward the world discussed by Halford Mackinder, the most famous British

geopolitician, in 1904. While understandable, this approach underplays the role of geopolitics as a means of understanding domestic power politics. Here, the frames of reference are both England and the British Isles. The two were joined by a common narrative of the rise of London and the Southeast to dominance and control, first over England, notably in the sixteenth century, and then, from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth (from Oliver Cromwell's conquests of Ireland and Scotland to the battle of Culloden in 1746) over the British Isles.³ This domestic geopolitics was deliberately subordinated by an emphasis on the English and, later, British state as the unit for discussion and, subsequently, analysis.

However, this approach is seriously misleading. Thus, it is no accident that the struggle to impose the Reformation in England had a powerful geographical component, with related hostile risings against the Tudors in the North and Cornwall from the 1530s to the 1560s while, on the British scale, there was powerful opposition to the Reformation in Ireland from the 1530s. Support for the Parliamentarians or Royalists in the Civil War of 1642–1646, both in England and across the British Isles, also reflected marked spatial variations, as did backing for Jacobitism within the British Isles between 1689 and 1746. Moreover, the consequences of these spatial variations helped explain the result of the conflicts, with control over London and the Southeast proving a key element in the success of the Parliamentarians and, later, of the opponents of Jacobitism.

Similar points about spatial variations could be made about key episodes in other countries: for example, support for, or opposition to, the French Revolution, and for particular stages of the Revolution such as the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1790.⁴ The struggle within France over the Revolution featured an especially severe regional variation in the form of the bloody and unsuccessful royalist counterrevolution in the Vendée. Most discussion of geopolitics, however, does not center on divisions within countries but, instead, treats the state as the unit and focuses on international affairs. Thus, there is a willingness in geopolitical terms to treat the US Civil War (1861–1865) as if contested by two competing states.

As far as England (and, later, Britain) was concerned, there was also an agenda of international concern driven by competitive power politics as well as by the expansion of empire. Drawing, however, on a point

made in chapter 1, these processes need to be approached not only in modern terms, but also in those terms employed by contemporaries. Indeed, a major part of the history of geopolitics is that of the changing understanding and usage of terms, both in the past and between past and present, these changes in part reflecting the differing experience of spatiality and power.⁵

In the early-modern period, and in part as a consequence of the Renaissance and of the interest linked to Western expansion, the ability to discuss and interpret spatial issues increased with the development of geography, both as an intellectual subject and as a sphere of publication. Moreover, carto-literacy rose greatly with the production of large numbers of maps and atlases, while, under the influence of popular geography, an increasing number of literary works began to make use of topographical data.⁶ The relationship between these developments and shifts in usage about territory was indirect. However, the latter occurred in some key areas, notably the contemporary understanding of the term, empire. Originally employed in England when discussing dominion over the British Isles and the surrounding seas, empire was reconceptualized to include transoceanic possessions, and then to encourage expansion into the continental interiors, notably in North America.⁷ There was not the same willingness to discuss India in terms of imperial expansion, in large part because of the governmental role of the East India Company.

A reconceptualization of empire was not required for this expansion to be pursued, but it helped make such a policy appear normative. This apparent necessity then came to play a role in domestic politics. Indeed, the use of the term normative can reduce what was, in practice, the contentious political character of the pursuit of empire, not least in particular contexts. Such a reduction is a parallel to the downplaying of the geopolitics of domestic dissension. These points can be pursued by looking at an example, British geopolitics during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763; in North America: the French and Indian War), which is the central, but by no means the sole, topic in this chapter.

The understanding of geopolitical goals and issues was a matter of what has since been termed strategic culture.⁸ The latter, however, should be treated not as a readily apparent objective reality, but rather as a key public mythos: in short, an instance of geopolitics as political rhetoric.

Indeed, at both the national and international levels, the concepts of geopolitics and strategic culture have to address the issues of coherence and consistency and, notably, in the face of the contested character of national (as of international) interests, of the range and rage of debate, and of the roles of politics and contingency in both policy and debate.

The very existence of geopolitics, strategy, strategic culture and strategic policy in the eighteenth century is highly problematic as far as some well-informed scholars are concerned.⁹ The delay in the development of the idea of strategy is held to have reflected conceptual and institutional limitations, with early usage focusing instead on the idea of stratagems or tactical devices. Yet, paralleling the treatment of geopolitics, such an approach mistakenly equates the absence of an articulated school of strategic thinking or doctrine of strategy with a lack of strategic awareness. For example, as far as the British navy was concerned, there was considerable experience of choosing, indeed balancing, between tasks. This entailed a process of prioritization that, as with the Roman army, involved spatial considerations. This process can be seen with the detachment of squadrons from British home waters for operations in the Baltic, the Mediterranean, and the Caribbean. Moreover, a strategy of commercial interdiction played a role in operations against the Dutch in the late seventeenth century and—including a powerful transoceanic dimension—in the Anglo-Spanish crisis of 1725–1727. At that stage, British policymakers and commentators debated the respective need of facing very different challenges and the relative value of related deployments. In this form, the latter issue went back to the war with Spain in 1585–1604. Furthermore, the planned use of naval power in international crises (as by Britain in 1718, 1730, 1731 and 1735) can be assessed as wide-ranging and reasonably sophisticated, given limitations with communications and institutional support.

The same is true of planned British operations on land, although here there was a degree of greater complexity because such operations involved coalition warfare. Thus, there was an intertwining of military planning and diplomatic exigencies. This intertwining can be seen with the War of the Spanish Succession, in which Britain was involved from 1702 to 1713, and again in the War of the Austrian Succession, in which Britain was involved from 1743 to 1748. Therefore, an important background to studying the issue of geopolitics and strategic culture during

the Seven Years' War is to appreciate that strategy existed as a concept, even if the word was not used in English until about 1800, when it was borrowed from the French. The earliest citation in the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* is from 1810.

A second context for the subject is provided by an understanding of geopolitics and strategy in the widest sense, namely as being seen to relate to the health and strength of the country as a whole. From this perspective, the British role in the Seven Years' War was, in part, a symptom, albeit a very significant one, of a wider anxiety about the state of the country; while there was, again, a clear relationship at the time of the French Revolutionary Wars (1792–1799; for Britain from 1793), for all the combatants, between strategy and concern with domestic circumstances. This approach may seem far removed from the habitual consideration of the Seven Years' War and other conflicts, but the approach repays attention because it helps explain the contours of public political concern at the time. These, in turn, helped drive the politics of the conflict, and thus the contemporary understanding and discussion of what can be termed geopolitics.

The anxiety about the country reflected the extent to which organic theories of the state were important. There is a tendency, in contrast, when considering the eighteenth century, to emphasize mechanistic themes, not least because of the intellectual potency enjoyed that century by Newtonian physics, and the extent to which notions of balancing power were regarded as of importance. Indeed, an emphasis on mechanistic themes was the case both for international relations, not least the understanding of what would be subsequently termed geopolitics, and for domestic constitutional issues. As far as the former were concerned, states were seen as sovereign but linked, as if within a mechanism. This system was treated as self-contained, and as part of a static and well-ordered world. This concept was based on the model of the machine which, in turn, was regarded as well-ordered and as enabling its parts to conduct activities only in accordance with its own construction.

The mechanistic concept of the system of states was well-suited to the wider currents of thought of the period, specifically Cartesian rationalism as well as its successors. These currents of thought provided not only an analytical framework, but also a moral context for international relations.

For example, balance-of-power politics, as generally presented, appear as selfishly pragmatic, bereft of any overarching rules, and lacking any ethical theoretical foundations; in other words as a prelude to Cold War containment, at least in the eyes of critics of the latter. In practice, however, the situation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was somewhat different, notably in terms of the felt need to oppose hegemonic expansionism, both as far as the balance of power was concerned and with regard to Cold War containment. There was a widely expressed theory of the balance of power, as well as rules for its politics, rules outlined in Western tracts, pamphlets, doctoral dissertations, and explanations of the reasons for the resort to war. The relationship between such theorization and rules on the one hand, and decision-making processes on the other, is obscure, and clearly varied by ruler and minister. Nevertheless, such discussion set normative standards that helped shape policies and responses.¹⁰

Without denying a central role for such mechanistic notions, it is necessary to complement them with an awareness of the organic assumptions of the period. These were important, not so much at the level of the international system (until the nineteenth century), but at that of individual states. Moreover, these assumptions helped provide a dynamic component that was (and is) usually lacking with the more structural nature of the mechanistic themes. This contrast is more generally important for geopolitics, with (in crude terms) organic concepts of international relations lending themselves to expansionism, while mechanistic concepts tended to be more defensive or at least reactive. On the other hand, mechanistic concepts of balancing could lead to the aggression and expansionism of equivalent gains, as in the Partitions of Poland (1772–1795), or in Western imperialism: for example, the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 over zones of influence in Persia.¹¹ The Cold War division of both Germany and Europe between 1945 and 1989 was a variant on this process.

The dynamic component of organic assumptions was vitalist in intention. In particular, there was a sense of a state as the expression of a nation, of the latter as linked in a national character, and of this character as capable of change and as prone to decay. The last looked in part to cyclical accounts of the rise and fall of empires. These accounts drew much of their authority from the commanding role of Classical Rome in the historicized political thought of the period; but there was also strong

input from contemporary ideas of health. Thus, a traditional sense of the nation as akin to a person remained important. This idea translated into the international sphere with a sense of nations as competitive, and as under threat from challenges that were foreign as well as domestic in their causation and mechanism.

As far as the Seven Years' War was concerned, anti-Catholicism was important in affecting British attitudes.¹² Anti-Catholicism encouraged a view that the struggle should be persisted even in the face of news that was highly negative, which was the case in the first two years of the war.¹³ Anti-Catholicism led to a perception of rivalry in terms of an existentialist and meta-historical struggle.

Such ideological and emotional intensity should not be divorced from the discussion of geopolitics. Instead, they are important when evaluating the reality behind geopolitical concepts and their application, and also when assessing the language and tone of geopolitical analysis. Thus, in looking for parallels, it is instructive to consider the relationship between ideological drives, such as anti-Catholicism and, later, anti-Communism, and power political issues, such as opposition to France and, later, to the Soviet Union. However, the nature of these relationships is open to discussion. Indeed, there are extensive and long-standing historiographical debates over such questions as the role of ideology in the foreign and military policies of the governments of Revolutionary France and also in those of their opponents. So also with the Cold War.

MIDCENTURY BRITISH GEOPOLITICS

In Britain, the politics, and thus geopolitics, of the Seven Years' War drew on the character and dynamic of public political concern to an extent that was not matched on the Continent, where politics was generally more authoritarian and a sense of nation less apparent in public discourse. In Britain, governmental and public sensitivity to imperial issues rose in midcentury. Economic competition led to the foundation of the Anti-Gallican Association in 1745, a body that joined manufacturing and trade in its goals. Through concern with design, this competition was linked to aesthetic rivalry with France. This rivalry was given an economic point through a conscious process of public support, particularly

by the Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce established in 1754. Enthusiasm for imperial expansion from the late 1730s and, even more, the 1750s reflected both political positioning and the strengthening of the public engagement with such expansion as a way to ensure commercial strength and maritime destiny.¹⁴

Yet, in part, however much linked by opposition to France and however tenable in ideological terms, the running together of “an empire of the seas,” the traditional idea and reality of British power, with the new goal of territorial empire in North America represented a geopolitical conflation that for Britain posed serious problems in policy as well as conception. Moreover, it is necessary to be cautious in presenting an undifferentiated account of British public attitudes, not least because it is unclear how extensive prior to the Seven Years’ War was interest in territorial expansion and the resulting geopolitics. In this case, the latter might be termed the domestic politics of geopolitics in order to capture the extent to which this was separate to the governmental conception of geopolitics. As a key instance of the latter, various government officials in both the colonies and London were very interested in British claims to land in the Ohio Valley prior to the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and France in 1754. War itself was not formally declared until 1756.¹⁵

The war, like many other conflicts, helped foster the ambitions that had preceded its outbreak, and powerfully so, not only at the governmental level, but also in terms of public discussion. Thus, the geopolitics and strategic culture were changed, indeed transformed, during, and by, the war, as much as causing it or setting its alignment. To argue this point, which is more commonly true of the relationship between geopolitics and conflict, does not deny the role of earlier interest in imperial expansion, but it does suggest a major change as a result of the outbreak and course of the war. In contrast, despite competition between French and Spanish claims in the New World, there was no war between the two powers, and thus no conflict that created new geopolitical realities or, a crucial difference, at least a new context.¹⁶

The discussion above is not intended to deny the value of linking midcentury British expansionism and, more generally, other geopolitical themes, to longer-term sociocultural shifts. These include, in this case, a growing assertiveness on the part of the expanding middling orders

and the accompanying repositioning of trade as a political interest and sphere of discussion.¹⁷ However, there is a need for specificity in offering such an account of the geopolitics of empire. This specificity should be not only chronological, but also with respect both to particular spheres for expansion and different mercantile interests. The relationship between these interests and imperial expansion was complex, not only due to these differences, but also because merchants were wary of the burdens that might arise.

Nevertheless, rivalry with France provided a common issue and tone in midcentury Britain, linking diplomatic, mercantile, imperial and cultural, anxieties and themes. Rivalry, moreover, resonated with a strong context of popular assumptions. This rivalry also made it important, as it made it possible, to minimize tensions between these different anxieties and themes. In part, this dominance of France in British geopolitics reflected France's prominence as a dynamic power and the immediacy of the threat it posed, notably to national security and to the Protestant Succession. The rise of Austria, Russia and Prussia earlier in the century led to competing concerns, most particularly from those anxious about power politics in Germany (the German states) and the Baltic, but these concerns did not find a deep popular resonance. France's commercial and colonial revival after 1748 was important in centering popular anxieties on the country. So also did the extent to which an easing (although not ending) of Anglo-Spanish political and commercial tensions after the War of the Austrian Succession ended in 1748¹⁸ help to throw the focus on France. This focus encouraged an important shift in the public imagination of Britain as an imperial power, a shift toward the willingness for a greater role of transoceanic interests and concerns.

In part, the focus on France reflected a key relationship between power and geography—that of the open frontier, in this case in North America. The specific issue here was the extent to which competing territorial claims in the dynamic, expanding and, thereby, unstable world of European North America provided the basis for dispute. However, there was also a dynamic open frontier of uncertainty created by the impact of naval construction on the competition for oceanic primacy. As a transoceanic imperial power, Britain had to take note of other such

powers, of which France was the most significant. Thus, in its issue of January 21, 1748, the *Westminster Journal* declared that no peace was acceptable unless it was grounded on the ruin of French naval power, adding that new naval powers¹⁹ were not a commercial threat unless they obtained colonies of their own. The paper added that there was scant sign of that, as all of America had been claimed. Thus, France was the key threat. In terms of later geopolitical language, this was a rivalry on the “rimland” between two powers, and the “heartland” was a matter of global or, at least, Atlantic systems centered on oceanic Europe, with this “heartland” divided among competitors.

Public opinion was, and is, open to multiple definitions. It is most helpful to think of a number of widely held opinions. These included the wish to be seen to do well and the need to protect national territorial and commercial interests, which were the general platitudes of policy, as well as of more particular notions that were not so widely held, but which were presented as public opinion by their protagonists. In Britain, the goals of policy were crucial themes in public debate. Geopolitics and strategic culture were centrally linked to questions of public politics and were expressed accordingly. The politics of strategy helped provide a considerable measure of continuity, with issues and problems interpreted and debated in terms of the experience of conflict. This experience was perceived through the perspective of collective (and contentious) public myths, such as the hopes invested in blue-water policy (the primacy of maritime and colonial goals and conflict). These hopes constituted a valid and vital geopolitics based on the national interest, as far as its supporters were concerned.

An expectation of a public debate influencing policy presupposes a linear process of influence; albeit one affected by important feedback mechanisms in terms of the attempt to produce material for, and in, this debate. Yet, the relationship between debate and policy was more complex and less automatic than this model assumes. This situation provided more opportunity for those who sought to shape both debate and policy. Debate, politics and policy thus were in a complex relationship.²⁰ Shaping this relationship in terms of geopolitics and strategic culture, or rather a particular understanding of them, notably that of the last century, may lead to an underplaying of this complexity. In particular,

the response to specific events played a key role in mobilizing political energy. For example, by early 1754, the specific political impact of the shift in public consciousness toward a greater concern over colonial disputes with the Bourbons, especially with France in North America, was limited. In contrast, by late 1754 the prevalent opinion in political and governmental circles was that Britain needed to stand up to France in these disputes. Again, as a reminder of the complexity of debate, politics and policy, this view was not really, or even closely, related to the more general issues of Britain's diplomatic standing compared to France and other Western powers, issues that were less acute in early 1754 than they had been earlier in the decade. Anglo–French hostility at the governmental level still revolved around European issues, but without the political or public resonance within Britain that could lead ministers to expect support if they pressed for action. Instead, changes in North America proved crucial and were seen in that light.

THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR AND POLITICAL CONTINGENCIES

North America had been a cause of diplomatic activity, ministerial concern and mapping²¹ for a number of years. However, its sudden rise to prominence in the summer of 1754, with the outbreak of fighting in the Ohio valley, was a surprise to many in London (though not to colonial officials such as Virginia's Lieutenant-Governor Robert Dinwiddie), rather than the product of geopolitical forces that were apparent to all. This change underlines the nonlinear character of geopolitics: geographical factors may have a long-term role, but they are operative in particular political circumstances. This provides another instance of the complex relationship between structure and agency.

The prominence of North American issues in 1754 was politically significant in Britain precisely because it matched with a powerful and politically loaded theme of public debate, one that joined, or could join, Whig critics of the (Whig) government with Tory opponents. Thus, there was frequent emphasis on a threat from France, and this emphasis preceded the mid-1750s. The pseudonymous "Camber" referred, in the *London Evening Post* of May 27, 1749, to the "encroaching ambition" of

France's moves in the West Indies. He warned of the possible loss of the sugar trade and also drew attention to the threat to the Newfoundland fishery posed by the French recovery of Cape Breton. Pressing for efforts to separate Spain from France, *Old England* claimed on December 21, 1751, that "the exorbitant power of the House of Bourbon is a subject worn . . . threadbare by my indefatigable brethren of the quill."

Such an emphasis could also serve domestic political purposes by creating the impression that the government was failing to respond, and was thus part of the problem as well as a threat to the nation. Ministers did indeed respond, although this response was shaped by their own attitudes and experiences, and here the notion of a British geopolitics and a related strategic culture can appear unduly unitary, hegemonic, and based on an unsubtle notion of influence. For example, Thomas, Duke of Newcastle, the First Lord of the Treasury and the leading minister, was keener on focusing on Europe and the challenge from France to the European system. In contrast, a rival, John, 4th Duke of Bedford, secretary of state for the Southern Department from 1748 to 1751 and, in 1762, negotiator of the Peace of Paris, was a ministerial supporter of "blue water" policies, with their populist stress on maritime destiny and transoceanic interests. In 1749, Bedford responded to news of Spanish warships searching British merchantmen in the Caribbean by writing to Benjamin Keene, the envoy in Spain: "You know how extremely jealous this nation is of the least encroachments of this nature—the least spark of this sort must, if not timely prevented, kindle a flame."²²

From such remarks it is easy to leap to William, Duke of Cumberland, complaining in 1757 about mistakenly following "the Tory doctrine of a sea-war."²³ Rather than being an unengaged commentator, however, Cumberland (the sole surviving son of George II, it must be remembered) was part of the politics of the situation, and his comment indicates the danger of employing remarks out of context when discussing policy. An opponent of William Pitt the Elder, Cumberland felt, in 1757, that he was starved of support in his German command because of the influence of Pitt's blue-water ideas. Cumberland sought to condemn these ideas by labeling them as Tory, and thus unacceptable to Whigs, although that proved a difficult case to sell to the public.

It is the argument here that Cumberland's explanation in terms of doctrine is both correct and insufficient. Ideology, ideas, and information were important to geopolitics, which helped explain the controversy caused by differing maps of the North American interior. However, to move to policy it is necessary to explain the interaction of ideology, ideas and information with the politics of the period. While this included a public sphere, there is also the extent to which politics was a matter of what one might term five men and the Duke of Newcastle, and the complex relations between them. Here a crucial shift in recent scholarship has been the positive re-evaluation of the role of monarchy and the impact of monarchs in eighteenth-century Britain.²⁴ The vulnerability to attack of his native Electorate of Hanover, a fundamental geopolitical issue and idea, the significance and consequences of which were (and are) contestable, ensured that George II did not want war with France. However, the deteriorating situation in distant North America limited George's options, reflecting the degree of interdependence that emerged from the range of European powers. Within Europe, Hanover, as a result, was vulnerable to attack in what was a fast-deteriorating international situation. Although conflict between Britain and France had broken out over the Ohio country in 1754, full-scale war was not declared until 1756. Alongside the concern that it could break out, there was a specific worry that France might attack Hanover in order to put pressure on Britain, including counteracting any British gains in North America. It was assumed that this policy would also involve an attack by France's ally, Prussia, to which Hanover was particularly exposed.²⁵

In response, in the geopolitics of alliances (a key aspect of geopolitics as both goals and means) the British government sought to strengthen relations with Austria and its ally, Russia. Each of these states bordered Prussia and was in a position to threaten military pressure on it, as Russia had done in 1735 and 1748.²⁶ George II was associated with this policy, which indeed had been a significant theme in his views since the early 1730s. As a reminder of the role of individual choice, the empire that counted to him was the Holy Roman Empire (essentially modern Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic), and not the British Empire, although, alongside his continued interest in Hanover, he became more concerned about the latter during the course of the Seven Years' War.

Attempts were made by politicians (and subsequently have been by scholars)²⁷ to lessen the tension between European and imperial goals in British foreign policy, and to argue that they were fundamentally compatible and, indeed, mutually beneficial. This was the argument William Pitt the Elder, both minister and politician, made from 1758, when he claimed that the dispatch of British troops to Germany distracted France, and thus eased British operations in North America,²⁸ but it was not an argument that captured George's attitude in the mid-1750s. He saw a clash in commitments and, despite his interest in North America, clearly favored the European dimension. Such a clash was indeed particularly apparent in the mid-1750s. Nevertheless, when the war went well, George was to press for the conquest of Canada from the French. George's role might appear marginal if the focus is on the crisis for the British Empire in North America. That is mistaken, as George's determination to keep attention directed to Europe influenced both British policy and politics. This situation raises questions about how strategic culture should be discussed. Thus, part of the analysis of the geopolitics of a situation depends on the geopolitics of the perspective. George had scant interest in India.

On January 10, 1755, George told the newly arrived French envoy, the Marquis du Mirepoix, that he sought a continuation of peace, but he also spoke to him with warmth about the situation in North America. Characteristically, George presented this in terms of honor and obligations, with the monarch appearing in the traditional light of a defender of his subjects, themes that are difficult to analyze in geopolitical terms if the emphasis is placed on honor. George told Mirepoix that, in response to repeated complaints from the American colonists, he could not refrain from providing them with the protection he owed them. George claimed that he had no intention of expanding his possessions, but he stated that he could not accept that others should infringe the territorial rights of his subjects; an approach that Mirepoix declared was shared by Louis XV.²⁹ Offering a reminder of the key role of personal views, and particularly priorities, Mirepoix claimed in later correspondence that George did not care much about the colonies and did not want war, but that he had no intention of trying to improve the situation for Hanover by making concessions to France over North America, and indeed had no power to make such a suggestion.³⁰

Yet, the French occupation of Hanover in 1757 led George to consider negotiations with Austria for neutrality for the Electorate, which indicated the major dependence of policy, indeed strategic culture, on events. Hanoverian neutrality was rejected by Pitt as likely to wreck Britain's alliance with Prussia, and as posing the danger that Britain's ally, Frederick the Great, would leave the war. This episode underlines the need to consider geopolitics in terms of alliance dynamics, and also to accept that the geopolitics of participants interacted in a fashion that was shaped by events and politics.³¹ As a reminder also of the political dimension, Pitt, in the winter of 1757–1758, played a major role in securing a political settlement that tied the defense of Hanover to British direction and identified it with the more popular Prussian alliance. He proposed that Britain pay the entire cost of the "Army of Observation" intended to protect Hanover. In 1758, George won support for the dispatch to Germany of British troops, which were tasked to assist this army. The dispatch of this force was an important concession to George, part of the settlement of domestic political differences. Considering the geopolitics of the Seven Years' War in the light of the contested character of national interests emphasizes the extent to which political contention and politics make geopolitics and strategic culture a means of debate, rather than categories that take precedence over politics.

Another instance of the role of politics can be found in the attitude of foreign monarchs. Ferdinand VI of Spain (r. 1746–1759) resisted French pressure to act against Britain and warnings that the Spanish colonies would follow those of France in being conquered by her.³² His attitude is a reminder of the dangers of adopting a schematic approach to international relations. Far from being driven to align with France by fear of British expansion or by dynastic links, Ferdinand was reasonably close to Britain. In contrast, his half-brother and successor, Charles III (r. 1759–1788), was concerned about a fundamental shift of Atlantic power toward Britain. Charles's accession represented a major change in Spanish policy reflecting a different geopolitical assessment. Spain eventually joined France against Britain.

British success therefore helped transform not only attitudes there, but also those of Britain's opponents. This sense of geopolitics

and strategic culture as malleable and dynamic is one that needs to be captured. Looking to twentieth-century discussions of geopolitics in terms of relations between continental and oceanic powers, there was the question of the relationship between the conflict on the European mainland and, separately, at sea and across the oceans. The wide-ranging dimensions of the struggle were not global but they were certainly extensive.³³ More specifically, the particular consequences of political geography, and notably for commercial links in the interior, have been held responsible for “the stark geopolitical contrast” in India between the British position in Bengal and that of the French trading bases.³⁴

The point about malleability is particularly appropriate when considering the latter years of the war, for the parameters of debate in Britain were very different from those at the outset. In part, this difference reflected the consequences of campaigning, but there were also key external developments in the shape of the altered political environment surrounding the accession of a new king (George III r. 1760–1820), who was determined to see through changes. There was an important interaction between campaigning and politics, with choices in relations with Prussia and Spain seen in political terms. George III, his key adviser, John, 3rd Earl of Bute, and Thomas, Duke of Newcastle, the First Lord of the Treasury, decided to seek to revive the “Old System” of prewar alliances (notably with Austria), a policy that entailed distancing Britain from Prussia. However, as a powerful reminder of the impact of ideas, George and Bute did not envisage the extensive and costly Continental commitments of Newcastle’s prewar diplomacy. The defense of Hanover was no longer to be a central feature of Britain’s Continental policy, and thus its geopolitics was to change.

Conversely, the argument that the Anglo-Prussian alliance was unlikely to have survived the war anyway throws light on the policies of Bute, who can be seen as an intelligent and effective minister forced to deal with the commitments of war, including the Prussian alliance, and obliged to adapt policy to the peacetime exigencies of domestic political and financial constraints.³⁵ Geopolitics, in the shape of British commitments, drew in with the coming of peace in 1763, a phrasing, however, that suggests a natural process at work, when, instead, the domestic and international politics of the episode should be emphasized.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

A sense of geopolitics and strategic culture as dynamic, or at least changing, makes sense of the politics of the period, including of politics in the widely defined sense of attitudes to state and country. The consequences of the Seven Years' War were profound in France, where public debate about foreign policy became more prominent than hitherto. In Britain, the key change was a focus on imperial issues that led to postwar attempts to make empire work. This meant, in practice, to work as seen from the perspective of London. These, however, were attempts that, unintentionally, helped cause the American Revolution. In part, this revolution, which broke out in 1775, was an expression of tension between different "kinds of spaces," notably the oceanically oriented British Atlantic and the settler empire of "the American Frontier," with the intermediate eastern seaboard providing a crucial sphere of tension.³⁶ Although in the seventeenth century English merchants and proprietors had begun the colonization of New England, the Chesapeake, and the Carolina low country, they had subsequently lost control over the process of settlement, defeated by the enormous availability of agricultural land and the difficulty of commanding immigrant labor. As a result, more autonomous economies had developed. Moreover, the spaces of the American interior provided colonial élites with a "much greater geographic context in which to maneuver than existed on the islands of the British Atlantic."³⁷ Most of the work on the American Revolution has been on ideology and politics, but it is also possible to see geography as playing a key role: "[T]he fracturing of empire was along structural faults embedded in the continent's evolving human geography."³⁸ While correct, these faults were given life in 1775–1776 by political events and ideological commitment. The discussion of human geography in these terms leads to a downplaying of non-Western elements, but these played an active role in power politics and the international economy, although even more so in the Indian Ocean world.³⁹

METHODOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

That the above discussion of the Seven Years' War and its consequences could be repeated for other episodes and indeed, allowing for changes

in political system and culture, throughout the period 1500–1815 covered in this chapter, indicates the problem with broad-brush analytical formulations.⁴⁰ The intention here is not to undermine the latter, but simply to point out that the detailed application of theory in particular contexts faces serious problems.

For all scholars, serious issues are created by limited space, not least the difficulty of explaining the context, process, and contingencies of each choice of policy, and then of analyzing it in accordance with the chronological specificities of the debate at any particular juncture. Arguments take on meaning in that context, but this approach poses problems of analysis, exposition, and space. As a result, factors of convenience encourage a frequently misleading tendency to emphasize the continuity of arguments, as indeed do academic fashions, as well as the strategies or culture of particular disciplines, including that of political geography and geopolitics.

This problem of simplification is also an issue that involves historians. The common problems are not only the selection and analysis of texts in accordance with a predetermined thesis, but also the very notion of a *zeitgeist* [spirit of the age]. Those considering the past (and indeed also the present and future) may stress the power of particular sets of ideas, but, to go beyond this, and to suggest that one vision became a dominant discourse, runs considerable risks. Such an approach may become self-validating; it has severe limitations in describing what was generally in fact a diverse situation; it may neglect the complexity and compromises within discourses itself; and it may miss the extent to which supposedly hegemonic worldviews were actually divisive and polemical.

Indeed, to take the period of Whig hegemony under George I and George II, 1714–1760, the contested nature among the Whigs of the concept of national interest makes it easier to understand Tory criticism of the methods and objectives of foreign policy. The role of contingency in affecting the formulation and execution of policy contributed to this criticism as well as reshaped the debate. To again underline the problem with the idea of a dominant discourse, albeit in a very different context, contemporary claims that German geopoliticians of the 1930s and early 1940s offered monolithic support for Nazi expansionism underrated differences between emphases, as the discussion in chapter 6 indicates.

A historian in the British empirical tradition would therefore argue that an awareness of particular interest and specific conjunctures should take precedence over the fascination with discourse. In doing so, it is important that the reality was more complex and fractured than those who search for a *zeitgeist* might suggest. This skeptical view, however, is a fundamental challenge to the standard approach across so much of the academic world, with its tendency both to employ discourse as a hegemonic concept and (as a related, but different, issue) to argue by assertion. As an aspect of this problem, it is unhelpful to ascribe policy to a climate of opinion unless the subjective nature of the definition of that climate is accepted and the problematic concept of moving from climate to policy allowed for. Such methodological challenges need to be addressed explicitly.

Geography and Imperialism: The World in the Nineteenth Century

AN IMPORTANT INSTANCE OF THE CONCEPTUAL AND methodological problems involved in geopolitics is provided by the treatment of geography as an adjunct, indeed enabler, of imperial power. This view was taken by some specialists in cartographic studies, notably Brian Harley,¹ and has subsequently been adopted by certain writers on geopolitics. Thus, Gearóid Ó Tuathail began *Critical Geopolitics*, a major and influential work on the subject, which is subtitled, possibly more aptly than he intended, *The Politics of Writing Global Space* (1996), by stating: “Geography is about power. Although often assumed to be innocent, the geography of the world is not a product of nature but a product of histories of struggle between competing authorities over the power to organize, occupy, and administer space.” He subsequently added that geography was “an active writing of the earth by an expanding, centralizing imperial state.”² Such an approach, however, underrated the complexity of the subject, denied the degree of autonomy enjoyed by geographers, at least in practice, and overrated the cohesion and sense of purpose of the state.

The intention here is not to focus on the general weaknesses of this and similar arguments, several of which are considered elsewhere in the book but, rather, to assess British imperialism specifically in this light. The issue is a presentation of geography, both as an adjunct for the process of imperial conquest and as a key aspect of colonial rule. Geography, as practice, analysis, and discourse, is discussed by its critics

as empowering the imperialist and weakening native culture, not least by ensuring that space is conceived in the terms of the imperialist, with native geographical consciousness driven to the shadows, usually the shadows of an oral culture. Thus, there is much discussion of imperialist appropriation: through naming; geography's role in land-seizure and distribution; the drawing of colonial boundaries without concern for pre-existing alignments and affinities; and of geography as an aspect of control.

These processes, which can be presented, with much reason, as one coherent drive, provide a key instance of geopolitics to some commentators. Furthermore, in an extension of the argument that the conflicts within Europe in 1914–1945—specifically the major eastward expansion of German power during both world wars—owed their origins to transoceanic European imperialism, a similar point was made about the usage of geography for Western imperialism as a whole, first outside and then within Europe. In the next chapter, the classic period of geopolitics as an explicit literature, even a formal doctrine, that of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, will be considered. Here, it will suffice to note that a key problem with the treatment of geography as an imperial practice in this fashion is that it adopts a simplification and instrumentalism that underplays the issue of moving from the drawing of links to the weighing of influence. More particularly, it is also unclear how far what is castigated was no more than the commonplace rationalization of what had already occurred; in short, that the key element was conquest, and not subsequent intellectual strategies or even those that accompanied conquest.

The variety of geography—geography as medium and not message—also needs to be underlined. For example, it is possible to link the development of the subject in England in the late sixteenth century to that of English imperialism. Attempts to understand the wider world led to the study of geography, which offered a new ideal of science as a tool for understanding and controlling nature; while the need to confront the information acquired by exploration and the issues raised posed problems for classification.³ Service of the state fostered an interest in mathematical geography, while descriptive geography encouraged readers to regard the world as a source of wondrous tales and new goods;

and there was a relationship between the study of geography and the development of ideas of English power and imperial growth.⁴ A sense of maritime destiny was certainly pressed in a number of publications, including John Dee's *General and Rare Memorials pertaining to the Perfect Act of Navigation* (1577) and Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voiages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1598–1600). Hakluyt's work served in its field a function akin to John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563), which provided an account of England as a kingdom that had been in the forefront of the advance toward Christian truth. Such works offered those who were open to the culture of print an awareness of the oceans and the overseas world that provided a potent vision of present interest and future glory. However, crucially, the impact of such works on government policy is difficult to assess, and easier to assert than to weigh. In hindsight, the reign of Elizabeth I (r. 1588–1603) was to be linked to transoceanic endeavor. However, it is the English focus on the war in the Low Countries, in which England intervened from 1585 to 1604, that is more notable.

A similar point about the difficulty of assessing influence can be made about the high tide of imperialism in the nineteenth century. Policy and contention focused on issues such as whether Britain should adopt a forward policy, notably, but not only, in Afghanistan, Sudan, Uganda, or southern Africa. The contemporary literature about British greatness and imperial destiny did not ensure specific governmental, political or public responses in these and other debates. Nor did specific initiatives. For example, the British-led Survey of India sent Indian geographical spies and explorers into Tibet and Central Asia between 1863 and 1893, but that did not mean any agreement on a forward imperialist policy; indeed, in many respects, accurate information could be seen as a crucial prerequisite also for those who urged policies of caution.⁵

Yet, allowing for the difficulty in drawing a consistent causal relationship between geography and imperial policy, as opposed to imperial activity, it would be naïve to neglect the relationship between imperialism and both the acquisition and the display of knowledge.⁶ Strategy required knowledge, such as that offered by the Hydrographic Office in the development of British theatre strategy during the Crimean War of 1854–1856.⁷ In Canada, the potential routes for a railway between

Halifax and the St. Lawrence River, surveyed in 1864–1865, were shown on a map, which helped to clarify the decision to choose a route as far from US territory, and thus the risk of attack, as possible.

Maps helped imperial powers perceive local interests and apparent threats. Thus, the British followed Russian advances in Central Asia on maps to the “Northwest Frontier” of British India. In doing so, the British unduly minimized the problems the Russians faced with the terrain and the native population. In December 1838, the Duke of Wellington wrote to the leading London bookseller, John Hatchard, requesting a copy of “Arrowsmith’s map of Central Asia.” In 1877, as British anxieties about Russian expansion reached a new height, Robert, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, the Secretary of State for India, declared in Parliament:

I cannot help thinking that in discussions of this kind, a great deal of misapprehension arises from the popular use of maps on a small scale. As with such maps you are able to put a thumb on India and a finger on Russia, some persons at once think that the political situation is alarming and that India must be looked to. If the noble Lord would use a larger map—say one on the scale of the Ordnance Map of England—he would find that the distance between Russia and British India is not to be measured by the finger and thumb, but by a rule.⁸

No such map was available, but Salisbury, in urging caution about Russian expansionism, was stressing that maps had to be understood if they were to be used effectively.

Moreover, territoriality required knowledge—locational specificity—and the construction and acquisition of that knowledge were parts of a more general process by which Westerners sought to understand the world in their own terms.⁹ As is so often the case, terminology can convey different meanings with, for example, the word *understand* in the last sentence replaced by *grasped*. This was certainly true of the process by which the United States gave shape to the territories over which it had acquired sovereignty. The institutional framework was provided by the army’s Corps of Topographical Engineers, which was created in 1838 when the Topographical Bureau was expanded and organized as a fully fledged staff corps under the command of the army. Force was a powerful factor. In 1849, James Simpson’s exploration of what was to be northwestern New Mexico and northeastern Arizona was undertaken as part of John Washington’s punitive expedition against

the Navajo. Simpson was able to explore the Canyon de Chelly only after Washington had defeated them.

Having purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867, the Americans acquired a vast new territory to explore and map: the Russians had mapped only part of the interior. The army, navy, Coast Survey, and Revenue Marine competed in exploration, but it was only in the 1890s that the Geological Survey was responsible for the mapping of much of the interior. More broadly, the American conviction and implementation of "Manifest Destiny" had similarities with the later use of geopolitics from the 1900s to the 1930s.

The opportunities to acquire information had been changed by new equations of distance and force. Thanks to steamships, railways, and telegraphs, distance had been transformed and, in many minds, overcome. A belief in the ability of railways to express, as well as to overcome, geographical links and constraints represented a new and abrupt version of earlier comments on rivers and roads.

This capability was linked to, although far from coterminous with, a more extensive application of Western military power. In 1857, Frederick, Lord Napier, the British envoy in Washington, argued that the maritime strategic value of Cuba had been transformed by steam power: "The passages of Cuba will not be closed and opened by the fluctuations of wind and weather, they will be patrolled and governed by the navy which possesses a general ascendancy. The accidents and vicissitudes of local war at sea are superseded by the steady predominance of steam."¹⁰ Relations with the non-Western world were rapidly transformed. Centers that had not hitherto been brought under Western control were captured: both coastal (Algiers in 1830 and Aden in 1839) and internal (Beijing in 1860 and Khartoum in 1878). This reconfiguration of the spatial dimension of global power owed much to technological developments such as metal-bottomed steamships. In many respects, the situation prefigured the changes, in power projection and reconnaissance, that were to come from air power.

Alongside the acquisition of territory, there was also, in the nineteenth century, as in other periods, a response to what was felt to be an unacceptable level of ignorance. In 1872, Sir William Farr, a prominent British epidemiologist, announced, in his presidential address before

the Statistical Society, that “of Africa, statistics knows little or nothing *certain* . . . as yet all Africa is for science a great desert.”¹¹ There was also a determination to claim, and thus display, success,¹² a goal in part achieved by a demonstration of knowledge, notably in mapping. At the same time, knowledge did not necessarily increase with time. Thus, in 1817, John Barrow, the leading civil servant in the British Admiralty, published a map to illustrate his theory of an open sea between the Davis and Bering straits, permitting a northwest passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Earlier maps had shown the northern end of Baffin Bay as closed, but Barrow preferred to doubt Baffin’s maps, not least because he thought icebergs were driven south in Davis Strait by an ocean current.

Geographical advances did not necessarily lead to imperial sway. For example, although triumphantly (but briefly) invaded by Britain in 1868, Ethiopia in the 1890s successfully resisted conquest by Italy despite a marked increase in Western knowledge about it. Indeed, to survey part of the country between 1837 and 1849, Antoine d’Abbadie invented a rapid survey method and critically reviewed his instruments. His later development of a simplified theodolite, the *ata*, and his continued stress on simplicity and lightness in instrument design derived from his Ethiopian surveying. Back in France, d’Abbadie wrote on Ethiopia, including a *Géographie d’Ethiopie* (1890), and also prepared ten maps.

Exploration was also intensely competitive and frequently associated with laying claim to, or substantiating claims to, territory. In the 1840s, John Frémont, as part of the widespread activity of the American Topographical Corps, crossed the Sierra Nevada to California, helping to end the idea of the Rockies as a barrier.¹³ In 1899, the leading Oxford geographer, Halford Mackinder, made the first recorded ascent of Mount Kenya, in part to preempt a reputed German expedition: Germany was the colonial power in German East Africa to the south.

The acquisition of knowledge, and of geopolitical insights and considerations more broadly, were subordinated to exigencies reflecting other political narratives. Even when there was a close link, it was geographers who were subservient to the expansionist impulses, rather than giving rise to them. Thus, the Berlin Conference of 1885 established the principle that the hinterland of a stretch of coast occupied by a European power was legitimately part of its sphere of influence, an approach

adopted by European statesmen, and one that encouraged territorial expansion and found work for geographers. In particular, the local spatial patterning of imperial rule and settlement, especially the different racial, gender and social spaces of land-use and settlement,¹⁴ were greatly dependent on surveyors, mapmakers and other geographically linked trades. They assisted in a commodification of land that helped lessen non-Western rights to it, even if surveyors, mapmakers, and others were often dependent on local assistance¹⁵ and could be welcomed as well as opposed by local people.¹⁶

Geography, as the acquisition of spatially linked information and, even more, its organization and analysis, was, in the nineteenth century, an aspect of the widespread systematization of knowledge also seen in cognate subjects of human and physical geography such as ethnography and geology. The physical geography of the world was understood in terms of measurement and measured and presented accordingly. Seas were charted, heights gauged, depths plumbed and rainfall and temperature graphed. All of this information was integrated, so that the world was increasingly understood in terms of a European matrix of knowledge. This contributed to an integrative science of the Earth, as in Alexander von Humboldt's *Essay on the Geography of Plants* (1807).¹⁷ Areas were given an aggregate assessment—for example, wet, hot, mountainous, forested—that reflected and denoted value and values to Europe, and thus encouraged use or, at least, specialization in use.

Similarly, regions were grouped together, most prominently as continents, in response to European ideas. Thus, the South Atlantic world of the west coast of Africa, Brazil, the Guianas, and the West Indies, was subordinated to a European model in which Africa and the New World were separate.¹⁸ The voyage of Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland to South America in 1799–1804 was an especially important example of this approach, as described in Humboldt's *Vue des Cordillères et Monuments des Peuples Indigènes de l'Amérique* (1810) and *Atlas Géographique et Physique du Royaume de la Nouvelle Espagne* (1811). The application of this approach to human geography was far less satisfactory, not least because of the criteria employed for classification. These criteria were frequently misleading as well as pejorative, not least in the handling of political units and ethnicity.¹⁹ This was a pronounced aspect of a clear

tension also apparent within the West between the views of those who did the classifying and those who were subject to the process.²⁰

The accumulation, articulation, and increase of geographical knowledge and interest fell into geopolitics, which was designed as a key form of applied knowledge that encouraged and facilitated planning. Geography was part of the process by which, alongside, and indeed antecedent to, technological developments (notably the telegraph), there was a crucial development in the perception of the plasticity of nature and of the world itself. This led to a reassessment of the world as a whole. In his essay, "Signs of the Times," Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), a celebrated as well as provocative British man of letters, observed of the new capability brought by steam power: "We can remove mountains, and make seas our smooth highway; nothing can resist us. We war with rude Nature; and, by our resistless engines, come off always victorious."²¹ There was also a reassessment of particular regions, as with the recasting of Africa away from "White Man's Grave" toward an area in which Westerners could operate and, indeed, settle.²² The constraints of climate and disease could be conquered.²³

This sense of nature overcome had a major impact on the political imagination, notably in dissolving distance and encouraging what has been seen as globalization.²⁴ The telegraph itself provided a new means of geopolitics, that of rapid communications. This system was initially driven in great part by the global needs of the British political and economic system, and was largely financed by British investment.²⁵

The laying of submarine telegraph cables encouraged the mapping of the seabed. In 1848, a chart of the Persian Gulf was prepared, but the Anglo-Persian War of 1856–1857 and the Indian Mutiny of 1857–1859 led to a need in London for speedier news and, thus, a quest for more information about the possibilities for telegraph routes. In 1857, a fresh survey of the Gulf was set in place. A general chart of the Gulf, completed in two sheets in 1860, comprised a new map of the islands and principal points around the Gulf, including details of some of the coastline. The rest of the coastline was derived from old maps. The chart, published by the Admiralty in 1864, was useful to the cable layers, although further surveys were necessary before the cable could be submerged. Meanwhile, the Gulf seabed was surveyed during 1862–1863. In addition, in

1863, Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis Pelly, the Acting Resident in the Gulf, traveled by land around its northern end and produced a report for the British authorities in Bombay (Mumbai) that was supported by a map indicating the boundaries of the territories around the Gulf.

The emphasis on the global dimension of power and, more specifically, on the global character of British power, looked toward the later image of US power. In response to British campaigning in West Africa in 1873, the *Medical Times and Gazette* of February 18, 1874 argued that it was clear Britain could send “troops to fight in any part of the known world without incurring exceptionally heavy loss from climate.”²⁶ George, 2nd Duke of Cambridge, Queen Victoria’s first cousin, and the commander-in-chief of the British army from 1856 to 1895, referred in 1868—in the aftermath of British successes in Ethiopia—to “an army that can go anywhere and do anything,” a theme to which he returned in 1874.²⁷

A sense of imperial power as necessary and normative was communicated through the educational system, including in the new university discipline of geography. Hereford George (1838–1910), a fellow of New College Oxford from 1856 until his death, lectured on geography in the Modern History School at Oxford and played a major role in the establishment of intercollegiate lecturing there, as well as being an active Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. He took a confident view of Britain’s imperial role and future in his, *The Historical Geography of the British Empire* (1904), a work that had reached its seventh edition by 1924.

CONCLUSION

Changing intellectual and cultural suppositions remolded assumptions about place, and about national, ethnic, and geographical hierarchies, with everything then entailed that stemmed from a notion of hierarchy. Such notions were particularly important in a period in which cultural superiority was explicitly taken to justify both control and the use of control over territory and people. In the broadest sense, this process of analysis and explication can be seen as political. That did not mean that a particular political narrative arose as a result. However, imperialism was intimately linked to this process. So, ultimately, was the development of geopolitics as a formal discourse.

Geopolitics and the Age of Imperialism, 1890–1932

GEOGRAPHY AND INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Geopolitics as a self-conscious and distinct subject began at the close of the nineteenth century. It would be misleading to ascribe this development to one specific cause, but international competition was clearly the key element. Crucial forces during the latter decades of the century stimulated the construction of formalized geopolitics, which, in turn, would irretrievably alter the visualization, pace and conduct of international relations. These forces can be attributed to the distinctive, but also linked, drives of Western industrialism, growing nationalism, and overseas expansion (the New Imperialism), and to the mechanical, electrochemical, and military technological leapfrogging accompanying them. This more dynamic environment encouraged and appeared to make necessary the fruition of new ideas for conducting statecraft and international relations and, notably, a move from the somewhat static approach toward regulating European affairs seen from the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815.¹ Increased competition and anxiety led to a search for alliances. However, the creation of alliances, and then changes in alliance systems, brought in their wake new opportunities and, correspondingly, also a new awareness of strategic vulnerabilities. Moreover, academic and quasi-academic deterministic doctrines and polemics arising from new scientific and social science fields, most prominently social Darwinism, invigorated the push for a novel way of envisioning and using the international environment. Weaker states, such as the Netherlands, felt vulnerable in the new environment,² and

understandably so, while would-be states, such as Poland and Finland, sought to establish themselves.

Developments in printing and mapmaking, including steam presses, mechanized papermaking, and lithography, were all important in the spread and depiction of ideas. The increase in the scale of publication was linked to mass literacy, urbanization and democratization. Politics played a role, both international and domestic. In 1884, the US map publisher Rand McNally produced a map for the Democratic Party showing the wide tranches of the United States that had been given to railway corporations, with a printed accompanying text, including the statement, "We believe that the public lands ought . . . to be kept as homesteads for actual settlement."

The ability of the major Western states to expand outside Europe without conflict between them, other than the Crimean War of 1854–1856, can lead to a failure to heed the extent to which their international relations on the global scale were intensely competitive, and were widely seen in this light. Moreover, this global competition increased toward the close of the century, and the trend was seen in this light. This increase in competition arose both because most of the world had already been divided up, either as colonies or as spheres of influence, but also as a result of the rise of new imperial powers—Germany, Italy, the United States, and Japan—to add to the expanding imperial powers earlier in the century—Britain, France and Russia. In addition, the latter group of powers was still actively expanding: Britain and France, in particular, in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Oceania. Lesser imperial powers, Portugal, the Netherlands and Spain, expanded, in part in response, in order to preempt threatening moves by others.

There was a high rate of international tension. The United States and Spain fought in 1898, the year in which, in the Fashoda Crisis, Britain and France came close to conflict over Sudan; while, in southern Africa, Britain went to war with the Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State in 1899, a conflict that was to lead to their annexation. Five years later Japan and Russia went to war on a far greater scale. In the 1900s, moreover, a range of disputes threatened conflict, although they did not lead to war, including between France and Germany over Morocco and between Britain and the United States over Venezuela.³

In addition, there was a situation of great flux as powers sought to advance their positions. Thus in 1912, Rear-Admiral Ernest Troubridge, the Chief of the War Staff of the British Admiralty, in a memorandum on the Italian occupation of some of the Turkish Aegean Islands, noted of British policy:

A cardinal factor has naturally been that no strong naval power should be in effective permanent occupation of any territory or harbour east of Malta, if such harbour be capable of transformation into a fortified naval base. None can foresee the developments of material in warfare, and the occupation of the apparently most useless island should be resisted equally with the occupation of the best. The geographical situation of these islands enable the sovereign power, if enjoying the possession of a navy, to exercise a control over the Levant and Black Sea trade and to threaten our position in Egypt.⁴

Whether or not advanced in conceptual terms, or as a formal doctrine, geopolitics provided both a means to understand international competition and a way to urge particular policies, generally in the shape of alleged national destinies. These destinies were apparently given scientific form by the language of geopolitics. Countries that gained or sought independence asserted a distinctive political geography, while empires saw their rivalry in the same terms. In Bulgaria, under Ottoman control from the close of the fourteenth century until 1878, the first map with a Bulgarian text was published in 1843, while the first Bulgarian atlas was printed, in Vienna, in 1865. The publication of an atlas of Finland by the Finnish Geographical Society in 1899 marked a declaration of hostility toward Russian rule.

More generally, literary nationalism, notably books celebrating and uniting all that was known about one's homeland, found a ready readership, and publishers were keen to feed the demand. In France, the old sixteenth-century idea of a *Tour de France* that served to unite the national territory in the public imagination was a constant theme, as in Gaston Bonnefont's *Le Voyage en zigzags de deux jeunes français en France* (1889).

THEORISTS OF SPATIAL POWER:
RATZEL, KJELLÉN, AND TURNER

Geopolitics as a self-conscious intellectual tradition rested on the realist theory of international relations and on the geography of states,

as developed by Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), a professor of geography in Germany, and the country's leading political scientist. He influenced a younger scholar, the Swede Rudolf Kjellén (1864–1922), who in 1899 actually coined and defined the term *Geopolitik*. The key element was an approach to state competition in which the territorialization of space was presented as an expression of conflicting political drives, and as held in tension by them. Ratzel, who was trained in the natural sciences (like Halford Mackinder) and had served in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, explained international relations in the Darwinian terms of a struggle for survival, although arguing that Charles Darwin had failed to devote due attention to the issue of space. A Darwinian explanation appeared modern and relevant and a form of universal explanation that contrasted with more conventional accounts of international relations and, in particular, the apparently more mannered, more historical and more limited nature of an explanatory pattern that looked back to the Classics.

War, to Ratzel, was natural. He also saw states as organic, although accepting that such a term was a simile. Ratzel thereby largely ignored divisions within states, let alone the play of individual political and military leaders who, in practice, provide the key level for understanding geopolitical pressures. In his *Anthropo-geographie* (*The Geography of Environmental Influences*, 2 volumes, 1882 and 1891) and his *Politische Geographie* (1897), a systematic analysis, Ratzel stressed the close relationship of people and environment. The struggle for space was central to his *Die Erde und das Leben* (*The Earth and Life*, 1902). In this work, Ratzel deployed the concept of *Lebensraum* (living space) that had been devised in 1860 by the biologist Oscar Penschel in a review of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Focusing on *Lage* (position), *Raum* (space), and *Raumsinn* (the sense of space held by the group that dominates the state), Ratzel emphasized the role of environmental circumstances in affecting the process and progress of struggle between states. Ratzel's *Politische Geographie* (1897) treated war as a normal process. Its second edition, which appeared in 1903, was entitled *Politische Geographie oder die Geographie der Staaten, des Verkehrs, und des Krieges* (*Political Geography, or, The Geography of the State, Traffic, and War*⁵). Ratzel's book was to be recommended to Hitler.

Ratzel was much engaged in German maritime and colonial expansion, supporting the development of a large fleet and the establishment of overseas bases as the means to secure Germany's "place in the sun," a reference to the tropical location of many colonies, notably in Africa and Oceania.⁶ Such a policy was highly provocative as far as other international powers were concerned.

Ratzel's work was important for the development of geopolitics, not least because of its influence abroad. Thus, Polish geographers held Ratzel in high esteem.⁷ He was particularly influential on Kjellén, who held the chair of political science at Sweden's leading university, Uppsala. Kjellén's early work focused on the conventional treatment of the state, in terms of historical identity and constitutional character, a treatment appropriate for nation-states ruled by limited monarchies, such as Sweden. Moreover, the emphasis on historical identity and constitutional character also characterized British writers, not least because they presented Britain's imperial position in a benign light and notably in progressive terms that looked toward colonial self-government. A similar emphasis emerged in the work of US historians of the 1870s and 1880s, such as Henry Baxter Adams. These writers traced US institutions and national character to roots in Anglo-Saxon England, the seedbed also favored by English historians.

Kjellén subsequently rethought his views in accordance with Ratzel's emphasis on the role of geographical factors. To Kjellén, full, like many intellectuals, of *fin de siècle* (end of century) pessimism about the future of both Western civilization in the face of international competition and ascendant democratic populism, it was necessary to understand geopolitics in order to appreciate the true nature of national interests. Kjellén was particularly concerned about the fate of Sweden, a failing empire since defeat at the hands of Russia in 1709. Overshadowed by Russia, which, as a result of sweeping success in a series of wars, had gained Ingria and Livonia from Sweden in 1721, Karelia in 1743 and, most traumatically, Finland in 1809, Sweden was also affected by the consolidation of Germany around Prussian power and ambition, and by rising Norwegian nationalism. Indeed, Norway became independent from Sweden in 1905. Moreover, Sweden had no overseas colonies.

The *fin de siècle* was felt far more in Europe than in the United States, which offers another approach to the origins of formal geopolitics as, in part, a response to US power. This power, that of the world's leading manufacturer, was newly expressed on the global scale as the United States spread its strength across the Pacific in the 1890s, and was to be driven home by sweeping and dramatic success in war with Spain in 1898.

At the same time, a particular geographical basis for US political culture had been offered on July 12, 1893, when Frederick Jackson Turner delivered an address, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," to the American Historical Association in Chicago. Turner argued that the availability of "free land" ensured that Americans developed distinctive character traits and institutions, with individualism and democracy based on economic opportunity. The frontier was presented as a "crucible" that explained US development. The Census Bureau had itself declared the frontier closed in 1890, ending a defining period of United States history. Turner thus redefined this history from a focus on European links and the East Coast to an emphasis on the West and on the American nation.⁸ Indeed, Turner's account was very much based on the idea of agency by "European" Americans. Accepting the nineteenth-century idea of a hierarchy of races and civilizations, Turner did not see Native Americans as playing a significant role in the contact zone other than as resisting the advance of civilization. Because of the Pacific and the lure of East Asia, notably the China trade, the United States was not comparable geopolitically to China, in that the turn from the ocean (the Atlantic for the United States) was not simply a turn into the interior, as it had been for China. However, that element was strongly present for US commentators. Turner's approach was scarcely apolitical, and it was unsurprising that Turner praised Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. A prominent expansionist of the 1830s and 1840s, Benton argued for the country's westward destiny and pressed hard for the United States to occupy the Oregon region, preempting Britain.⁹

In Europe in the 1890s, the strong sense of *fin de siècle* also produced an assumption that the new century would lead to new beginnings, and that the resulting discontinuity required new analytical concepts as well as new solutions.¹⁰ Emphasizing the value and application of scientific methods, Kjellén presented the state as taking on particular significance

in terms of its existence and effectiveness as a geographical entity. To him, both existence and effectiveness rested in part on the state's relationship with other states as geographical entities.

This approach took forward Ratzel's stress on territorial expansion as both product and cause of a state's success as an organic phenomenon. Indeed, to Ratzel, this union of expansion and strength, the two being crucial to the state's existence (rather than simply controlling space itself), was expressed in terms of its pursuit of *Lebensraum*. Success in this pursuit would guarantee, as well as define, power, and thus permit the pursuit of great-power status. Power, in short, was cumulative, with space a crucial means and measure of power.

Kjellén provided the vocabulary and theoretical term of *Geopolitik*, opening the way to formal geopolitical reasoning in terms of an explicit methodology that was regarded as more rigorous and with reference to a specific literature. Kjellén saw this new-coined term as one offering a new understanding for a new age—in short an advance through classification on the existing subject of political geography. Kjellén presented *Geopolitik* as one of the key factors in a theory of politics and government; the others were *Ekonomopolitick*, *Demopolitik*, *Sociopolitik*, and *Kratopolitik*. The emphasis, as in other intellectual fields of the period, was on a universal law (and issue) that would provide both explanation and a key to reordering circumstances and developments. A belief in the possibility of the latter, moreover, was to help make geopolitics fashionable.

Ironically, 1899 also saw another attempt to offer a new ordering of the world, with the convening of the First Hague Peace Conference, in which 26 countries were represented. Like its sequel in 1907, this conference led to significant developments in international law. However, there was no comparable success in addressing or settling international differences.¹¹

To Kjellén, an advance in understanding was necessary because of the pronounced flux in world affairs, one of transformative international political and economic changes, notably the rise of the United States. In explaining them (as part of his thesis, a part that was not strictly necessary), Kjellén argued that geopolitics took precedence over the other forms of politics. Such an argument represented a departure from historicist accounts of states in terms of particular constitutional, legal,

diplomatic, and political legacies, rationalizations and legitimations: historicist accounts that lent themselves to cultural interpretations. Kjellén, indeed, argued that these accounts were overly narrow and drew on a particular political and intellectual strand, that of French bourgeois republicanism and, before that, eighteenth-century Enlightenment ideas, both of which he saw as weak.

Instead, adopting a widespread counterpoint, Kjellén pressed for a broader concept of states as organic communities endowed with biological characteristics and, therefore, with a life of their own—communities that were geographically grounded. To Kjellén, the legitimation offered in geopolitics was that of control over space, and control, moreover, in a competitive situation in which conflict was natural.

Moreover, this approach permitted Kjellén to measure states by the same criteria, as in his *Die Grossmächte der Gegenwart* (1914), a study of the power position of the major states. He was thereby able to put aside what he presented as subjective approaches and views such as those centered on ethical standards. His was an international order or system in which all were to be judged as one and to be understood and ranked accordingly. The world was as if isomorphic (equal at every point), and thus readily subject to international change. In his *Stormakterna* (*The Great Powers*, 1905), Kjellén urged the value of super states and, specifically, a larger Germany. At the same time, Kjellén advocated particular Swedish goals, notably the maintenance of the 1814–1905 union with Norway and the containment of Russia. Russia had destroyed Sweden's empire in the eastern Baltic in 1709–1713, finally annexing Finland in 1809 after the third Russian conquest of the territory. Containment was to become a key concept in geopolitics, more particularly one directed against Russia.

The process of applying geopolitical perspectives to particular national interests (as well as of such interests to geopolitics) was a widespread feature of a period in which politicians, military planners, diplomats, and commentators sought to respond to escalating international problems and opportunities by creating alliance systems. These systems were designed to foster these interests and to be viable if the interests were correctly understood. Military strategies were devised accordingly.¹² Thus, at one level, geopolitics was an aspect of the period of strategic concern and planning prior to World War I (1914–1918).

Geopolitics was also related to a rise in the late nineteenth century in industrial, commercial, and agrarian protectionism and related concerns. This protectionism reflected both economic nationalism and the strains and anxieties arising from global competition in a world that seemed smaller and more interdependent. Indeed, the idea that the world would be dominated by large and competitive international blocs that sought strategic and economic self-sufficiency and, thereby, security, was one that lent itself to geopolitical discussion. This idea appeared to pose a major challenge to the European states and empires as, in a changing environment, they needed to retain a competitiveness, both to outside powers and to each other. In Britain, Joseph Chamberlain, the colonial secretary from 1895 to 1903, pushed this argument particularly hard.

A Swede writing in Swedish is unlikely to make a major overseas impact, but Kjellén's *Staten som Lifsform* (*States as Living Organisms*, 1916) was published in Leipzig in 1917 as *Der Staat als Lebensform*.¹³ Germans scarcely needed to read this in order to consider the possibility for a total geographical reordering of Eastern Europe in the wake of the collapse of the Romanov dynasty that February. This collapse was the latest version of a reordering of parts of Europe that the Germans had been pursuing from 1914. The emphasis on the now was particularly appropriate to them. German plans then for a new *Mittleuropa* looked toward the later German expansionism of the 1930s.

So also for Japan. At the time of the Sino-Japanese (1894–1895) and Russo-Japanese (1904–1905) wars, in both of which they had been victorious, the Japanese political and military leadership of the 1890s–1900s had a specific worldview, one convinced of the social Darwinist interpretation of geopolitics. The Japanese translation of “survival of the fittest” was “jaku niku kyoo shoku,” literally “weak meat, strong eat.” Moreover, a recurring phrase about their own situation in the world was that Japan was like “a piece of meat before tigers.” This was a reference to a sense of anxiety in the face of Western expansion in the western Pacific and East Asia, and not to Japan's own expansionism at the expense of Korea and China. This anxiety had been at the fore since the enforced opening to the West in 1854 as a result of the arrival of US warships the previous year.¹⁴

MACKINDER

Meanwhile, a global dimension had been added from London, itself a cityscape that blatantly expressed power—economic, political, and governmental¹⁵—and the global significance of which had been celebrated in Halford Mackinder's *Britain and the British Seas* (1902). On January 25, 1904, at a meeting at the Royal Geographical Society in London, Mackinder (1861–1947), an influential British academic geographer who was director of the London School of Economics (1903–1908), presented a paper entitled “The Geographical Pivot of History.”¹⁶ In this, he focused on the largest landmass on Earth and advanced a notion of a Eurasian “pivot,” the basis for his view of the importance of the “heartland”: “[T]hat vast area of Euro-Asia which is inaccessible to ships, but in antiquity lay open to the horse-riding nomads.” The “pivot” was the key term in Mackinder's 1904 paper, but it was central to the notion of a heartland, a notion that was developed in later work. Impregnable to attack by sea, the heartland, therefore, could not be attacked by the leading naval power, Britain and, later, the United States. Whoever controlled the “heartland,” Mackinder claimed, threatened to overrun the whole of Eurasia. He argued that the heartland of Eurasia constituted “the pivot region of the world's politics,” past, present, and future, control over which would threaten other powers. Mackinder saw “Europe and European history . . . subordinate to Asia and Asiatic history, for European civilisation is . . . the outcome of the secular struggle against Asiatic invasions[;] . . . for a thousand years a series of horse-riding peoples emerged from Asia.”

This was a theme straight out of Edward Gibbon. However, in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788), Gibbon argued that civilization had led to science, such that “cannon and fortifications now form an impregnable barrier against the Tartar horse.”¹⁷ Gibbon was particularly impressed by the Westernization of Russia under Peter the Great (r. 1689–1725).

Taking conflict as normal, Mackinder also claimed that, thanks in part to technology in the shape of railroads, the nature of the military challenge in Eurasia had altered. He presented the advantage as restored to the attacker. “Russia replaces the Mongol Empire. Her pressure on Finland, on Scandinavia, on Poland, on Turkey, on Persia, on India,

and on China, replaces the centrifugal raids of the steppeman[;] . . . the camel-men and horse-men are going[,] . . . railways will take their place, and then you will be able to fling power from side to side of this area.”

The threat to Scandinavia would have echoed with Kjellén. Thanks to railways, Mackinder saw a heartland power in Eurasia that was now able to deploy its strength more effectively than the nomads had done. In this case, the emergence of “the geographical pivot of history,” as a strategic entity, was presented as a result of technological change. Mackinder was interested in the Trans-Siberian Railway, a railway begun in 1891 and nearing completion, and on its implications for the unity of the “heartland.”¹⁸ Indeed, rail links were regarded as key demonstrations and enablers of power, and in particular spatial contexts.¹⁹ Mackinder assumed that a more extensive rail network would be created in Eurasia. Today, there is similar interest. This is shown not only in new rail links—notably Chinese rail construction, for example, in Tibet—and plans for additional rail links, but also in the implications of new oil and gas pipelines, not least in the central regions of Eurasia and pipelines from these regions.

Technology, to Mackinder, thus enhanced, indeed created, geopolitical forces and axes, although he did not like the term *geopolitical* and did not use it. In his perspective, territorial power was, in large part, a function of technology or with the latter at any rate acting as a force-multiplier. In the “pivot” lecture, Mackinder argued that the greater powers were playing on a global board with a great ocean in which the size and arrangement of continents presented opportunities to the players, an approach that looked toward the popular later board game, *Risk*. Yet, arguing that human perceptions of, and reactions to, geographical realities were crucial, Mackinder was no environmental determinist.²⁰ At the end of his 1904 lecture, Mackinder declared: “I have spoken as a geographer. The actual balance of political power at any given time is, of course, the product, on the one hand, of geographical conditions, both economic and strategic, and, on the other hand, of the relative number, virility, equipment, and organization of the competing peoples.” The last was an organic view of the nation, one conducive to social Darwinians and to British Liberal Unionists, such as Mackinder. He stepped back from predicting which state would be successful, although he mentioned those that might dominate the “pivot.”

At the lecture, Mackinder's interpretation was challenged by the young Leo Amery, then a *Times* journalist, later a Conservative cabinet minister and prominent exponent of British imperialism. Amery emphasized the onward rush of technology and the role of industrial capacity. He told the gathering that sea and rail links and power would be supplemented by flight, a remarkably prescient remark, given that the Wright Brothers had only launched their first powered flying machine the previous year, on December 17, and that balloons had earlier failed to fulfil hopes of their potential.²¹ Amery added that, once air power played a role, then: "a great deal of this geographical distribution must lose its importance, and the successful powers will be those who have the greatest industrial basis. It will not matter whether they are in the centre of a continent or on an island; those people who have the industrial power and the power of invention and of science will be able to defeat all others."

The United States, where manned powered flight had begun 39 days earlier, was an obvious candidate for this role, and this was indeed to be the case. It was to be *the* air power, just as Britain had been *the* sea power. Thus, geopolitics was being challenged, even as it was advanced as a concept—or, rather, it was being reconceptualized. Mackinder himself failed in 1904, and again in 1919, to rise to the geopolitical challenge of assessing air power.²² From a different direction, Spencer Wilkinson, a major British commentator on military matters and military history, criticized Mackinder at the meeting for using a Mercator projection, thereby exaggerating the size of the British Empire, as well, more pertinently given the map employed in Mackinder's article, that of the Eurasian heartland.

At a time of growing concern in British political circles about both overreach and a deteriorating global position, Mackinder's survey was, in effect, a call for vigilance and for a united British Empire able to resist whichever of Germany or Russia dominated the "pivot area" and became the "pivot state." British imperial moves which, in 1904, included a successful advance on Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, were made in a context of pronounced international competition. Germany and Russia appeared threats, but there were also concerns about US and French intentions. In hindsight, in his essay "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace," published in 1943, Mackinder presented his account as motivated by concern about Russia but also arising from the growth of German power, notably the extent to

which "the nation already possessing the greatest organized land power and occupying the central strategical position in Europe was about to add to itself sea power."²³ In practice, in terms of 1904, the notion of the "pivot" related to Russia, not Germany, and Mackinder's 1943 gloss reflected the subsequent relations of Britain, Germany, and Russia. By 1943, Russia, now the Soviet Union, was an ally against Germany.

Looking back in 1943, Mackinder noted that "the particular events out of which sprang the idea of the heartland were the British war in South Africa and the Russian war in Manchuria,"²⁴ each fought at a great distance from the center of power of the respective states. Russia, not Germany, was the key element in the 1904 paper, not least because Mackinder argued that "it is desirable to shift our geographical view-point from Europe, so that we may consider the Old World in its entirety."²⁵ The map "Continental and Arctic Drainage" that he offered was a map of much of Russia; Germany was not included. Asiatic "hordes" were a theme in the essay, and, separately and later, the expansion of Russia was presented as a counterpoint to Europe's maritime expansion. This was presented as culminating in a situation in which "the Russian army in Manchuria is as significant evidence of mobile land-power as the British army in South Africa was of sea-power."²⁶ Indeed, where Russia is directly compared with Germany, it is the former that is held to be more of a challenge: "In the world at large she occupies the central strategical position held by Germany in Europe."²⁷

In practice, Mackinder exaggerated Russian power. In 1914, the first general mobilization of Russia's reservists was successful, producing 3,915,000 men in two weeks.²⁸ However, the Russian attack on Germany was to be easily defeated that year, notably at Tannenberg, and much of Russian Poland was conquered by the Germans in 1915. While fearing encirclement by Russia and France, the Germans were motivated by racialism and by ideas of race war between Teutons and Slavs. Voicing pejorative racial stereotypes about the Russians and arguing the need to keep the Slavs in check,²⁹ the Germans, both the military and the politicians, had consistently overestimated Russia's military potential and underestimated that of France and Britain. There is nothing to suggest that this was deliberate, but the misperception proved very powerful. Similarly, Britain (including Mackinder) and France, each of which

was equally impressed by Russia's size and population, overestimated Russia's military potential, as indeed Russia's own leaders did.

With great prescience, Mackinder in 1904 raised the issue of social revolution in Russia: "Nor is it likely that any possible social revolution will alter her essential relations nor the great geographical limits of her existence."³⁰ While impressive, given that Russia was to be convulsed in 1905 and, more seriously, in 1917, this remark did not capture the extent to which revolution altered the international parameters within which Russia operated. In addition, Mackinder's suggestion that the contrast between land and sea power was one between Romano-Teutons and Graeco-Slavs, a difference linked to "the source of ideals" as well as the "material conditions" of mobility, was deeply flawed, not least as an account of Europe's development but also as a view on the existence, nature, and significance of racial-cultural traditions.³¹

Meanwhile, presenting a theme that was more common in Australia and the United States, Mackinder was worried about the situation in East Asia, where the Boxer Uprising of 1900 in China and the rise of Japanese power indicated challenges to Western power. In 1904, he suggested in his lecture: "Were the Chinese organized by the Japanese, to overthrow the Russian Empire and conquer its territory, they might constitute the yellow peril to the world's freedom just because they would add an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent, an advantage as yet denied to the Russian tenant of the pivot region."

A different Chinese challenge to global order and the British Empire was provided by the sinister orientalism of Dr. Fu-Manchu, the creation of the British crime reporter Arthur Sarsfield, who wrote under the pseudonym of Sax Rohmer. In adventures such as *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu* (1913) and *The Devil Doctor* (1916), the geopolitics was of a global network of terror able to attack the British Empire at its heart in London. This was an account that led to a major theme in the geopolitics of imaginative fiction.³² More generally, Mackinder, both in his 1904 lecture and in other works, offered accounts that gave interpretative weight to growing interest in geography among the British public. This interest was shown in the increase in maps in newspapers.

Mackinder's concern about the "pivot," more specifically Russia, offered a parallel to the views of Kjellén. The geopolitical dimension

looked toward later anxieties about developments in the “heartland,” helping to give a measure of consistency and coherence. Looked at differently, this consistency in part reflected the extent to which new problems were shoehorned into existing categories and concepts. For example, Japan’s role in Western ideas about the containment of Russia, later the Soviet Union, was to be transferred to an understanding of Japan as playing a key part in the containment of China. This shoehorning had, and has, its weaknesses.

To respond to the crisis of British power, Mackinder turned to protectionism and social reform and to the Dominion status of the former settlement colonies—Australia, Canada and New Zealand: “The whole course of future history depends on whether the Old Britain besides the Narrow Seas have enough of virility and imagination to withstand the challenge of her naval supremacy, until such time as the daughter nations shall have grown to maturity, and the British Navy shall have expanded into the Navy of the Britains.”³³

Mackinder, indeed, was an advocate of imperial federation. In his unsuccessful 1900 election campaign for Parliament, he pressed the case for the empire as a league of democracies with a common defense policy. His was a federated empire characterized by equality among nationalities, the diffusion of manufacturing activity beyond the United Kingdom and a commonwealth in which Muslims were not thought of as pagans. In a 1907 essay “On Thinking Imperially,” Mackinder advocated the creation of a multicultural empire.³⁴ In 1908, he went to Canada to deliver lectures in favor of imperial unity.

The theme of imperial cooperation in a competitive world was very much that of Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914). A former manufacturer who entered politics as a Liberal, Chamberlain was a keen exponent of imperial expansion and formally broke with the Liberals over the Irish Home Rule issue in 1886, becoming, instead, a Liberal Unionist. Allying with the Conservatives, Chamberlain subsequently became colonial secretary (1895–1903). As such, he pressed for the development of what he termed Britain’s “imperial estates” and for expansion in South Africa. In the 1900s, Chamberlain campaigned for imperial preference by means of tariff reform, an imperial protectionism that, however, did not find favor with the electorate, which, instead, voted Liberal in 1906 and twice

in 1910. A supporter of an imperial tariff system, Mackinder was adopting a Liberal Unionist position when he argued in his 1904 lecture that the world was now a “closed political system” where, due to changed opportunities, statesmen would have to divert their attention “from territorial expansion to the struggle for relative efficiency.”³⁵

Mackinder’s was a geography and geopolitics of challenge and threat, one that gave depth to, but otherwise reflected, much of the contemporary writing about Britain’s position. Although he disliked the words geopolitics and geopolitician, and wrote extensively and successfully on geographical topics, Mackinder is generally considered the leading British geopolitician.³⁶ Geopolitics as an analytical approach was clearly not incompatible with the definition of geography he offered in 1904: “It answers two questions. It answers the question Where? and it then proceeds to answer the question Why there?”³⁷ Mackinder repeatedly pressed the pedagogic case for geography, seeing it as the interaction of science and the environment and as a bridge between the humanities and the sciences, as well as a support for British imperialism. From 1913 to 1943, he was chairman of the Geographical Association.³⁸

The son of a provincial doctor who had studied medical geography and sought to relate diseases to environmental conditions, Mackinder had been appointed reader in Geography at Oxford in 1887 becoming, as well: principal of Oxford’s extension college at Reading (1892); head, at Oxford, of Britain’s first university geography department (1899); and the second director (1903–1908) of the London School of Economics (LSE). Resigning from Reading in 1903, he combined his Oxford and London School of Economics commitments until 1905 when he focused alone on the latter. There, in 1907, he was responsible, alongside Richard Haldane, the Secretary of State for War, for instituting a “class for the administrative training of army officers,” the students of which primarily consisted of army logistics officers. The focus was on efficiency and Mackinder was the key figure in getting the syllabus organized. As an aspect of the course, geography was approached in part as a theatre of military operations and with an emphasis on India, and in part with a concern with geostrategy, notably the defense of Britain by means of the command of the sea.³⁹

Mackinder was certainly far more influential and engaged than most academics. Having fought Warwick unsuccessfully as the Liberal

Imperial candidate in the “Khaki election” of 1900 during the Boer War, an election that was a Conservative triumph, Mackinder was persuaded by Amery to join the Conservatives in 1903, and, in 1908, Amery and Alfred, Viscount Milner, a keen advocate for imperial expansion, secured the money to enable Mackinder to resign from the LSE and focus on politics. After fighting a bye-election unsuccessfully in 1909, he was successful in the 1910 general election very narrowly (being reelected in the second election that year) and was a Conservative MP until 1922, at a time when the party supported imperial protectionism. The Conservatives entered a coalition government in 1915 as a result of World War I, and this government continued until 1922. (Kjellén, too, was a member of his country’s parliament, serving as a Swedish MP for six years.) As a British MP, Mackinder made perceptive remarks deploying geopolitical arguments, for example, on the future of Ireland.⁴⁰ During World War I, he helped military recruitment in Scotland. Mackinder’s roles included British High Commissioner to South Russia in 1919–1920, during the British intervention in the Russian Civil War, and chairman of the Imperial Shipping Committee in 1920–1945, a position that revealed the difficulties in imperial cooperation, but also the possibility of seeking such cooperation. Mackinder argued that the empire needed good maritime communications. He also chaired the Imperial Economic Committee in 1925–1931.

Mackinder’s views and roles were affected by the strains in Britain’s imperial position and, subsequently, by World War I. This war did not see the geopolitics anticipated by Mackinder, in that Britain allied with the heartland power (Russia) against another that was more on the periphery (Germany). Looked at differently, Russia and Germany competed for control of the heartland, while, at the same time, as Mackinder noted, Germany also bid for naval success as an Atlantic power. At the same time, geopolitical drives can appear not only as explanations of policy, but also as abstractions that do not capture serious differences over policy. For example, once World War I had begun, particular German lobbies had their own goals. Naval commanders were keen on obtaining bases on the coast of Belgium and, if possible, France.⁴¹ Indeed, Tirpitz, the administrative head of the navy and a bitter opponent of Britain, suggested in November 1914 to the head of the German general staff

that Germany focus on the Western Front and pursue a separate peace with Russia on the basis of prewar territorial boundaries. There was no dynamic behind such a proposal because Germany had an interest in territorial gains, interest encouraged by military success. Meanwhile, Bethmann-Hollweg, the German chancellor, had, on September 9, 1914, announced war aims that included territorial gains, notably the Longway-Briey iron ore basin from France, dominance of Belgium, and colonial gains in Africa. By March 1918, military success against Russia and the Bolshevik Revolution the previous autumn led Germany to demand and obtain vast tracts of territory as part of its peace treaty with Russia. In contrast, the opposition Social Democrats were to call for a peace without annexations or indemnities.

Other states, such as Italy, also produced rationalizations of their territorial claims, generally in terms of historical and ethnic considerations. *The Bulgarians in their Historical, Ethnographical and Political Frontiers, 679–1917* (1917), an atlas produced by the Bulgarian envoy in Berlin and published in December 1917 in English, German, French, and Bulgarian, declared that peace in the Balkans was only possible if frontiers were settled on principles “that be as natural as possible; that they enclose the respective nations, with their natural constitutive parts; that they safeguard the political independence of those nations; that they correspond to their historical traditions and do not conflict with the right of each nation to self-government.”⁴²

Mackinder was not alone among British commentators of the period in being affected, both by the major strains in Britain’s imperial position and by World War I. This was true, for example, of J. A. (John Atkinson) Hobson, the author of *The Physiology of Industry* (1889), a critique of laissez-faire economics, and of *Imperialism: A Study* (1902). In the latter, Hobson ascribed the formative role to the tendency of these economies to overproduce capital and goods. His work served as inspiration for Vladimir Lenin’s *Imperialism: Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), a work that was to be a bible for the Soviets in international relations. Whereas Mackinder was important in the development of Conservative thought on international relations, Hobson was involved in the New Liberalism of the same decade. Whereas Mackinder came to favor imperial protection, Hobson moved away from this remedy. Indeed, Hobson argued against imperialism and, instead, in

favor of a peaceful democracy seeking to widen social prosperity. He also came to favor an internationalism linked to free trade. In his *Democracy after the War* (1917), Hobson returned to his critique of imperialism and protectionism as anti-democratic and anti-liberal.⁴³ Thus, what for Chamberlain and Mackinder were geopolitical building blocks and clear policies were far more problematic to some other commentators.

During Mackinder's career, geographers continued to serve the cause of British imperialism, not least because World War I added extensive German and Ottoman possessions to the British Empire, while the pressure for the economic development of existing colonies, especially by improving communications, gathered pace. These were not the limit of British interests. For example, an Imperial Conference that met in 1926 decided to assert British and Dominion title to parts of Antarctica. To support these claims, the Committee on British Policy in the Antarctic commissioned a revision of the Hydrographic Office's South Polar Chart, one that emphasized the role of British explorers.

Mackinder himself responded to the European situation at the close of the World War I—not least the German success against Russia in 1917–1918, and Russia's move to Communism in 1917—by proposing a new order in Eastern Europe, namely a group of “buffer states” backed by Britain and France. This was in order to restrain both Germany and Russia. Already, in 1904, he had warned: “If Germany were to ally herself with Russia,” as was threatened when the two signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, there would be the danger of “the use of vast continental resources for fleet-building, and the empire of the world would then be in sight.”⁴⁴ Karl Haushofer, the key German geopolitician, was to be greatly influenced by this argument. In January 1918, Arthur Balfour, the British foreign secretary, had suggested that the Allies help anti-Bolshevik movements in Russia that “might do something to prevent Russia from falling immediately and completely under the control of Germany . . . while the war continues[;] a Germanized Russia would provide a source of supply which would go far to neutralize the effects of the Allied blockade. When the war is over, a Germanized Russia would be a peril to the World.”⁴⁵

In many respects, Mackinder's proposal for buffer states was a rationale of Anglo-French policy. This was the case of the postwar

settlement in Eastern Europe, in particular the support for the creation of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the expansion of Romania, Greece, and Serbia. It was also the case for intervention in the Russian Civil War, which indeed personally involved Mackinder in 1919–1920. Moreover, the Anglo-French military and political support in 1919–1920 for the new states resisting Russian expansionism, notably the Baltic Republics, Finland and Poland, was a key aspect of the new order advocated by Mackinder. He was convinced of the threat posed by Communist expansion. As high commissioner in South Russia, Mackinder pressed the British cabinet in January 1920 on the danger of “a new Russian Czardom of the Proletariat” and of “Bolshevism sweeping forward like a prairie fire” toward India and “lower Asia.”⁴⁶ There was a general tendency to see anti-imperial rebellions in the British Empire as part of a global Communist conspiracy that had to be stopped. Indeed, that was precisely the intention of the Soviet Comintern. Mackinder was knighted in 1920.

Although a buffer was created, the intervention in the Russian Civil War failed. In large part, this failure was because of the weaknesses of the anti-Communist “White” forces in Russia, notably their internal divisions and their political and strategic mismanagement. The latter provides an insight into the significance of the internal dimensions of the military blocs that attract geopolitical attention. Thus, the British general staff report of July 22, 1919, was pessimistic about the prospect for Anton Denikin, the White commander in the South: “Unless he can offer to the wretched inhabitants of the liberated districts . . . conditions of existence better than those which they suffered under the Bolshevik [Communist] regime, he will in the course of time be faced with revolt and hostility in his rear just at the time when the Bolsheviks will be concentrating large numbers of troops for a counter-offensive.”⁴⁷

British officers on the ground were very depressed by the corruption, weakness, and attitudes of the White camp.⁴⁸ Indeed, the collapse of the Whites helped make foreign intervention redundant. Although pressed by Winston Churchill, the secretary for war, as well as by Mackinder, this intervention faced the legacy of World War I in the shape of financial burdens and a widespread wish for demobilization. The latter was an aspect of the degree to which resources do not exist in

the abstract. Moreover, Britain had a range of commitments, including in Ireland, Iraq, and Egypt. The British withdrawal from intervention in the Russian Civil War culminated when the Georgian port of Batumi on the Black Sea, where the British had landed troops in late 1918, was evacuated in July 1920. This was the final abandonment of Mackinder's call for the British to hold the rail line from there to Baku on the Caspian, a position presented as supporting British interests in Persia (Iran) as well as being inherently significant due to the line's major role in oil extraction.

The British withdrawal was followed by a Soviet advance. By February 1921, Soviet forces had taken over Azerbaijan, Armenia and, lastly, Georgia. The fate of the Caucasus underlined some of the problems with facile explanations of geopolitical pressures and factors. In particular, the role emerges of second-rank powers whose efforts should not be readily incorporated into theories of binary rivalry. In this case, Turkish opposition to Britain was a key element. Focusing on the geopolitics of a global empire, the British saw the states in the Caucasus as a buffer for their interests in Iraq, Persia (Iran), and India; but, to weaken Britain and to win Soviet assistance, including arms, the Turkish nationalists, under Kemal Atatürk, were willing to attack Armenia, while the strong Turkish presence in Azerbaijan did not resist the Soviet invasion. The Turks also wanted to gain Batumi, which they failed to do.

Mackinder's work at this juncture was not only directed against the Soviet Union. It was also intended as a response to the internationalism offered by proponents of the League of Nations, an internationalism that looked back to The Hague peace conferences in 1899 and 1907. Mackinder felt that Wilsonianism, the democratic internationalism, ideas, and policies associated with Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States from 1913 to 1921, was naïve. He argued that it was necessary for commentators to distinguish between reality, in the shape of geopolitical realities, and democratic ideals, a theme of his *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919). Mackinder claimed that it was important to understand the fundamental geographical inequalities of nations. This alleged tension between reality and idealism was to be one of the binary divides that geopoliticians regarded as a defining characteristic of the situation and a rationale for their subject.

The Soviet leader, Lenin, the leading opponent of Mackinder's prospectus for Eurasia, adopted a very different geopolitical approach, notably in the second edition of his *Imperialism*, which was published in 1918. Lenin developed a form of "reverse heartland" thesis, insofar as the heartland was reconceptualized and located far further west in Eurasia, and this heartland was presented as vulnerable from the periphery. Arguing that colonial peoples can rebel against the Western colonial powers, Lenin's thesis presented the colonial areas, notably in Asia, as a soft underbelly of the West. The Soviet Union was seen as a key actor, able through proper agitation to turn these areas, particularly India and China, against the imperialists, as indeed it sought to do.

NAVALISM

Geopolitical discussion responded to strategic issues and notions, and to related spatial awareness and assumptions. Thus, the geopolitics of navalism advanced in influential works such as *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (1890) by Alfred Thayer Mahan, a US naval commander and lecturer at the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, can be seen as responding not only to the potential of naval power but also to the immensity of the oceans, notably as depicted in the Mercator projection. At the same time, Mahan's call for the United States to develop its naval strength as a strategic tool allowed for the specific maritime requirements of particular states as a consequence of their geographical position and their strength vis-à-vis the other naval powers. In short, there was a two-way relationship between state and system, a relationship in which geopolitics seemed to have particular weight. In his book, Mahan listed and then discussed, "the principal conditions affecting the sea power of nations." They were: "I. Geographical Position. II. Physical Conformation, including, as connected therewith, natural productions and climate. III. Extent of Territory. IV. Number of Population. V. Character of the People. VI. Character of the Government, including therein the national institutions."⁴⁹ Mahan's theories reflected US economic development and encouraged the United States to play a role in international relations. Powerful East Coast industrial and commercial interests backed navalism.⁵⁰

In some respects, the geopolitics of navalism described a system in which major differences in strategic culture and tasking affected powers that had access to and used similar weaponry, a situation that was to be more generally true of geopolitical writings. Thus, Britain had to protect maritime routes that provided her with food, raw materials and links to export markets, a case argued by navalist interests funded by the City of London, for example, the Navy League.⁵¹ In contrast, naval challengers to Britain, such as France, where the thinkers of the *Jeune École* were active in the 1880s, sought a doctrine, force structure, strategy, and operational practice that could contest the British maritime routes. Navalists, in France and elsewhere, argued that an appropriate force structure would enable them to change power relations.⁵²

Mahan was influenced by the German historian, Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903), who, in his *Römische Geschichte* (*History of Rome*, 1843–1846, English translation, 1862–1866), presented Roman naval power as playing a crucial role against Carthage in the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE). Reading this in Lima in 1884, while on naval duty protecting US interests in Peru, Mahan was struck by “how different things might have been could Hannibal have invaded Italy by sea . . . instead of by the long land route, or could he, after arrival, have been in free communication [with Carthage].”⁵³ This was a reasonable observation, one made more pertinent by the fact that Rome’s maritime achievement against Carthage in the First Punic War (264–241 BCE) was far from inevitable. Indeed, unlike Carthage, Rome did not have a background as a naval power, and had to create the relevant strength and infrastructure.

Building on the relationship between geopolitical arguments and particular political requirements, navalism as a thesis for strategic strength was linked to the particular nature of British and US societies. Neither had a large army nor employed conscription. This situation was a reflection of political norms that favored freedom and liberty (at least for their citizens as opposed to their imperial subjects, for example, in India and the Philippines respectively), over the authoritarian political cultures of states with large armies, such as Germany and Russia in the late nineteenth century.

For Britain, as for the United States, the key question was how best to pursue a strategy that made optimal use of its resources without requiring

a change in strategic culture and, as a consequence, political culture. Like Germany, the United States wished to use its navy to become a great oceanic power as well as a major continental force; and Britain wished to do so to prevent losing this status. Each therefore required a geopolitical prospectus that made sense of this position or could limit challenges to it. Yet, that suggests an instrumentalism for which direct evidence is scanty. Moreover, in both Britain and the United States, as in France, Germany, Russia, and Japan, there was a pronounced tension between maritime and territorial, navy and army, priorities. Discussion of national interest and geopolitics has to be seen, at least in part, in terms of this tension.

This point underlines the controversial nature of geopolitical works, whether they are explicitly geopolitical or, more commonly, implicitly so. Thus, Mahan sought naval power for the United States to effect his view of the national destiny of international power expressed through naval strength. Similarly, Mackinder, in the early 1900s, came to support the new imperialism of the Liberal Unionists, such as Joseph Chamberlain, as he saw territorial control over land as a key to economic strength. The combination of economics, strategy, and geopolitics appeared to offer coherence for both views. Growing overseas trade underlined the importance of sea power, not least with its capacity to protect or to blockade and, thus, interrupt this trade. On the other hand, irrespective of their oceanic profiles and strength, the industrialization and political coherence of large land powers—the United States, Germany, and Russia—appeared to challenge the value of sea power,⁵⁴ or to give it a new direction and energy, by linking this naval strength to continental ambitions and by basing their strengths on continental (land) resources. This was the case whether these states were part of the Eurasian heartland or not. Mackinder made reference to Mahan in his 1904 paper.

In his *Britain and the British Seas* (1902), Mackinder argued forcefully that the development of rail technology and systems altered the paradigm of economic potential away from maritime power. This view seemed borne out by the economic growth of the United States and Germany, both of which benefited greatly from the impact of rail. Mackinder told his audience at the Royal Geographical Society in 1904 that an international system based on sea power, which he termed the

Columbian epoch,⁵⁵ was coming to an end as a result of the reassertion of land power made possible by the railway. He argued that "a generation ago steam and the Suez Canal appeared to have increased the mobility of sea-power relatively to land-power," but "trans-continental railways are now transmuting the conditions of land-power."⁵⁶

Alongside the technology of transport came the importance of communications, notably telegraphy and the advent of radio.⁵⁷ These technologies were important to military command and control, as well as to imperial governance and economic activity, especially maritime trade. The geopolitics of the communication routes were strategic in intent; although the costs stemming from the specifications arising from that rationale considerably affected their profitability. The strategic nature of these routes was seen in hostile British action against German radio posts and submarine cables immediately after the outbreak of World War I in 1914.⁵⁸ Radio made it possible to direct naval units at sea.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM

More generally, the development of geopolitics reflected not only the impact of strategic issues, but also the environmental determinism that was so influential from the 1890s. Although not all geographers accepted the idea of such determinism, geography was a central aspect of an intellectual world that linked humans and the physical environment and helped explain these linkages. Environmentalism played a crucial role in the organic theories of the country, nation and state, and in the treatment of the culture of particular peoples and countries as defined by the integration and interaction of nature and society. Thus, distribution maps played an increasing role in scientific investigation and exposition, whether with the science of mankind or with biological and physical sciences.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the very notion of environmental determinism, or at least its influence, politicized the physical environment and geographical relationships because this environment and these relationships were seen as directly affecting the strength and policies of states.

Environmental causation was particularly attractive to geographers because it emphasized their importance: they apparently could best explain the present and suggest the future. Advances in map production

and in the printing of color, in particular, made it easier both to include more physical details, such as color-coded contour zones—for example, brown for 1000–2000 feet—and to juxtapose such details against those of states and societies. The use of color increased the density and complexity of information that could be conveyed; and this made the role of the map as an explanatory device easier and clearer. In addition, environmental causation made geographers appear better interpreters of the past than historians, providing a rationale for historical geography, as well as facilitating the understanding of change by archaeologists.

The rise of environmentalism looked back to eighteenth-century notions of the role of geography in culture and society,⁶⁰ and to nineteenth-century interest in nationalism and evolution. These concepts combined to suggest an agenda of political history—domestic and international—in which environmentally molded nation-states played a crucial role, displacing the dynastic interests of ruling houses in favor of what were styled national interests. In the eighteenth century, the thesis that objective national interests existed had developed rapidly. In large part, this thesis was a product of the Enlightenment proposition that humans live in a universe governed by natural laws that proclaim, among other things, the existence of “nations.” These were defined through a mixture of geography, language, culture, physical features, even traits of personality. The “interests of nations,” essentially, were to be understood in terms of protecting their geographical, cultural, and physical integrity (i.e., security).

Such ideas became more prominent in the nineteenth century as states were increasingly defined in nationalist terms. This was a process that led to greater interest in ethnic and environmental factors. It was environmental influence that apparently could best explain the differing political trajectories of various ethnic groups, the processes by which they had become nations and states with particular characteristics and interests. Far from being an alternative to nationalism, environmentalism could make these processes appear natural, necessary and inevitable. In terms of the relations between nations, this situation led to an emphasis on “natural frontiers,” a theme found in the writings of the geopolitical school associated with Ratzel and his disciples. In turn, it was necessary to find and explain these frontiers.

Trained mostly in the natural sciences, nineteenth-century geographers assumed a close relationship between humanity and the biophysical environment. They sought to probe this relationship in terms of the environmental control that they took for granted. Mackinder, who took a degree in history after a first one in animal morphology, wrote in his 1887 paper, "The Scope and Methods of Geography," of "an interaction between man and environment." Environmentalism was an attractive method for the geographers and historians of successful and expanding states,⁶¹ such as Germany and the United States. The assessment of much of the world, notably the tropics, as a different, indeed diseased and/or degenerate, other⁶² helped justify a place in the sun for these states, adding a physical dimension to notions of "manifest destiny" about ineluctable expansionism. Environmentalism also played a crucial role in the organic theory of the state and in the treatment of culture as defined by the integration of nature and society.

Thus, in the United States, there was a treatment of the country's territorial expansion that could be made to seem inevitable, and thus necessary—an academic counterpart to providential notions of American "Manifest Destiny." Key works included not only Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893), but also Albert Brigham's *Geographic Influences in American History* (1902) and two books by Ellen Churchill Semple, a geographer at the University of Chicago: *American History and its Geographic Conditions* (1903) and *Influences of Geographic Environment on the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthro-Geography* (1911). Semple had studied under Ratzel in Leipzig in 1891–1892 and 1895. She popularized his idea of anthropogeography, the geography of environmental influences. In contrast to the more cautious and less determinist Brigham, Semple argued the relationship between the physical environment and historical movements.⁶³

The political implications of such works were readily apparent. Thus, Semple claimed that Africa was inert. She attributed this in part to what she discerned as the lack of the fructifying variety of geographical conditions, a totally erroneous view. Moreover, the inevitable triumph of the "civilized" was a frequent theme, as with the Oxford geographer, Hereford George (1838–1910), author of *Relations of Geography and*

History (1901).⁶⁴ This was an influential book, which appeared in new editions in 1903, 1907, 1910 and 1924, the last of which was reprinted in 1930, an instance of prewar ideas extending into the interwar period. George stressed the role of geographical influences, not least on strategy, as in the British campaign in Sudan in 1898 and in the Second Boer War (1899–1902). George also argued that human action could affect the environment, an emphasis that was different from that of Semple and, instead, accorded more with that of Mackinder. Linking geography, war, and strategy, George was also the president of the *Kriegspiel* (War Games) Club at Oxford, as well as the author of *Battles of English History* (1895) and *Napoleon's Invasion of Russia* (1899). Mackinder was a member of the *Kriegspiel* Club.

The analytical tension over the placing of emphasis in this relationship was an important theme in human geography in the early twentieth century, and one that coincided with the rise of geopolitics as a distinctive discourse. In part, discussion by geographers underlined the idea of inevitable, clear-cut interests for particular states flowing from their geographical nature, a view conducive to a somewhat deterministic geopolitics. However, in addition, geographers' discussions of the autonomous part of human action undercut this idea and also left much room for intellectual assessment of these interests and the related political debate and contention. Thus, geopolitics, differently understood as involving the debate over national interests, appeared more necessary.

A shift of emphasis, from the environment as a determining force and toward its interaction with human society was particularly associated with Paul Vidal de la Blache (1843–1918). Trained as a historian, Vidal de la Blache played a major role in the development of French geography and was appointed to the chair of geography at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1899. Such a description can serve to depoliticize the development of geography, both in this instance and more generally. In the case of Vidal de la Blache, it was also significant that the chair of history and geography to which he was earlier appointed in Nancy in 1872 was a product of German success in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. The chair had originally been a chair of history at Strasbourg, but Strasbourg had been annexed by Germany as a result of the war. Nancy

was in the part of Lorraine that remained French and was close to the new German border. In 1917, when France was fighting to regain Alsace-Lorraine, Vidal de la Blache published *France de l'est (Lorraine-Alsace)*, a study of the region.⁶⁵ This was an academic variant of the map of France displayed in French schoolrooms in which Alsace-Lorraine was shown colored in black.

Geographical and historical studies were closely associated in France, a key unlocking of the potential for geopolitics. Indeed, until 1942, the *agrégation*, the major competitive examination for admission to teaching posts in French universities and high schools, entailed a joint examination in history and geography. As a result, the two subjects were each far more open to the influence of the other than in Britain or the United States, although the resulting focus in France was largely on particular regions of the country itself.

Publishing his *Tableau de la géographie de la France* (1903) as the first volume of a history of the country, Vidal de la Blache argued that the environment created a context for human development rather than determining that development. The environment thus set the parameters for sociocultural developments, rather than being the central issue in history. The emphasis was therefore shifted back to humanity and to the varieties of human activity, to cultural geography, and to the complexities of nation building.⁶⁶ Vidal de la Blache also argued that political geography had to be seen as an aspect of human geography as a whole.

Vidal de la Blache's work was taken up by another French geographer, Lucien Febvre (1878–1956). Opposed to determinism and the work of Ratzel, who had been influential in France,⁶⁷ Febvre was suspicious of the use of the notion of influences. Instead, he preferred the idea of an interaction between man and environment. In an argument with instructive implications for geopolitical writing, Febvre directed attention to the problematic nature of the sources of environmental determinism, sources that were all too often presented in simplistic terms, referring, in contrast, for example, to the “complexity of the idea of climate.” Although not published until after World War I, Febvre conceived of his critique in 1912–1913. It can therefore be placed alongside US criticism of Ratzelian notions, most obviously those notions expounded by Ellen

Churchill Semple.⁶⁸ In opposition to determinism, Febvre advanced what he termed “*possibilisme*.”

Febvre also directed attention to the study of human regions. This approach was geographical, but implicitly challenged the geopolitical emphasis on imperial nation-states—states that dominated the regions of the metropole as well as imperial possessions. Febvre argued that states were man-made, whereas, he claimed, the sole geopolitical entities that were “givens” were natural regions. These regions, he claimed, had a human as well as a physical character. According to Febvre, states could be remade, or could be subsumed, by civilizations based on these regions. Rhenish civilization, which Febvre presented as spanning France and Germany, was an example.⁶⁹ This argument looked toward the later idea that the one-time Lotharingia, the Carolingian “Middle Kingdom” of the ninth century, was the heartland of the European Economic Community, the basis of the European Union.

To Febvre, distinctive *genres de vie* existed in human regions, which were specific and distinct physical units. He argued that study of them became the obvious way to understand the relationship between humans and environment. A study at the regional level offered the possibility of a more detailed assessment of the relationship and directed attention to human activity. According to Febvre, although the physical geography of the French regions was far from uniform, the differences between them—for example, in climate—were not sufficient to explain regional variations in human geography. This approach encouraged an emphasis on the consequences of human action and, thus, history. More generally, the path-breaking *Annales* school of French historians, established in 1929, among whom Febvre was prominent, deliberately set out to fuse history and geography. They stressed regional characteristics that gave places an identity that was historical as well as geographical. However, reacting against conventional political history, the *Annales* school devoted little attention to geopolitics, and certainly not at the national and political levels. They disaggregated states, an approach that was very different to the contemporary approach to political geography in Germany where the emphasis was on the state as a unit.⁷⁰ Geopolitics as theme and doctrine was actively pursued in Germany, as it was not by the *Annales* school. At the same time, geopolitical ideas were very important

in the French consideration of empire, and notably of the relationship between the metropole and the colonies.

GEOPOLITICAL CONTINUITY?

It would be very convenient to play forward from the start of the twentieth century to the present day, fitting the major elements of geopolitics and the analysis of the subject throughout the intervening period into the theories and arguments advanced at the time. This is an echo of the tendency in our time to discuss present-day crises—notably over the East and South China Seas and Ukraine—with reference to the background of World War I which, conveniently for commentators, had broken out a century earlier. In the early 1940s, Nicholas Spykman, indeed, used the term “rimland,” taking over Mackinder’s “Inner Crescent” (albeit with significant geographical differences). Moreover, the heartland–rimland contrast provided (and provides) a convenient approach to consider not only the two world wars but also the Cold War. All three can be seen in terms of a struggle between Russia/Soviet Union and Germany/NATO to dominate the Eurasian heartland, and the consequent pressure by Russia/Soviet Union on the rimland. Mackinder’s work was frequently cited, both during the Cold War and thereafter.⁷¹

The links were broader-ranging and sometimes more specific. For example, during the Cold War, British strategic thinking, which consciously owed much to Mackinder’s ideas, discerned a tension between heartland and rimland, and thus saw the stability of South Asia as closely linked with that of the Indian Ocean, where Britain was the leading naval power until the decision in the 1960s to abandon the “East of Suez” policy came to fruition in the 1970s. China’s easy victory over India in their short border war of 1962 could be understood in this context, as could the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent Soviet military presence there until 1989. Each was represented as an expansion by the heartland and as a threat to Western interests with major strategic, geopolitical, and resource consequences. Thus, British commitment to the region, specifically in a naval role, could appear necessary, as could efforts to persuade the United States to support or take on Britain’s role.

Looking to the future, the combination of a weak heartland (meaning a Soviet Union shrunk to Russia) with a rising China, has been seen as providing a new geopolitical situation.⁷² With its emphasis on long-term strategic issues based on geographical considerations, the heartland–rimland analysis employed geopolitics and apparently demonstrated its continued applicability. However, there are serious problems with the applicability of that approach. These include its repeated tendency to underrate the specificity of particular conjunctures, and the contingencies of episodes. There is also the difficulty posed by the relatively limited conceptual and methodological armory of the classical geopolitician, and thus the frequent recurrence of particular concepts.

Instead of emphasizing continuity, however, it is as pertinent to follow Amery's intervention after Mackinder's 1904 lecture, and to note fundamental discontinuities in context. These discontinuities can be traced to a number of pressures. Technology provides an important context and a factor for transformative change. The rise, first, of air power and then of the use of space have both proved highly significant over the last century, in terms not only of weapons technology and power projection, but also for assumptions about power and geopolitics. As a challenge to geopolitical continuity, there were key shifts stemming from major changes in public culture. These included: structural factors, notably the rise of democratization, and ideological ones. The latter looked toward Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" (see chapter 9), although requiring a more sophisticated approach than found in that work.

These changes, whether structural or ideological, were downplayed in the classic accounts of geopolitics, as those accounts subordinated everything to the spatial character and interests of the state, understood in terms of conventional power politics and, indeed, as Kjellén did, put the state as an entity above its population. Without neglecting the role of this character and the interests of states, a different geopolitics was offered by the changes in public culture, their consequences and the extent to which states followed different trajectories. This process had already been prefigured in the rise of public politics in selected countries in the West since the late eighteenth century, notably in Britain, the United States and France.⁷³

The need to consider wider perspectives in geopolitics and related fields was indicated, from a totally different direction, by the limitations of strategy as generally conceived in the early twentieth century. In the decades prior to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the development of general staffs on the model of that of Prussia/Germany encouraged a process of continuous military planning and preparation that adopted a view of geography, physical and human, determined by military exigencies, as well as placing new demands on cartographers. Specifically, aside from planning for war, the regular summer maneuvers that armies undertook to maintain their fighting capacity created a need for maps that integrated topography and transport routes. Yet, this heavy staff emphasis on operational factors also proved to be a key instance of the way in which militaries lost sight of the need to relate planned operations to wider issues of strategic viability, not least the relationship between output (success in operational terms) and outcome (persuading the defeated to accept the victors' views). The latter brought up aspects of human society that had been underplayed in the instrumentalist perspectives of military planning.

The resulting failure was very much to be demonstrated with German war-making during 1914, because proficiency in moving units and whole armies did not equate with an understanding of the wider political context of the war. Geopolitical discussion needed (and needs) to take account of this context. In the case of the Germans, there was the mistaken assumption that events, through effective planning, could be plotted out and their consequences anticipated, leading to an assured outcome.⁷⁴ This problem was to recur in 1917 when the Germans embarked for the second time on unrestricted submarine warfare. There was a failure to gauge both the military and political consequences, notably the difficulties of mounting an effective blockade of Britain and of counteracting US entry into the war.

At the same time, alongside the weaknesses of classical geopolitical writing, it is instructive repeatedly to note the discussions of power politics in Eurasia that made, and make, no explicit reference to geopolitical writers but that, nevertheless, employed and employ geopolitical concepts. For an example of such a discussion, Alfred Rieber, in offering in 2007 a borderland perspective on the origins of the Cold War, saw the

latter as “a phase in a prolonged struggle over the Eurasian borderlands that stretches back to the early modern period, when the great polyethnic, bureaucratic conquest empires . . . began to reverse a thousand years of nomadic military hegemony over sedentary cultures.” This argument was related to the social dimension offered by the interaction between conquered borderland populations and imperial authorities.⁷⁵ At one level, such arguments indicated the centrality of geopolitical analysis; as well as the limitations arising from a reluctance to discuss new perspectives in terms of this geopolitical literature.⁷⁶ Yet, this issue also highlights the failure of much of this geopolitical literature to advance with reference to such new perspectives.

Nazi Geopolitics and World War II, 1933–1945

NAZI GEOPOLITICS

The contrast between German policy, and the presentation of policy, in the two world wars made the role of ideological suppositions in geopolitics (or to be modish in the construction of space), readily apparent—thus indicating the overriding significance of politics and public culture for the content and tone of geopolitics. There was, it is true, a German treatment of Eastern Europe in World War I as uncivilized.¹ German successes, especially in 1915, led to the development of new categories when viewing Eastern Europe, and to the attempt to create a new-model society under military direction. Moreover, the German military administration in Eastern Europe became interested in 1917 in clearing away the local population and in bringing in soldier-farmers who would realize the agricultural potential of the land. However, although frequently harsh, this treatment lacked the genocidal character and objectives of German policy in World War II.² Indeed, the Nazi propagation during that conflict of a racist geopolitics organized round the notion of racial purity was a highly distinctive form of geopolitics. It had later echoes, in “ethnic cleansing” in Eastern Europe, South Asia, and much of Africa after World War II but, until Rwanda in 1994, these episodes lacked the genocidal ambition and commitment of the Nazis. Moreover, this policy was scarcely extraneous to the geopolitics and strategy of Nazi international relations. Instead, there was an intensely racist inflection to the latter, one that led directly to the genocidal anti-Semitism that was central to German policy. Rather than seeing this situation as

a marked contrast to Kjellén's argument about the primacy of the state, the state was conceptualized by the Nazis as a necessarily racial space and purpose, with governance a matter of enforcing and extending this character internally and of extending it externally.

Nazi geopolitics is a prominent and highly significant, and often difficult, topic for those who work on geopolitics, because Karl Haushofer, one of the leading geopoliticians, was closely associated with the regime. In practice, this association, notably in the latter years of World War II, was more ambiguous than was to be suggested and, after the war, he was to argue that the links were not close. However, earlier, there were indeed strong links between German expansionism, Nazi propaganda and many German geographers. In supporting expansionism and Nazi themes, these geographers acted as geopoliticians. These links with geographers were as much the result of widespread compliance with Nazi thinking, a compliance seen across German academe,³ as of a coherent propaganda offensive involving the geographers. German geographers who were unsympathetic tended to focus on physical geography.

Nevertheless, there was such propaganda, and a geographical approach that clearly accorded with it. The major theme was ethnographical—pressing hard the alleged cause of the German people, many of them under foreign rule, for example, until the 1938 Munich settlement, the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia—and this theme drew on the development of right-wing German geopolitics in the 1920s. It was argued that the territorial losses under the 1919 Versailles peace settlement—for example, the Polish Corridor near Danzig (Gdansk)—should be rationally (and radically) revised in light of the distribution of peoples in Eastern Europe. This idea was both taken further and, in part, contradicted by its advocacy by those who, propounding a racial stadial theory of human development, thought the Slavs inferior and, therefore, unsuited to the lands where they were a majority.

German ethnographical discussion and mapping were part of a more general use of such themes and evidence. Thus, in 1923, Pál Teleki, a geographer who had been a Hungarian delegate to the post World War I peace conference at Trianon (1920) that had deprived Hungary of much of its territory, published an ethnographical map of Hungary designed to support its territorial claims.

German geopolitics was adversarial, both as far as other peoples were concerned and with reference to other scholars. For example, German geopoliticians strongly criticized Isaiah Bowman (1878–1950), the leading US political geographer of the age. Indeed, with reference in part to Bowman, Haushofer claimed that the science of geopolitics had been perverted by the Anglo-Saxons. Director of the American Geographical Society from 1915 and Chief Territorial Specialist of the American Commission to Negotiate the Peace at the close of World War I, Bowman had gained fame as President Woodrow Wilson's geographical advisor and, indeed, was a Wilsonian idealist. Bowman relished behaving as a kind of Wilsonian arbiter when dissecting the national claims of Europeans. In addition, as a cartographer of ethnicity, Bowman played a key role in charting postwar territorial losses by Germany and Austria as part of the Versailles peace settlement. Other states sent geographical experts to the peace conference; from Poland, for example, came Eugeniusz Romer, the author of the 1916 *Geograficzno-statystyczny atlas Polski* (*Geographical-Statistical Atlas of Poland*); Mackinder, however, was not consulted by the British government. Due to his role, Bowman became the academic nemesis against whom the concepts of German geopolitics were fashioned. Ironically, from the German perspective, Bowman, who was offered the executive secretaryship of the League of Nations in 1919, was himself very depressed by the failure of Wilson, Versailles, and the League to bring order out of chaos, and indeed reflected: "The whole world has fallen into disorder."⁴

Influential in the decades prior to World War I as Germans debated how best to exercise their power and pursue status and advantage, geopolitics became more important as a self-conscious discourse in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. Nazi ideas were influenced by German geopolitics from early in the party's history and, in turn, came greatly to influence the latter. However, the racist trend in geopolitics preceded the Nazi rise to power in 1933. Indeed, objective geographic standards and values were abandoned in favor of tendentious presentation, in response to the aggressive and racist conservatism of German geopolitical circles in this period.⁵ This process gathered fresh impetus and encouragement under Nazi rule. New research centers, notably the Northeast German Research Community at Berlin founded in 1933, produced research

that matched these criteria.⁶ In 1935, Heinrich Himmler founded the *Ahnenerbe* as a form of SS think-tank to support his racist and other beliefs, including searching for the alleged origins of the Aryan master race in the Himalayas.⁷

Cartography presented these developments. For example, skin, hair, and eye color in *Mitteleuropa* (itself very much a German concept) were mapped in Hans Günther's *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (1935), reflecting Nazi concerns with racial characteristics. The blondish character of the Sudetenlanders in Czechoslovakia would have underlined its German character to the map's German readers. *Mitteleuropa* in this map was defined as encompassing Alsace and Lorraine, although these regions had been returned to France after World War I. It also incorporated the territories lost to Poland under the Versailles settlement, including the Polish Corridor, and the South Tyrol, which had been transferred from Austria to Italy after that war. Maps drew attention to past episodes of German eastward expansion.⁸ In 1938, however, as a reflection of the care taken not to risk offending Mussolini's Fascist regime in Italy, Hitler ordered the withdrawal of a map of German culture showing the German ethnic areas in the South Tyrol. The Nazis encouraged maps in public displays. These emphasized areas where Germans lived under foreign rule. In 1933 a cartographic play on this theme was staged in Berlin. Maps were also used in German films. A map displayed at the 1938 Nazi Party convention depicted the danger of a Soviet attack on Germany by indicating the routes that could be used. The polemics of the Nazi use of space were matched in Fascist Italy.

Similar features such as the display of maps were also more generally a characteristic of the propagandist stance of the new ideologies of the period, of Communism as well as Fascism. The result was very much a geopolitics of commitment, with the assumption that the control over space was inherently political. For example, the British writer J. F. (James Francis) Horrabin (1884–1962) employed maps to advance his markedly left-wing agenda, as in "The New Map of Europe" published in his *The Plebs Atlas* (1926), a work designed for use by working-class students at the National Council of Labour Colleges. This map presented Europe as subject to imperialism, with nominally independent states in fact "colonies" of the major powers. Thus, Portugal, Greece, the Netherlands,

Denmark, Norway, Finland, and the Baltic states were all depicted as British colonies, a depiction which exaggerated the extent and impact of British economic influence. Horrabin's *Atlas of Empire* (1937), published by the left-wing British company of Victor Gollancz, showed on its cover a picture of the globe encircled by a chain that included the symbols of the US dollar, the British pound and the French franc.

The primacy of militarization in the Soviet state owed much to a sense of spatial threat arising from anxiety about just such imperialism. Stalin's often-paranoid perceptions of encirclement, capitalist crisis and inevitable, imminent war generated his policies of breakneck modernization as well as the brutal and bloody internal repressions, although his chosen course also had to do with domestic political struggles. During the Stalin era, Soviet schoolchildren frequently were shown maps of "capitalist encirclement" to drum into their heads that their country was living in a siege environment. Maps, indeed, are a key element in geopolitics which, notably in this respect, constitute a way of seeing and representing the world, and rendering places and areas strategic accordingly.⁹

German geopolitics was to affect Nazi foreign policy.¹⁰ There were, however, tensions in the relationship. These focused on the contrast between the Nazi desire for a geopolitics of untrammelled expansion (with space a measure of the stages or impact of expansion), and, on the other hand, the attempt by geopoliticians to advance a consistent rationale of what would be an extensive, but limited, expansion. This rationale was notably provided in terms of the distribution of German populations outside Germany, a distribution that, albeit within a context of propaganda, could be assessed and presented in objective terms.¹¹ There was also a tension in understanding the dynamic forces: between the standard geopolitical emphasis on the formative role of the environment, and that of the Nazis on such a role for the German people. However, the geopoliticians were also committed to the latter.

The German geopoliticians, notably Otto Maull, Ewald Banse, and Karl Haushofer, looked to the theories advanced by Ratzel and Kjellén, seeing German identity and interest very much in geographical terms, and supporting expansionism accordingly. They argued that an understanding of Germany's geographical position and context was necessary in order to enable the state to realize its potential. A variety of forces and

arguments came into play including the recent attainment of German political unity after victory over France in 1870–1871 and a linked sense of destiny, as well as a parallel belief in the country's own recently acquired material superiority thanks to recent industrialization, various doctrines tumbling out of social Darwinism, a feeling of being outnumbered by the Slavs, and fury at the result of World War I.¹²

The key figure was Haushofer (1869–1946), who had been a general during the conflict, directing the artillery against the British attack on the Somme in 1916. Retired after the war, and like many right-wingers angry at Germany's defeat, he gave a particular political slant to the political geography he lectured on at Munich. From 1924, Haushofer was editor of the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* (*Journal of Geopolitics*), which he founded as the mouthpiece for the *Geopolitik* he advocated. Haushofer was the most active contributor, just as he was a most industrious writer of books.¹³ Influenced by Kjellén's writings on the state, and by Mackinder's paper of 1904, Haushofer sought to adapt the latter to German interests. He did so by defining a German sphere of influence in terms of his own ideas on pan-regions. Subsequently, Haushofer extended this idea to the benefit of Germany's allies in the Pact of Steel, Italy and Japan, which were pursuing expansionist geopolitical ambitions of their own.¹⁴

Haushofer had visited Japan from 1908 to 1910 as a military advisor and was much impressed by the culture of the society and its strong militarism. He gained his doctorate from the University of Munich with a thesis on the political and military geography of Japan in the 1900s. In turn, Haushofer took part in negotiations between Germany and Japan and was influential in the move in Japan to a greater endorsement of geopolitics from the mid-1930s. Aside from his books on Japan, some of which were translated into Japanese, Haushofer wrote extensively about the country in the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*. His work was much applauded in Japan.¹⁵ This was a period of rising militarism in Japanese government and politics, and geopolitics provided both a means to expound policy and a way to make expansionism appear modern and rational. In 1931, Japan occupied Manchuria, the most economically advanced part of China. This was seen as a vital support for the Japanese economy, notably with the provision of coal, and for Japanese society, particularly by providing land for settlement, and thus reducing population pressure.¹⁶ In 1937, Japan began a large-scale war of expansion

in China. In turn, Japanese planners and commentators became concerned about the routes by which China was supplied, which led to interest in further expansion.

Founding the Institute of Geopolitics, Haushofer developed and led a group of geopoliticians at Munich. They argued in favor of great powers, powers defined by control of large spaces, which, in turn, provided these powers with security and resources. Such control and self-sufficiency were regarded as the necessary basis for the expansionism that served the interests of the struggle by states to secure an independent future. Laying claim to what was presented as an appropriately committed objectivity, geopolitics was seen by Haushofer as an applied science that permitted the pursuit of national policy. As a variant on Mackinder, whose 1904 essay he greatly praised, Haushofer presented the leading pan-regions as *PanEuropa*, *PanAsien*, and *PanAmerika*. Each of these had an extension into the southern hemisphere. *PanAsien* was designated for Germany's ally, Japan, while, in a definition of the relationship between Europe and Asia, Germany's region, *PanEuropa*, a region based on the idea of "Middle Europe," was to include expansion into Russia. This would entail taking into control the pivotal capacity of Mackinder's "pivot" and subordinating it to a region controlled by Germany. Haushofer's thesis was one that assumed expansion and struggle, themes to the fore in the many maps in the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik. Lebensraum* (living space), a term employed by Ratzel, was much deployed. So also were ideas of *Wehr-geopolitik* (Geo-Strategy) and total war that incorporated all the energies of society. A member of Haushofer's circle, Ewald Banse, caused consternation in 1934 when his *Raum und Volk im Weltkriege* (1933) appeared in an English edition, under the title *Germany, Prepare for War!*

Rudolf Hess, Hitler's personal assistant, was Haushofer's favorite pupil. Haushofer visited Hess in Landsberg prison after Hitler's failed *putsch* in 1923, and Hitler took up some of Haushofer's ideas. In power from 1933 as Hitler's deputy, Hess, in 1934, appointed the recently promoted Haushofer as president of a council for those of German origin living outside Germany, while the sales of the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* shot up, and the institute greatly expanded. Haushofer was president for a while of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Geopolitik* (Association of Workers in Geopolitics). Based at the University of Heidelberg, this group acted

as a powerful lobby at the university level, and one that helped in the politicization of geography as a subject and, in turn, reflected this politicization. Within the Ministry of Propaganda, there were two study groups to ensure that teachers offered appropriate geopolitical education at school level. In 1939, Haushofer was to receive the Order of the Eagle of the German Reich from Hitler in recognition of his services to geopolitics. Haushofer also had good links to the army general staff. His ideas, moreover, circulated widely outside Germany.

Haushofer's geopolitics were strongly attacked by French political geographers, not least because of the tendency in German geopolitics to adopt a determinism of space and earth (the Nazis emphasized race as well), and thus to diminish the role of human society and free will. Moreover, Albert Demangeon, a key French human geographer of the interwar period, explicitly criticized German *Geopolitik*, not least for lacking academic rigor and for placing geography very much at the service of the state.¹⁷ Ironically, if the last phrase is altered to "at the service of criticism of the state," similar points can be made today about some of the recent literature on critical geopolitics. As Jacques Ancel, a much-decorated French veteran, pointed out, *Geopolitik* was prescriptive rather than analytical.¹⁸ In addition, although there was possibly Polish interest in an agreement with Germany aimed at making gains from the Soviet Union, Polish political geography focused on defending the status quo established by the Treaty of Versailles, a status quo threatened by Germany and the Soviet Union. Polish geographers were highly critical of what was regarded as the propagandist nature of geopolitics, which was identified with Germany.¹⁹

By the end of 1939, with Poland totally defeated, Haushofer's earlier calls for the revision of Germany's loss of territory and prestige in the 1919 Versailles peace settlement had been fully realized, and Germany was in the ascendant. By the end of 1939, it was allied with Japan, the Soviet Union, and Italy, and by the end of June 1940, France and much of Western Europe had been conquered and British forces driven from Continental Europe, while the United States remained neutral. Haushofer had pressed the case for geopolitics as a striving for survival and primacy between competing powers. This vision now appeared to have been implemented in full. Haushofer admired Mackinder's 1904 observation that an alliance between Germany and Russia would be very potent,²⁰ and he strongly

supported the August 1939 Nazi–Soviet (Ribbentrop–Molotov) Pact. In 1919, a report from the British general staff had argued that “taking the long view, it is unquestionable that what the British Empire has most reason to fear in the future is a Russo-German combination.”²¹

Yet, Hitler, with his construction of politics in terms of races, not states, and of races supposedly engaged in an existential struggle,²² had no time for any limitation of German expansion on other than a short-term, tactical basis motivated by opportunism. Redressing the 1919 Versailles peace settlement was at best a tactic for Hitler, as was cooperation with Poland in 1935–1938, or Russia in 1939–1941. Hitler’s refusal to consider limits, other than for tactical reasons, as in 1938, a refusal that arose from his ideological drive, was linked to a very separate, but central, flaw in much geopolitical thought, then and since. This flaw was the inability to understand the inner workings of other states and societies, an inability frequently linked to a misplaced instrumentalism in explaining and seeking to affect their policies. Thus, the Nazis did not appreciate the strength of Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Similarly, the United States failed to understand German and Japanese motivations, or at least to incorporate such an understanding into its prewar military planning.

Global war from 1941, as Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22 and, on December 11 declared war on the United States after the latter had been attacked by Japan, brought forward the millenarian strain in Nazism and encouraged Hitler to give deadly effect to his aspirations and fears. The removal of Jews from a German-dominated Europe became a key aspect of German geopolitics. This was an extreme instance of the extent to which, across history, space was, at least in part, often an expression of racial or ethnic interest. From the outset, the Nazis had presented German nationalism very much in terms of the *Volk* (people), treating Jews as a threat to the organic, ethnic concept of Germanness, and as automatically antithetical to the *Volksgemeinschaft* (people’s, or national, community), that was the Nazi goal. In one respect, this ideology was a perverted consequence of the advent of Western-style nation-states in multiethnic Central Europe in 1918–1919. The Nazis were convinced of the elemental characteristics of race and overlooked the extent to which their definitions of race were, in practice, an aspect of

racial construction. The dissection and mapping of race were also issues for allies, such as Hungary. Emerico Lukinich questioned the Romanian character of Transylvania.²³

A stress on the *Volk* also challenged alternative readings of the internal geopolitics of Germany. Aside from denying a role for individualism, the focus on the Aryans ensured that serious regional, political, religious, social, and economic distinctions and divisions within Germany, both prior to 1938 and after its expansion that year,²⁴ were deliberately downplayed. This process was an extreme accentuation of that by which the German empire—created in 1871, the Second Reich—overlaid earlier identities and loyalties. There was an attempt to nationalize the concept of *Heimat* (Homeland). The process was also a crucial aspect of the internal de-politicization and external repoliticization associated with dictatorships. This dual process was a political goal central to much geopolitics. The external approach tends to attract attention but should frequently be seen alongside the internal one.

WORLD WAR II AND THE HOLOCAUST

The Nazi leadership planned a “New Order,” with an enlarged Germany central to a new European system, and with the Germans at the top of a racial hierarchy. The economy of Europe, both conquered and allied, was to be made subservient to German interests. The rest of Europe was to provide Germany with forced labor (both *in situ* and in Germany), raw materials and food, and, in turn, to receive German industrial products on German terms. Industrial plants in occupied areas were to be taken over.²⁵ Japanese plans for the “Co-Prosperity Sphere” they planned to create in conquered areas were similar, though not always as well developed.

New rail and, in particular, road routes and bridges were to provide the transport links in a German-dominated Europe and were an expression of the new geopolitics. Goals and needs both played major roles. The unusually harsh winter of 1941–1942 revealed the inadequacies of the existing road system in the western Soviet Union, which the Germans had recently conquered. These inadequacies led the Germans in the spring of 1942 to decide to build a series of strategic roads to supply their forces and link their territories. DG IV, designed to link L'vov and

Stalino, was the most important highway, and Heinrich Himmler's personal involvement led to the road being called the "Highway of the SS." Such roads were regarded, moreover, as a way to kill Jews through very cruel forced labor. Mass graves marked the route. The road was also seen as a setting for new model towns. A spur of the DG IV was to cross Crimea and bridge the Straits of Kerch to its east, a span of 4.5 kilometers. From there, the road would continue into the Caucasus, to serve German strategic interests in the area, notably gaining control of oil production in the region, and also acquiring the possibility of both deploying forces near the Turkish border and of advancing against the British in the Middle East. Hitler took a personal interest in the Kerch bridge, which would be seen as a symbol of German control and engineering prowess.

The DG IV and the bridge were never completed, as the Red Army advanced back into Ukraine in 1943. Instead, the bridge sections stockpiled at Kerch enabled the Soviets to complete the bridge as a railway bridge, and, from October 1944 to February 1945 (when it broke up under the pressure of ice), the bridge supported the Soviet advance, providing a transport route into Crimea.²⁶ In March 2014, during the Ukraine crisis, the Strait of Kerch took on great significance as the direct route from Russia to Crimea. On March 3, Dmitri Medvedev, the Russian prime minister, announced that Russia would press ahead with plans to build a £2 billion bridge across the strait.

Crimea was referred to by the Nazis as a German Gibraltar, a German Riviera, or, for Hitler, with his interest in a supposed racial provenance, a Gotengau, the land of the ancient Goths. In Crimea, South Tyroleans, displaced to satisfy Mussolini, were to replace the native population. Ukraine was to be devoted to SS *latifundia* (estates) supported by subjugated peasants. A settler colony of ethnic Germans in Ukraine was planned by Himmler under the name of *Hegewald*.

Much of the former Soviet Union was designated for German occupation, with small sections for some of Germany's allies, notably Romania. To the east, Siberia was to be maintained as a rump state to which those deemed undesirables, appropriate neither for Germanization nor for extermination, were to be forcibly transferred. What was presented as a spatial purification was a key aspect of Nazi population policy.²⁷ The latter, as so often with geopolitics, was a theme in state policy and ideology,

as well as a product of control over territory. The slaughter of Jews and the killing of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians, by the Germans drew on a determination to restructure totally both peoples and space.²⁸ The earlier Nazi discussion, in 1940, of sending Jews to Vichy France-ruled Madagascar, where it was presumed that they would die in the hostile environment, also drew on an ethnic geopolitics. Hitler wished to remove the Jews from the Axis sphere.²⁹

The Holocaust was a distinctly geopolitical process. This was so at the strategic level, in terms of ensuring the “biological eradication of the entire *Jewry* of Europe,” which Alfred Rosenberg, the minister of the Eastern Territories, promised in a press briefing on November 18, 1941. Indeed, Germany was declared *judenfrei* (free of Jews) in June 1943. The geopolitical nature of the Holocaust was also apparent at the operational and tactical levels. The former involved the large-scale movements necessary to ensure a concentration of Jews, first in Poland, and then in the extermination camps. The tactical level related to the organization of killing in the camps.³⁰ Detailed research has indicated that this situation was made more complex by the relationship between central direction and local initiatives,³¹ but the movement of Jews was fundamental to the Holocaust, and this movement reflected spatial assumptions, including where best to slaughter and from where first to deport Jews. At the Wannsee meeting on January 20, 1942, it was reported that all Europe’s Jews were to be deported to Eastern Europe in order to prepare for what was intended as a Final Solution.³² “Evacuation to the East” was employed by the Germans as a euphemism for slaughter, and communication routes, in the shape of railways and the cattle-cars in which the Jews were transported in very harsh circumstances, were crucial to the process. Thus, the rail spur constructed to ensure that trains could go directly to Auschwitz II helped reflect, and also ensure, the preponderant role of this camp in the killing.³³ German commanders in the field complained about supply shortages at a time when railway rolling stock was being used to take Jews to the camps.

Meanwhile, as elsewhere, the war had its transformative effect on geopoliticians and geopolitics. In 1934, Haushofer’s son, Albrecht, became a personal adviser to Hess. However, having angered Joachim Ribbentrop, the German foreign minister, in 1938, by arguing that any

attack on Czechoslovakia would only unite Britain against Germany, Albrecht, even more than Karl, wished to end war with Britain in 1940. Professor of Geopolitics at the *Hochschule für Politik* in Berlin, Albrecht was closely linked to Hess's probably unsanctioned and certainly unsuccessful peace overture in 1941, and Hess's secret flight to Britain led to the disgracing of the Haushofers, although they were kept in play as possible intermediaries in any future negotiations with Britain. Relations with Britain were not the sole reason for a breach between the Haushofers and the Nazi regime. In addition, as far as Karl was concerned, Germany had succeeded with the overthrow of the balance of power in 1940, and the dictates of geopolitics did not require further expansion. To him, the invasion of the Soviet Union was seriously mistaken, a perceptive analysis. Haushofer became a marginal figure.

During the war, the presentation of geopolitics was brought more under Nazi control and made more racist in intent. Going into hiding in 1944 after the unsuccessful July Bomb Plot against Hitler, Albrecht was captured, imprisoned and, finally, shot the following spring in the clearing out of political opponents just before the fall of the Third Reich. His unfinished work on political geography and geopolitics was to be published posthumously in 1951. Karl was imprisoned in the concentration camp at Dachau, but survived the war. Haushofer argued then that his works had been misunderstood by the Nazis. Dismayed by Germany's defeat, his own failure, and the death of Albrecht, Karl and his wife took poison and died in March 1946.³⁴

GEOPOLITICS AND THE GERMAN-US RIVALRY

In November 1939 *Life* magazine, the major US illustrated monthly, devoted an article to the Haushofers, presenting Karl as the "philosopher of Nazism" and the "inexhaustible Ideas Man for Hitler," while Albrecht was depicted looking at a globe. Readers were assured that in "Haushofer's German Academy in Munich . . . the world is remade every day between breakfast and dinner." This article was a key work in the charge against Haushofer and German geopolitics that characterized American popular discussion of geopolitics during the war. Moreover, this was an influential discussion that looked forward to hostile postwar

consideration of geopolitics. Nazi aggression was traced in part to the impact of geopolitical thought, and these charges were repeated in other popular US publications such as *Readers' Digest*.

The same accusation was made on film, including in *Why We Fight*, a series of films, intended to ensure motivation, produced by the US army's film unit under the impressive Hollywood director, Frank Capra. In this series, *Prologue to War* (1942) depicted a hemisphere of light and another of dark dictatorship, while the maps of Germany, Italy, and Japan were transformed into menacing symbols. The idea of contrasting hemispheres exemplified a modern, secular geographical representation of St. Augustine's dichotomous, but geographically unfixed, contrast of the cities of God and the Devil. The film *The Nazi Strike* (1942) presented Haushofer's Institute in Munich as part of an account of geopolitics explained as the "military control of space." In this film, a Mackinder sequence, reprising his dictum of 1919—"Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World-Island commands the World"³⁵—is presented as the German geopolitical intention: "Conquer Eastern Europe and you dominate the Heartland. Conquer the Heartland and you dominate the World Island. Conquer the World Island and you dominate the World."

The MGM film *Man for Destruction* (1943), an account of Haushofer, depicted him as advising Hitler and coordinating German intelligence-gathering around the world. This information is presented as helping the Germans achieve victory, and Haushofer as having a master plan to dominate the heartland and then to join the Japanese in attacking the Americas. Such a presentation made President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Germany First" policy appear necessary despite the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The German naval staff indeed had well-developed plans for a forward policy in the Atlantic against North and South America. This policy involved the acquisition of bases from Portugal and Spain, notably the Azores and the Canaries.³⁶

While Soviet commentators launched strong assaults on "Fascist Geopolitics," more sophisticated US commentators than the filmmakers also linked German expansionism with German geopolitics and, specifically, Haushofer.³⁷ A number of books appeared in 1942, notably: Andréas Dorpalen's *The World of General Haushofer*; Robert Strausz-Hupé's

Geopolitics: The Struggle for Space and Power; Hans Weigert's *Generals and Geographers*; and Derwent Whittlesey's *German Strategy of World Conquest*,³⁸ while an edition of Mackinder's 1919 work, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, was published in New York as well as London. Moreover, German works were translated. Thus, Banse's 1933 book, *Raum und Volk im Weltkrieg*, appeared in a 1941 US edition, *Germany Prepares for War*. American commentators called for the United States to have an explicit geopolitics in keeping with its own interests, one that was divorced from the German *Geopolitik* that was held to represent a perversion of the subject as well as a nationalist ideology. This distinction was strongly argued by Isaiah Bowman in his essay, "Geography versus Geopolitics," published in *The Geographical Review* of 1942. The last paragraph of this essay offered a powerful critique of quasi-scientific certainty, one that drew on Robert Strausz-Hupé's *Geopolitics: The Struggle for Space and Power* (1942): "Geopolitics is simple and sure, but, as disclosed in German writings and policy, it is also illusion, mummery, an apology for theft. Scientific geography deepens the understanding. But, like history or chemistry, it has no ready-made formulas for national salvation through scientifically "demonstrated" laws."³⁹

The combination of the war and German use of geopolitics led US political scientists and geographers to an explicit interest in geopolitics. German developments were commented on by George Kiss⁴⁰ as well as by Bowman. Bowman brought forward Strausz-Hupé, an Austrian *émigré*, as a commentator (and understudy) able to discuss the German geopolitical school, notably in *Geopolitics: The Struggle for Space and Power* (1942). Strausz-Hupé did not dream of a science of politics, the argument that geopolitics was a scientific school of politics, nor share in the view, associated with Henry Morgenthau, the secretary of the treasury, of immutable national interests, such that, under the Morgenthau Plan of 1944, Germany should be divided into two and deindustrialized. Instead, Strausz-Hupé saw Mahan and Mackinder as recruiting the immutables of geography toward the goal of understanding how to work the balance of power. Strausz-Hupé argued that earlier geopolitics had been used to encourage this balance whereas the German geopolitical school was employing geopolitics to try to overthrow the balance, a thesis also advanced by Bowman. The balance of power remained both

an attractive image and a goal for a benign world order; but it was unclear how to achieve this and not least how geopolitics was to be employed to advance this goal.

However, the development of the discipline of geopolitics in North America encouraged geopolitical analysis.⁴¹ Nicholas Spykman (1893–1943), a Dutch immigrant and former journalist, who was head of the Institute for International Studies at Yale, sought to apply geopolitics to explain America's position and to advance her interests. Rebutting the powerful isolationism of the interwar years, he argued that interventionism was a key US interest because, if any one power dominated Eurasia, it would threaten the New World, a thesis that helped explain why Roosevelt had rejected isolationism.⁴² To Spykman, a Europe dominated by the Soviet Union would be as dangerous as one run by Germany. This was a view similar to that taken by Harry Truman, then a senator, before the United States entered the war. Instead, Spykman sought a Europe in which the United States played a role. In his posthumously published *The Geography of the Peace* (1944), Spykman developed a "rimland thesis," an idea, based on Mackinder's marginal or inner crescent, which gave geopolitical focus to his concern about the dynamic geopolitics of Eurasia.⁴³

In turn, Mackinder, in a thoughtful 1943 essay, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace," focused both on the forthcoming strength of the Soviet Union and on the need to prevent any resurgence of Germany as an aggressive power. The latter was to be achieved by obliging Germany to face the certainty of war on two fronts: with the Soviet Union in the heartland and with sea power based on the United States, Britain as a forward stronghold, and France as the defensible bridgehead. The Soviet Union and the Western alliance were presented as friendly. In his essay, Mackinder expressed skepticism about the transformative strategic consequences of air power. Looking to the future, Mackinder saw the development of China as a cooperative project of the United States and Britain.⁴⁴ This essay adopted an optimistic tone that accorded with plans for a benign postwar order. The Axis powers, their governments, commentators, and domestic critics, also looked to the postwar world. Thus the failed July 20, 1944, bomb plot against Hitler was based on the idea that a Germany without Hitler could end the war with Britain and the United States while fighting on against the Soviet

Union. Facing defeat, the Japanese leadership sought in 1944 to bring the Chinese Communists into play as a post-war counterweight to the United States and the Soviet Union.⁴⁵

During World War II, US geographers played a major role in the war effort, with 129 of them employed in the Office for Strategic Studies alone. Bowman advised Roosevelt and the State Department as part of a broader link between academic opinion and US policy.⁴⁶ Bowman was a key figure in what might be termed the bloodline of US geopolitics. Beginning with Mahan, this line was initially limited mostly to military circles, but entered political circles with President Theodore Roosevelt, president from 1901 to 1909, who was very interested in naval history and thought.⁴⁷ Roosevelt's admiring younger cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was also interested in navalist views, was impressed by this example and hired Bowman as, in effect, his own personal geographer. In the meanwhile, however, Woodrow Wilson, president from 1913 to 1921, had repudiated the active US role in international relations encouraged by Mahan and represented by Theodore Roosevelt. Instead, Wilson had returned to the earlier US tradition of neutrality, albeit changing it into an idealism that justified, first, the intervention into World War I in 1917 that Wilson had earlier long opposed and, subsequently, support for the League of Nations. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, president from 1933 to 1945, tried to combine the geopolitics of both Theodore Roosevelt and Wilson. This was seen in the plans for the United Nations, the collective security of which was to be dependent on the great powers represented in the Security Council.

Attempts to organize an intellectual response to Haushofer led to discussion about an American Institute of Political Geography, or of Geopolitics, a proposal that did not come to fruition. However, in June 1942, the Geopolitical Section was organized inside the Military Intelligence Service. This section drew on civilian interest in geopolitics, although its public role helped ensure criticism from within the military, and it was abolished the following year.

Meanwhile, US involvement in World War II expanded the logistical possibilities and requirements that constituted a key element of geopolitics in practice, and thus a major target of strategy.⁴⁸ This involvement also led to a sustained need to explain the conflict to what

was very much a mass democracy at war, and in a more wide-ranging conflict than any of its previous wars. In particular, in response to the potent isolationism of the interwar years, it was necessary to defend US interests in distant regions. The explanation offered addressed popular concerns, but also the governmental perception that, under the shadow of air power, the oceans no longer offered security, while Japanese and German capabilities posed direct threats to the United States.⁴⁹

The government, moreover, sought to explain why the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 had led to the “Germany First” policy, in which the United States determined to focus its military efforts against Germany. The Americans faced what was for them the unique strategic dilemma of having to fight in two theatres. A “Germany First” policy was made easier by German submarines sinking many American ships off the Atlantic coast and in the Caribbean for months after Pearl Harbor.⁵⁰ This policy led, for example, to the successful invasion of Vichy-ruled Morocco and Algeria in North Africa in November 1942, a goal that appeared to have little to do with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor or, indeed, to any traditional US interests. The explanation involved both an account of Axis geopolitics, specifically an interconnectedness of threats and advances, and an active propagation of a rival US geopolitics, a process taking forward that seen in World War I.⁵¹ Roosevelt’s radio speech to the nation on February 23, 1942 made reference to a map of the world in order to explain US strategy. He had earlier suggested that potential listeners obtain such a map, which led to massive demand and also to increased newspaper publication of maps. Already, on September 9, 1939, Rand McNally had announced that more maps had been sold at its New York store in the first 24 hours of the war than during all the years since 1918.⁵² There was another upsurge in sales after America entered the war. Roosevelt, who obtained his maps from the National Geographic Society, created a map room in the White House.

The task of explaining engagement with distant regions posed a problem, but also produced opportunities for innovation in both conception and presentation. Thus, the film *Man for Destruction* (1943) depicted the actor playing Haushofer explaining global geopolitics in front of a map centered on the North Pole, an exposition of a threat that linked different parts of the world and also suggested that such a map

helped explain what the US response should be. From 1935, the innovative mapmaker, Richard Edes Harrison, a designer by background who had not been trained in cartography, used orthographic projections and aerial perspectives in the magazine *Fortune* to bring together the United States and distant regions. Harrison rejected the Mercator projection. Instead, as in 1941 and 1943, he produced a map centered on the North Pole, with the United States presented in a key position. The preface to Harrison's *Look at the World. The Fortune Atlas for World Strategy* (1944), an atlas that reproduced his maps from *Fortune*, explained that it was intended "to show *why* Americans are fighting in strange places and *why* trade follows its various routes. They [the maps] emphasize the geographical basis of world strategy." Harrison's maps put the physical environment before national boundaries, and also reintroduced a spherical dimension, offering an aerial perspective that does not exist in nature but that captured physical relationships, as in his "Europe from the Southwest," "Russia from the South," "Japan from Alaska," and "Japan from the Solomons."⁵³ The first edition of the atlas rapidly sold out, while Harrison's techniques were widely copied.

The reporting and presentation of war, notably the dynamic appearance of many war maps, for example, those in *Fortune*, *Life*, and *Time*, with their arrows and general sense of movement, helped to make geopolitics present and urgent. Far from the war appearing to American readers as a static entity, and at a distance, it was seen as in flux. The maps also made the war seem able to encompass the spectator both visually, through images of movement, and also, in practice, by spreading in his or her direction.⁵⁴ The orthographic projection used for the map entitled "The Aleutians: Vital in North Pacific Strategy," published in the *New York Times* on May 16, 1943, depicted the island chain as the center in a span stretching from China to San Francisco. This presentation made their potential strategic importance readily apparent.

Linked to these projections and perspectives, the role of air power, dramatized most effectively, first by the Japanese attack on the US Pacific fleet in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and then by the Allied dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, led to a new sense of space.⁵⁵ In part, this new sense, and in particular, the stress on distance, the key element in aerial range, was linked to a

reduced emphasis on physical geography, in geopolitical discussion, in geographical study (at least at the global level), and in maps. Yet, this reduced emphasis also reflected the analytical shift away from materialistic explanations and, notably, those based on the physical environment. The unintentional net effect was a decline in the ability to explain, and particularly to explain with reference to the physical environment, as opposed simply to describe.

The land was present as target and not as obstacle. The new sense of space and the focus on distance reflected both vulnerability to air attack and the awareness of new geopolitical relationships. It was possible for the Americans, from July 1942, to fly over the "Hump," the eastern end of the Himalayas, in order to move 650,000 tons of supplies from northern India to southwest China.⁵⁶ This capability required the construction of a series of air bases. In turn, these bases created a new operational geography, with Japanese land offensives in China, as in 1942 and 1944–1945, in large part directed against US air bases there.⁵⁷

The emphasis on air power had cartographic implications. In terms of maps, the Mercator projection was unhelpful in the depiction of air routes because great circle routes and distances were poorly presented in this projection, as distances in northern and southern latitudes were exaggerated. The former made the northern Pacific and northern Atlantic appear broader than they were, thus conveying a sense of distance from East Asia and Europe, and of security for the United States. More profoundly, World War II suggested that Leo Amery's prediction of 1904 about the potential for air power had been vindicated, at least insofar as the means of waging war and projecting power were concerned.

Underlying the theme of rival geopolitical analyses, however, the extent to which Germany's armies were primarily defeated on the Eastern Front (where at least two-thirds, and often three-quarters, of the *Wehrmacht's* divisions were engaged from the summer of 1941) also appeared to demonstrate the thesis of the prominence of the heartland. Without this alliance with the power (then Russia) that Mackinder had warned against in 1904, without this Soviet success, Anglo-American forces would only have been able to defeat Germany by the use of the atom bomb to decapitate the Nazi regime, the target originally intended for this bomb. Had this been the outcome, then the geopolitics of the war

would have looked different. Instead, the prominence of the heartland, and the value of its interior lines of communication, were shown not only in the defeat of Germany but also by the swift transfer of victorious Soviet forces from Germany to the Far East and their rapid and successful attack on the Japanese empire, particularly Manchuria, in August 1945. This attack, which the Americans pressed for, was primarily motivated by Stalin's drive for influence and territory, and his wish to play a major role in the future of China, Japan and Korea.⁵⁸

This conclusion to World War II looked toward the geopolitics of the Cold War—this was true at the regional level and at its global counterpart. Large-scale forced population displacements and resettlements in Eastern Europe after World War II undermined earlier linkages of space and people, while creating newly more-homogenous nation states designed to stabilize the new territorial order. The expulsion of Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia was particularly significant.

At the global level, the combination of Soviet strength with Communist successes in Eastern Europe in 1945–1948 and in China in 1949 ensured that the heartland appeared more as one bloc, under one driving force, than ever before in history. On one level, the Soviet Union, in accordance with Communist ideology about the supremacy of the means of production, displayed little concern with geopolitical ideas, at least of Western European provenance. On another level, with reference to their own criteria of territorial advantage, the Soviets were very interested. Thus, Stalin saw Soviet possibilities in the Balkans as linked to geopolitical possibilities. In 1944, Stalin told the Greek Communist Party that it had to face “geopolitical realities” and cooperate with the British.⁵⁹

By 1949, Russia-China could be seen as replacing Russia-Germany as the key relationship in the Eurasian heartland. This relationship displayed aggressive energy with the Soviet blockade of Berlin in 1948–1949 and with large-scale Chinese intervention in 1950 in the Korean War. It was unclear what the ideological aspect of Communist victory would mean for the validity of geopolitical analysis. With its stress on ideology, the Soviet Union showed scant interest in geopolitical arguments. Nevertheless, by 1949, the territorial dimension of international competition appeared as apparent as the ideological one.

THE MIDDLE EAST

The geopolitical narrative for the twentieth century at the global level is reasonably clear, but it overlapped and interacted with different and distinct narratives, notably, but not only, at the regional level. An important one, which had deep historical roots and continues to the present, occurred in the Middle East. The history and present of the Middle East involves a dichotomy of order and disorder. The quest for order is in part scriptural, religious, cultural and social, but is also a matter of attempts to create political spaces where these orders can be pursued and where disorder can be held at bay.

This issue was contained within imperial structures prior to the twentieth century, although these structures faced serious problems from across borders. The Wahhabis of Arabia were a prominent example in the early nineteenth century. There were also challenges from within empires, as with autonomous movements in Egypt repeatedly challenging the Ottoman Empire, and from competing empires. Prior to the second half of the eighteenth century, when Russian expansion became a serious issue, the major challenge came from other Islamic empires and movements, for example, the Ottoman overthrow of the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria in 1516–1517 or Nadir Shah of Persia's pressure on the Ottomans in the 1730s to the 1740s. European expansion was different, ultimately, not only because it was successful in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also because it seriously challenged existing Islamic assumptions of order. In response, the Ottomans had periodic movements for renewal. In Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria, the challenge to the Islamic world from Western expansion was linked to sectarian tensions relating to Jews, Christians and Druze. As a result of this response, the new imperial structures created after World War I did not work well and had to be maintained by force: in Syria, by the French in the 1920s and, in Palestine, by the British in the 1930s.

In the postimperial period in the Middle East after World War II, this process of challenge and response was repeated, but in a different geopolitical context. Moreover, the ability to devise stable domestic political solutions was made more complicated as a result of nearby hostile neighbors. Thus, whether the route pursued was control or

compromise over territory, as in Israel and Lebanon, respectively, the situation was inherently difficult.

The geopolitical context ensured the pressures of terrain, climate and logistics on the implementation of strategy.⁶⁰ This context also changed in a number of respects, including that of the means by which territory was represented. In a crowded world employing precise means of measurement in order to define and represent boundaries, it is understandable that the past was, and is, scrutinized to provide historical credence for such frontiers. However, for most of human history, major empires had, instead of clear lines, zones of authority in their border areas, zones in which the pretensions of imperial power did not always match the situation on the ground. And so for the Ottoman Empire, which overthrew its Mamluk counterpart in 1516–1517 and thus gained control over not only what is now Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt and the Hejaz, but also won a degree of authority over the Bedouin and other tribes in what is now Jordan and the bulk of Saudi Arabia. There was no hard-and-fast border, but rather a position of military dominance presented by lines of forts that guarded major routes, notably from Egypt to Mecca and from Damascus to Mecca.⁶¹ As such, fortifications as the defense against threats from the east replicated the situation seen with the earlier Romans, Byzantines, and Crusaders, and prefigured what has been seen more recently, and in a different context, with Israel.

The Ottomans maintained this approach to the Arab population and, indeed, used troops to advance the frontiers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in a process dependent on the legitimacy of force and physical presence, rather than on lines on the map. Thus, in what is now Jordan, the Ottomans established forts and outposts in the second half of the century, and in 1867 forced the submission of the Balqa Bedouin with an armed expedition, collecting unpaid taxes and ending the Bedouin extortion of tribute from the villagers, who were the source of Ottoman revenue. Far from seeing any economic divide on the River Jordan, the Ottoman presence was consolidated with agrarian settlement and, subsequently, with the building of the Hejaz railway from Damascus to Medina in the 1900s. The accession of the reformist Young Turks to control over the Ottoman Empire in 1908 brought new energy to Ottoman government, which was manifested in expansion

into Jordan. The Jabal Druze there were subjugated in 1910 and, further south, the Ottomans suppressed a revolt in Karak. Ottoman control was defended by military force, fortification and bribery.

As a result of military success in World War I, again showing the central role of force in establishing and affirming control and boundaries, Britain became the imperial power in the region. The conquered Ottoman territories were divided by the League of Nations into mandated territories, for which the ruling power was answerable to the League. This peace settlement was determined by the victors, which meant, for the Middle East, Britain and France. France became the mandate power in what became Syria and Lebanon, while the British mandate there was further south in the territories of Palestine and Transjordan. Separately, the British were also in control in Iraq and Egypt, and thus more generally able to determine boundaries. Again, force played a key role and, notably, as the British prevented expansion from Arabia by Ibn Saud, in part by using air attacks, a frequent theme in colonial control in the 1920s and 1930s.⁶² Palestine initially presented the British less of a military problem than did Transjordan, although in neither case was it necessary to employ the shelling and bombing used by the French in and around Damascus in 1925–1926. In Transjordan, the British found themselves faced by internecine tribal conflict and having to adopt the Ottoman role of defending settled areas against nomadic raiders. As a result, a force of cavalry and machine-gunners recruited from Circassians used by the Ottomans to this end was established by the British in Amman, as the “Reserve Force.”

The British relied on mapping as a means to affirm and use rule. Indeed, the clarification of imperial boundaries was important to the process by which colonial governments went about their business of collecting taxes, planning railways and administering territories. As a result, Palestine was surveyed by Britain. Moreover, thanks to this surveying Britain was able to produce the 1:100,000 topographical map of Palestine, in 16 sheets, between 1934 and the end of the British Mandate in 1948. As a demonstration of the use intended from such material, these maps were only printed in England. During World War II, the plates were handed over to army units serving in Palestine, for updating and printing for military needs.⁶³

The British ability to deploy information, however, was challenged by the rise of competing nationalisms in Palestine, each of which drew

on ambitions fired by the new possibilities apparently offered by the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the late 1910s on were a peculiarly complex period, both in the Middle East and more widely, because they saw both Western imperialism carried to an unprecedented territorial height, notably with the British Empire and also, in contrast, the rise of nationalisms seeking the overthrow of these empires. In the case of Britain, contradictory assumptions and promises that owed much to the exigencies of a war (World War I) she had nearly lost, greatly complicated the situation. Competing claims in Palestine posed a problem for Britain, which it sought to deal with by compromise. Arab disorder had been a problem for much of the 1930s, but it gathered force in 1937 after the Peel Commission, which had been established to tackle the linked issues of Jewish immigration and the violently hostile Arab response, recommended the partition of Palestine between Arab and Jewish states. The boundaries chosen essentially reflected ethnic preponderance, but it was assumed that there would be a forcible exchange of people between states as part of the settlement, as had been done between Greece and Turkey in 1923. This process outlined by the Peel Commission did not reach an actual partition, and it is therefore difficult to assess the nature of the use of maps had one ensued.

Instead, the report was rejected by the Arabs and led to the Arab Rising of 1937–1938. This placed a major burden on the British military, one that coincided with the Muslim *jihadi* rebellion under the Faqir of Ipi on the North-West Frontier of British India. This opposition directly assisted the Fascist dictators in putting pressure on Britain. In 1938–1939, the British used 50,000 troops to suppress this rising. Concern about Palestine was accentuated by Mussolini's attempts to exploit Arab nationalism, notably in Egypt and Palestine, as an aspect of his drive for Mediterranean hegemony, a drive that entailed the overthrow of the British position.⁶⁴ The Arab Rising posed a serious problem for the British, who, faced with sniping and sabotage and short of information about the rebels, were unable to maintain control of much of the countryside. However, the opposition lacked overall leadership and was divided, in particular between clans, a geopolitical situation that was of direct military significance on the ground. The British also used collective punishment to weaken Palestinian support for the guerrillas and

sent significant reinforcements in the winter of 1938–1939. The Rising was essentially over by March 1939.

British and French administrators and Jewish settlers therefore did not arrive as intruders in a self-governing Elysium, but rather became key players in a crisis of imperial power, a crisis provoked by the strains of one world war and then complicated by the consequences of the other.⁶⁵ The Arabs rejected another partition scheme for Palestine in 1948, only to be left defeated and, thereby, in a far worse territorial position. This failure is recorded in maps, as that of 1967 was to be. These maps are of consequence, but they recorded, rather than shaped, change.

CONCLUSIONS

The difficulties the British encountered in Palestine were on a very different scale from those considered by Mackinder. However, there was a shared characteristic of instability. Indeed, although physical geography might largely be only slow-changing, geopolitics had to address more rapidly altering circumstances. In shaping these for the purposes of analysis and explication, there was an attempt to provide coherence and consistency, but a roller-coaster of geopolitical fortune was readily apparent, both in the world system of the first half of the century and in particular regions. The changing distribution of power and wealth came to a crisis for the old order in 1937–1942, as a combination of forces assaulted the British and French empires and the defense of the relatively liberal trading empires they presided over.⁶⁶ Although these years saw, directed against Germany, the beginnings of a policy and strategy of containment and Cold War that was to be applied after 1945 against the Soviet Union,⁶⁷ the eventual defeat of the Axis powers owed most to the United States and the Soviet Union. In turn, this success opened the way to the Cold War and its bipolar geopolitics. It is noteworthy that Mackinder's essay "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace" appeared in the US journal, *Foreign Affairs*, published by the Council on Foreign Relations in 1943, the year in which he received the Daly Gold Medal from the American Geographical Society—while his 1904 paper appeared in a British journal, the *Geographical Journal*, published by the Royal Geographical Society. The West was now very much an expression of US power.

Geopolitics and the Cold War

THE TOTAL VANQUISHING OF THE THIRD REICH AND IMPERIAL Japan set the stage for the next phase of geopolitical thought and discourse—this time to account for, and to game-plan, the new US role internationally. This phase was grafted onto the older challenge of the “heartland” power, in the shape of a Soviet Union of unprecedented power and geographical range, the situation predicted by Mackinder in 1943. There were also the practical and theoretical questions of how far newer technology, in the form of long-range bombers, missiles and nuclear weapons vitiated the older heartland and oceanic geopolitical theses. Indeed, during the Cold War, newer types of core-periphery geopolitical formulations surfaced in the form of containment, the “Domino Theory,” and multipolarity. George Kennan and Henry Kissinger were the most prominent examples of geopoliticians in action. However, aside from the significance of traditional mental maps, US geopolitical propositions were not left unchallenged, most conspicuously by Soviet commentators, and by Western radicals, such as the French thinker Yves Lacoste, who claimed that post-1945 geopolitical theory was in practice a justification for military aggression. A different challenge to geopolitical accounts came from the rise of environmentalism and an appreciation of the constraints that human interaction with the physical environment could place upon geopolitical theorizing and action. Less conspicuously, official and popular views within the West frequently did not match those of the United States.¹

COLD WAR RIVALRY

The Cold War was presented in geopolitical terms, both for analysis and for rhetoric. As during World War II, a sense of geopolitical challenge was used to encourage support for a posture of readiness, indeed of immediate readiness. The sense of threat was expressed in map form, with both the United States and the Soviet Union depicting themselves as surrounded and threatened by the alliance systems, military plans and subversive activities of their opponents. These themes could be seen clearly not only in government publications, but also in those of other organizations. The dominant role of the state helps to explain this close alignment in the case of the Soviet Union and its Communist allies. In the United States, there was also a close correspondence between governmental views and those propagated in the private sector, not least in the print media.

News magazines offered an important illustration of the situation and, in the United States, served actively to propagate such governmental themes as the need for the containment of Communism. Thus, in the April 1, 1946, issue of *Time*, the leading US news magazine, R. M. Chapin produced a map, entitled "Communist Contagion," which emphasized the nature of the threat and the strength of the Soviet Union. The latter was enhanced by a split-spherical presentation of Europe and Asia, making the Soviet Union more potent as a result of the break in the center of the map. Communist expansion was emphasized in the map by presenting the Soviet Union as a vivid red, the color of danger, and by categorizing neighboring states with regard to the risk of contagion employing the language of disease: states were referred to as quarantined, infected, or exposed. Such terminology underlines the politicized nature of some of the use of geography during the Cold War.

A sense of threat was also apparent in the standard map projection employed in the United States. The Van der Grinten projection, invented in 1898, continued the Mercator projection's practice of exaggerating the size of the latitudes at a distance from the equator. Thus, Greenland, Alaska, Canada, and the Soviet Union appeared larger than they were in reality. This projection was used by the National Geographic Society from 1922 to 1988, and their maps were the staple of educational

institutions, the basis of maps used by newspapers and television and the acme of public cartography. In this projection, a large Soviet Union appeared menacing, a threat to the whole of Eurasia, and a dominant presence that required containment.

However, before employing these examples simply to decry US views then, it is necessary to point out that Soviet expansionism was indeed a serious threat and that the geopolitical challenge from the Soviet Union was particularly acute due to its being both a European and an Asian power. The situation was captured by the standard Western depiction of the Soviet Union. In turn, the Soviets employed cartographic imagery and language different to that of the West, a difference which reflected the expression of contrasting, as well as rival, worldviews.

A sense of menace was repeatedly presented. Carrying forward Franklin Delano Roosevelt's use of maps to support his fireside chats over the radio, President John F. Kennedy, in a press conference on March 23, 1961, employed maps when he focused on the situation in Laos, a French colony until 1954, where the Soviet- and North Vietnamese-backed Pathet Lao were advancing against the forces of the conservative government: "These three maps show the area of effective Communist domination as it was last August, with the colored portions up on the right-hand corner being the areas held and dominated by the Communists at that time. And now next, in December of 1960, three months ago, the red area having expanded—and now from December 20 to the present date, near the end of March, the Communists control a much wider section of the country."

The use of the color red dramatized the threat, as did the depiction on the map of Laos's neighbors: Thailand, Cambodia, South Vietnam, and Burma. Thus, the Domino Theory was in play, predicting a Communist advance in stages, and this theory was employed to support the deployment of 10,000 US marines who were based in Okinawa. In early 1961, Kennedy ordered marines into border areas of Thailand in order to send a message to the Communist Pathet Lao not to take over Vientiane, the Laotian capital. This strategy was an aspect of the new geopolitics that followed World War II. The threat of a graver regional conflict encouraged the negotiation of a ceasefire agreement for Laos ten months after the press conference.²

The Domino Theory was an instance of the degree to which, compared to the classical European geopolitics of the 1900s, a relatively vague, less theoretically grounded, and more generic sense of geopolitics helped to shape the mental maps of US leaders and the American public during both World War II and the Cold War. In those years, this approach focused on whose camp other states were placed in: the West, the Axis, or the Communist bloc. This added ideological dimension, certainly compared to the 1900s, ensured that geopolitical perceptions differed greatly from traditional concepts of spheres of influence. US officials and political scientists came to use the terminology of the Domino Theory with special reference to Southeast Asia in the 1960s: If South Vietnam falls, then Laos and Cambodia, and then Thailand. Eugene Rostow (1913–2002), a foreign policy guru for the Johnson Administration when he served as undersecretary of state for political affairs (1966–1969), pushed this belief, dutifully picked up and trumpeted by the secretary of state from 1961 to 1969, Dean Rusk, a former professor of political science. Underlying this construction was a tacit admission of US military weakness insofar as the Americans could neither defend nor fight on all fronts. In that respect, the Domino Theory certainly differed from earlier, more orthodox, formulations of geopolitical doctrine.

There were more dramatic departures from classical geopolitics, suggesting very different measures of power. For example, the cover of *Time* on May 15, 1950, provided an image very much of a US counter to the Soviet Union in other than conventional military terms. The cover depicted a globe with facial features eagerly drinking from a bottle of Coca-Cola being offered from behind the Earth by an animated planet that was Coca-Cola. The perspective was instructive. The image of the Earth was Atlanticist, with the nose on the face appearing between Brazil and West Africa and a bead of perspiration on the brow sliding down from Greenland. The Soviet Union was only partly seen and, at that, on the edge of the map, while newly Communist China and war-torn Korea were not seen on this perspective. The title “World and Friend. Love that piaster, that lira, that tickey, and that American way of life,” captured a particular account of geopolitics.

Without such animation, there was a publication of geographical works in which the contents were in effect highly political. This carried

forward a tendency seen during World War II. Thus, the publisher's note for the fifth (1942) edition of Albert Hart's *American History Atlas* declared: "The students in our schools today are the citizens of tomorrow. On them will fall the burden of conducting the affairs of the nation. They must, therefore, be educated for citizenship in a democracy. To carry on intelligently, the electorate must be well informed. In addition to love of country, Americans must 'know' their country."³

Praise increased during the early stages of the Cold War. Thus, *The March of Civilization in Maps and Pictures* (1950) referred to the United States as "a land populated by every race, creed, and color, and a haven of refuge for the oppressed[;] its phenomenal growth has never been equaled. Far removed from the traditions and hampering fetters of the Old World, it has charted a new course in government. Its freedom-loving people have devoted their energies to developing the riches that Nature has so lavishly supplied."⁴

There was also support for US foreign policy and American companies, as with the treatment, in atlases and other works, of the United Fruit Company and the Alliance for Progress in Latin America.⁵ There were similar accounts from other powers. *The Atlas of South West Africa* (1983), a work sponsored by the Administrator General of South West Africa and published in South Africa, emphasized the government's care for the welfare of the population, which scarcely described the situation in this South African colony.⁶

Turning from the use of geographical works to advance political views, the more formal nature of geopolitical discussion during the Cold War faced a number of serious problems that can be regarded as objective. It was unclear how best to assess the likely impact of strategic nuclear power and, subsequently, of rocketry. The high-spectrum military technology was never used, and therefore it was difficult to gauge its probable effectiveness. This point, which did not exhaust the imponderables of possible conflict between the great powers, meant that it was very unclear how to measure strength and, therefore, respective capability. In terms of geopolitics, and more specifically of the likely equations of power that might lead to the discussion of posture and policy as aggressive or defensive, this situation created serious difficulties.

These equations were not restricted to the high-spectrum end of the capability of the great powers. There were also conceptual and methodological issues arising from the processes of anti-imperialism and decolonization. These processes involved the shifting meaning of control, influence and effectiveness. More particularly, the nature and frontier of control in anti-insurgency struggles were difficult to assess as a result of a reliance on air power, which proved less effective than its exponents had hoped and had initially seemed the case.

THE DECLINE OF GEOPOLITICS AS AN ACADEMIC SUBJECT

Meanwhile, to a certain extent, the very idea and practice of geopolitics appeared redundant. Indeed, the rise of nuclear power with the United States in 1945 followed by the Soviet Union in 1949, in conjunction with the later development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, apparently made conventional geopolitical assumptions obsolete as the entire world could be actualized as a target. Moreover, the target could be rapidly hit. As such, the world had become an isotropic surface, one that was equal in every point. A different form of simplification was provided by clear-cut ideological readings of the world in terms of West or East.

Neither account appeared to leave much room for geopolitics. Further, its reputation as a subject declined in the postwar years. To a considerable extent, this decline was because geopolitics was associated with the Nazis and was differentiated from the US discussion of the spatial aspects of power, a discussion described as political geography. The latter was presented as different from geopolitics in both content and method because it was American and allegedly objective, and the term *geopolitics* was avoided. Moreover, the conceptualization of the subject was not pursued.

Indeed, geography was in decline in US education. Harvard University, a key institutional model and opinion leader, dismantled its Department of Geography in 1948, in large part to get rid of Derwent Whittlesey, a homosexual who headed the program.⁷ Appointed in 1928 and made a full professor in 1943, Whittlesey continued to be listed as professor of geography, but there was no longer a department, and he

was the sole geography professor still on the staff. Whittlesey published *Environmental Foundations of European History* (1949); he died of a heart attack in 1956.

Harvard's example was followed by other prominent institutions, such as Stanford. The elderly, but still influential Bowman was much involved in the fall of Whittlesey. With such a lead, it was not surprising that many US state and local education systems also dropped a subject now held to be irrelevant. The teaching of geography was largely relegated to the elementary level, and this was greatly to affect geopolitical understanding.

Political and intellectual currents interacted. Political geography no longer seemed acceptable in the United States,⁸ and was anyway largely separated from geopolitics by scholars such as Jean Gottmann, Richard Hartshorne and Stephen Jones.⁹ Geopolitics was discredited as a pseudo-science and by being linked to special pleading and, more specifically, Nazi Germany.¹⁰ This theme was continued by Tete Tetens, a German émigré who argued that geopolitics was being kept alive "for a new German approach to divide and conquer the world."¹¹ Tetens, a German journalist who fled for political reasons to Switzerland in 1933, moved to the United States after living in Argentina from 1936 to 1938. From 1939, Tetens produced research reports for Bernard Baruch (1870–1965), an important advisor to President Roosevelt, and for the Office of Strategic Services. Tetens focused on Nazi sympathizers in the United States and on German geopolitical plans. In 1941, Tetens reported on Haushofer's plan for world conquest and on Hitler's plan for an iron ring around the United States.¹²

After the war, Tetens presented Haushofer's disciples as playing a key role in directing German foreign policy¹³ toward a new alignment in which Germany shed US shackles and dominated Europe anew. Tetens quoted neo-Nazi circles, not least the Geo-Political Centre in Madrid, and its ambition that Germany have *Ausweichmöglichkeiten im geopolitischen Raum* (the necessary geopolitical space for strategic maneuverings).¹⁴ Tetens argued that geopolitical naivety on the part of the Pentagon had ensured that Germany was not purged of its pro-Nazi sympathizers and that this provided the possibility for Germany to pursue the geopolitical fundamentals that had governed German–Russian

relations in the past.¹⁵ European unification was traced back by Tetens to the pan-German School under Emperor Wilhelm II (r. 1888–1918) and to Haushofer's ideas.¹⁶

Some geopolitical work continued in the United States, in part by being presented as a different subject.¹⁷ However, geography as a subject, and thus the potential for a geopolitics grounded in geographical research, was also affected by criticism of environmental determinism. The attacks on the mono-causal character of environmentalism by the anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942) influenced Carl Sauer (1889–1975), a geographer interested in anthropology. Sauer criticized US geographers, notably Semple (who drew on Ratzel) and, instead, advanced a possibilist interpretation of the role of environment.¹⁸

In Britain, political geography was distinguished from geopolitics. The former aspired to impartiality and generality: the nationality or ethnicity of a political geographer, it was argued, should be no more deducible from his writings than that of a paleontologist or quantum physicist. As developed in Britain, political geography worked mainly by classification.¹⁹ Meanwhile, despite the example of Mackinder, geopolitics as an academic subject lost impetus in Britain and largely died out in about 1970. In Germany, geopolitics ceased to be a major subject. After a gap beginning in 1945, when Germany lay devastated by war, the publication of the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* resumed in 1951, only to end again in 1968.

Thanks to their connotations of Nazi thought and practice, formalized theories of the interrelationship or interdetermination of geography and politics, let alone explicit geopolitics, had limited purchase in the Soviet Union.²⁰ Soviet historical geography has also been presented as underdeveloped,²¹ although it could be quite sophisticated, in pre-university textbooks, university textbooks, and postuniversity historical literature. Once the obligatory ideological cant in Russian-language Soviet journals and books was cut through, the authors so often implied geopolitical formulations that even relatively astute readers could pick them up. Moreover, there were parallels between Marxist thought and classical geopolitics. These included laying claim to a spurious analytical objectivity, even precision, asserting the importance of materialist factors, and proclaiming, or at least suggesting, a determinist route to the

future. In both Marxist thought and classical geopolitics, agency poses a key problem, notably the tendency to downplay the role of the human perception of the situation and the extent of choice.

CONTAINMENT

An intellectual pursuit of geopolitics from the perspective of the academic conceptions of the time can only go so far, however, because whatever the attitude of universities, the contemporary pressure of the Cold War was in many respects acutely spatial. Indeed, the possibility of nuclear conflict initially played out very much in a territorial fashion as the early atomic weapons were free-fall bombs to be dropped from aircraft. Thus, as part, in particular, of a range of power based on aviation,²² the geography of power-projection, of bases and range, took on considerable weight. The United States rapidly sought to develop air bases able to take on the tasks of strategic warfare with the Soviet Union. A new geography led to new base requirements, including Iceland and Greenland.²³ In the event of World War III breaking out, it was assumed that, with its far greater numbers of troops and tanks, the Soviet army would be able to invade continental Europe. The Soviet Union, in turn, could be struck by British and US bombers from East Anglia, as well as from air bases in the British colony of Cyprus and in northern Iraq. Iraq was part of the British alliance system until 1958. For example, intermediate-range Canberra bombers could fly from Cyprus, over Turkey, a NATO ally, and the Black Sea to attack industrial cities in Ukraine, which was then part of the Soviet Union.

In turn, to protect the United States from Soviet attacks across the Arctic, major efforts were put into the construction of early-warning stations in Canada. As a significant aspect of the system, and providing a new geopolitical facility, the Semi-Automatic-Ground Environment Air Defense System, launched in 1958, enabled the predicting of the trajectory of aircraft and missiles. The largest computers ever built were developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for this system. Once a new nuclear geography of ground- and submarine-based intercontinental missiles gradually supplanted long-range bomber doctrine during the late 1950s and 1960s, strategic and geopolitical considerations

that focused on aircraft ceased to be pertinent when considering large-scale nuclear conflict. As a separate issue, there was the question of the strategic viability of carriers, particularly for Britain.²⁴ The significance of nuclear weaponry ensured a separate geopolitics focused on the availability of the raw materials. Thus, US policy in the Congo crisis in the early 1960s was affected by a determination to protect access to the Shinkolobwe mine, a source of uranium.

Separately, however, a strongly spatial sense of international politics had arisen in the development and application of Cold War ideas of containment. The perception of threats and opportunities shaped these ideas,²⁵ as did the views of specific military interests and their planners.²⁶ More was involved than the prospect of Soviet advances into particular areas, for the effort to avoid any large-scale conflict in the late 1940s combined with the Soviet acquisition of nuclear weaponry in 1949 to induce a rethinking of US strategy. This need was driven by a sense of Soviet expansionism, but also by a belief that periods of peace and war alike served Soviet interests, and that the Western powers needed to plan throughout to oppose these interests. Indeed, as far as Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator from 1924 to 1953, was concerned, geostrategic and geopolitical issues shaped both foreign policy and internal political developments. These issues included incipient East–West antagonisms and the ambition for territorial expansion into, or political control over Eastern Europe, a region seen by the Soviets as an ideological bridgehead, strategic glacis (protection) and economic resource. This list underlines the difficulty of handling geopolitical concepts with precision. In practice, each territory represented a range of interests, commitments, and perceptions.

The concept of legitimacy in international relations had become more important, or at least newly institutionalized, with the establishment of the United Nations in 1945; but, at the same time, the Cold War led to a geopolitics based on rivalry and the threat of war. Containment, certainly as a concept that was to be applied in US political and military strategy, received its intellectual rationale in 1947 from George Kennan, an American diplomat and intellectual. His article in *Foreign Affairs* in April 1947 made much use of the word containment. This concept was followed by the Truman government advancing the idea of America's

perimeter of vital interests. Moreover, this perimeter was to be consolidated by the creation of regional security pacts, foremost of which was to be the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), created in 1949. NATO was a product of America's global concern and Western Europe's acute feeling of vulnerability. In 1950, the National Security Council's NSC-68 document reflected the strong geopolitical sense of US strategy. The outbreak of the Korean War mightily drove the formulation of NSC-68 and also put US rearmament into motion.²⁷

The call to defend Western Europe and related waters accorded with the geopolitical stress by Spykman on the "rimland," notably Western Europe and Southeast Asia. However, other areas could be pushed into prominence by the application of the essentially malleable concept of containment. Europe could be taken to mean Western Europe, but could also be extended to comprehend the eastern approaches to the Mediterranean. Thus, in the late 1940s Soviet pressure on Greece and Turkey constituted key occasions for American engagement, as the United States, from 1947, took over geopolitical roles hitherto associated with Britain. Greece and Turkey were, from 1952, members of NATO, despite an Anglo-Canadian preference for a focus for NATO on Western Europe and the North Atlantic. Defensive pacts were also organized in South and Southeast Asia: the Baghdad Pact (1955), which in 1959 became CENTO, and SEATO (1955).

The US emphasis was on a global struggle because, for those concerned with opposition to Communism, individual states whichever bloc they were in, such as Belgium (the West) or Poland (the Communist bloc), took on meaning in these terms, rather than having important issues of their own, including specific geographical and political concerns and characters. This approach indeed captured a key aspect of the international situation. However, the approach also seriously underplayed the role of separate interests within blocs and, particularly, the extent to which allies and supporters had (and have) agency as, for example, with the roles of North and South Korea in the run-up to the Korean War,²⁸ or the independence toward the United States displayed by Israel, and still displayed, notably over settlements in the occupied West Bank. The failure to appreciate the role of these interests caused repeated problems for US foreign policy.

At the same time, the primacy of geostrategic concerns during the Cold War meant that the geopolitics of containment was more concerned with territory and strength than with values.²⁹ Linked to this, the United States and NATO were ready to ally with autocratic states such as in Turkey, Spain, Greece, Pakistan and others in Latin America, rather than focus on populist counterparts. For example, the United States and Franco's Spain signed an agreement in 1953 giving the Americans the right to establish air bases. This geostrategic approach was to lead to a failure to appreciate the difference between Communism and Third World populist nationalism, a failure that repeatedly led to problems for US foreign policy.

A number of writers developed the idea of containment, but did so in a context different from geopolitics because German *Geopolitik* had not only discredited the subject and language of geopolitics at the university level,³⁰ but also affected its more general public profile. In the United States, there was the attempt to define and apply what was, in effect, a geopolitics based on containment, with "defense intellectuals" playing a prominent role—of which the diminished community of academic geographers fought shy.

A key figure was Robert Strausz-Hupé (1903–2002), the Viennese-born US political scientist who, in his *Geopolitics: The Struggle for Space and Power* (1942), had criticized Haushofer.³¹ Strausz-Hupé argued the need for a geopolitics directed against the Soviet Union, which he correctly saw as combining the expansionism of Imperial Russia with the revolutionary threat of Marxist-Leninism.³² Strausz-Hupé supported a European federalism anchored in an Atlantic Alliance as a crucial bar to Soviet expansion, and he very much backed NATO. His *The Estrangement of Western Man* (1952) presented a robust Western civilization, now headed by the United States, as a key component in the geopolitical equation, one that must limit Communism. Strausz-Hupé argued that the crisis he had lived through reflected more than short-term problems and, instead, focused on larger issues in Western culture, specifically an absence of social values that rested on philosophical and moral confusion and failure. Thus, the geopolitical response he advocated—Britain and France joining in the cause of European unity, which he saw as likely to cooperate with the United States in bearing the burden of Western defense—could, to Strausz-Hupé, only be part of the remedy.

In his thesis, cultural and intellectual clarity, coherence, and values—in short metaphysical rearmament—were crucial to the defense of the West. Five years later, in 1957, Strausz-Hupé followed with “The Balance of Tomorrow,” an essay published in the first issue of *Orbis*, a quarterly he founded (still published in 2015): “The issue before the United States is the unification of the globe under its leadership within this generation. . . . The mission of the American people is to bury the nation-states, lead their bereaved peoples into larger unions and overcome with its might the would-be saboteurs of the new order who have nothing to offer mankind but putrefying ideology and brute force.”

In *Protracted Conflict* (1959), Strausz-Hupé, and the others who helped him write his book, argued that the Soviet Union was waging such a war, one that employed the Islamic idea of a bloc that was immune to democratic influence and opposed to another that was to be worn down, the West. Convinced that the Soviets were out to sap the West through means short of large-scale conflict, Strausz-Hupé argued, as George Kennan had done in 1947, that *détentes* would simply be short-term periods in which the Soviets would pursue their interests by different goals. In short, *Protracted Conflict* was a call both to vigilance and to a more robust approach to containment. It was therefore a warning of the need for caution in the face of the thaw in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin in 1953, notably under Nikita Khrushchev.

As with other geopolitical works, those by Strausz-Hupé were very much located in terms of the politics of the age or, more specifically, in terms of the foreign policy and domestic politics of the state in question. His books reflected debates over US foreign and military policy, as well as the character of the literature. Classic geopolitics might be binary, but it was rarely bilateral; in other words, the national perspective on international relations encouraged views of the international situation in terms of binary divides. Criticizing the containment practiced by the Eisenhower administration (1953–1961) for passively waiting to respond to Soviet attacks, and therefore failing to be pro-active, Strausz-Hupé was, in part, responding to the concern that Eisenhower’s strategy, both military and diplomatic, was lessening US options as well as posing a cultural threat. In order to reduce the costs of a military buildup and to prevent the deleterious political consequences that he assumed would

follow from such a buildup, Eisenhower had put the emphasis on nuclear strength, arguing that the threat of nuclear destruction would prevent Soviet attack. Thus, limited wars, for example, “rolling back” Communism, were not to be an option, both because they would likely lead to total war and because the United States would not be prepared for them. A cautious stance was taken in response to the Hungarian rising in 1956, an affirmation of aspirations for national independence.

Eisenhower’s approach was challenged by writers and politicians who favored the creation of a force structure and doctrine able to fight limited wars as an alternative to (and as well as) those designed for a nuclear total war. In some respects, geopolitical arguments were an aspect of this pressure for a limited-war capability, as writers such as Strausz-Hupé and Henry Kissinger sought not only to press for a more robust containment, but also to define goals and parameters that made sense of limited war. Limited nuclear war was part of the equation, and the apparent possibility of this outcome underlay John Kennedy’s successful presidential campaign against Eisenhower’s vice president, Richard Nixon, in 1960, especially his critique of Eisenhower for supposedly allowing a “missile gap” to develop. This was not, in fact, the case. However, in office, faced with the Berlin (1961) and Cuban (1962) crises, Kennedy found that limited war strategies ran the risk of a full-scale nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union. In short, the apparent precision of geopolitical commitment and strategic planning proved unstable under the pressure of international crises and in the face of the difficulties of nuclear planning and command and control.³³ In the Vietnam War, a limited war in which, despite failing to win, the United States did not resort to nuclear attack, the Americans found that the concept of graduated response proved difficult to operate, not least in affecting the views of the North Vietnamese.

Strausz-Hupé’s *Protracted Conflict* was endorsed by Kissinger, a Harvard historian of nineteenth-century international relations who became a leading “defense intellectual,” publishing *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (1957). Kissinger was a member of Strausz-Hupé’s Foreign Policy Research Institute, and also played a role in the Council on Foreign Relations. *Protracted Conflict* was taken further by Strausz-Hupé in *A Forward Strategy for America* (1961), which pressed for a solidification

of the West so as to thwart any Soviet advance, and for applying pressure on the Soviet bloc. Thus, containment was to be made a problem for the Soviet Union.

In his *Building the Atlantic World* (1963), Strausz-Hupé saw a transformed and robust NATO as the basis for a powerful West able to prevail over the Soviets in the international balance-of-power arena. Strausz-Hupé regarded US military superiority over the Soviets as fundamental to containment, and he treated the Vietnam War as an unnecessary entanglement.³⁴ This emphasis, itself, can be given a geopolitical slant by drawing attention to his European origins and East Coast career, both of which he shared with the German-born Kissinger; and that at a time when the East Coast was becoming less significant in US politics in relative terms, not least with respect to the growing importance of the West Coast. More generally, Strausz-Hupé argued that geography provided a basic understanding of geopolitics, and that geographical influences were sometimes negated, and at other times confirmed, by technological change. He was also convinced that geopolitics would be abused in both the political sphere and the academy (the academic world) by being pushed beyond what the geopolitical means of analysis could really explain.

Meanwhile, Whittlesey pupil Saul Cohen broke with the unwillingness of most academic geographers in the world's leading superpower to discuss international power politics and, in his *Geography and Politics in a Divided World* (1963) provided a wider Eurasian scope than did Strausz-Hupé's focus on NATO, albeit a scope that largely reprised Mackinder by discerning two geostrategic regions. Focusing on what he termed the shatterbelts between these regions, Cohen saw them as crucial zones of confrontation and conflict between the major powers, zones moreover whose instability was likely to draw in these powers. Cohen was subsequently to revise his account in 1991, 2002, and 2009 in order to take note of changes in power politics.³⁵

Although much Cold War thinking focused on Europe, it was in East Asia that geopolitical ideas and US strategy were placed under particular pressure as a consequence of concern about Communist expansionism. Whereas the Soviet Union appeared to threaten such a course in Europe, Communist expansionism actually seemed to be in progress in East Asia. There, a theme of continued threat could be used to link China's

large-scale direct intervention in the Korean War in 1950–1953, Chinese pressure on Taiwan from 1949, China's rapid victory in a border conflict with India in 1962, and Chinese and Soviet support for North Vietnam. These anxieties conflated US concern about the ideological challenge from Communism with the long-standing instability of the East Asian region, notably in the face of expansionism by the great powers, an instability that looked back to the defeat and instability of China in the 1890s and beyond that to the beginning of successful Western pressure on China in the 1830s and on Japan in the 1850s.

The Domino Theory of incremental Communist advances appeared to require the vigorous containment seen in the Vietnam War, to which the United States committed large numbers of troops from 1965. The Domino Theory was a geopolitical concept that enjoyed powerful traction in the United States in the 1960s, not least because it could be readily explained in public. This theory was designed to secure the goal outlined by President Lyndon B. Johnson in his address at Johns Hopkins University on April 7, 1965, on the theme of "Peace without Conquest." However, at the same time, the stress in Vietnam for the United States, as earlier with the Korean War, was on intervention in a secondary theater and, in part thereby, on the avoidance of full-scale, main-force conflict with the Soviet Union and China. This secondary character was (and is) not always appreciated by those who pressed for more extensive military action against North Vietnam.

America was to lose in Vietnam. However, the subordination of the operational military level to the strategic geopolitical level was indicated by the wider success in benefiting, by the end of the Vietnam War, from the Sino–Soviet rift and in developing a form of strategic partnership with China. In a 1962 article in *Orbis*, "The Sino-Soviet Tangle and U.S. Policy," Strausz-Hupé had argued that Marxist–Leninism was weakened by its failure to rate nationalism, and that this nationalism led to tensions in Sino–Soviet relations. This situation was seen as an opportunity for the United States which, he argued, should put aside ideological preferences and seek to ally with China as the weaker power of the two, an approach that was later to be taken by Kissinger. With his focus on Europe, Strausz-Hupé also regarded the Soviet Union, not China, as the key threat to the United States.

NIXON AND KISSINGER

Richard Nixon, then a failed Republican politician, was interested in the argument, and he drew on it in his article "Asia after Vietnam," published in *Foreign Affairs* in October 1967. Nixon saw the possibility of China taking a role independent from the Soviet Union as useful to the United States. After his defeat in the 1962 California gubernatorial contest, Nixon had practiced law in New York City. He reflected, read more, opened himself up more to academics, including Kissinger, became less rigid, and grew strategically. Nixon took into account the different tone in US–Soviet relations after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, as well as the increase in Soviet conventional and nuclear strength, growing Sino–Soviet animosity, mounting civil tension within China as a consequence of the Cultural Revolution, and conclusions to be drawn along the way as the Vietnam War persisted. All of this melded Nixon's evolving thinking on the relative decline of US conventional and nuclear strength vis à vis the Soviet Union and on the possible and necessary employment of China as a counterweight to the Soviet Union. As he was aware of the shift in US–Soviet military strength, so Nixon was aware that China was evolving a different kind of geopolitical thinking that was not averse to US inclusion in it. This underlay Nixon's approach to China. The difference between the Nixon of the late 1950s and the Nixon of the late 1960s was one of historical-mindedness, and in that regard his intellectual and statesmanlike posture had grown markedly.

Winning the 1968 presidential election, Nixon moved self-proclaimed pragmatic geopoliticians to the fore. A campaign adviser, Kissinger became National Security Advisor, and Strausz-Hupé, who had wanted that job, began a diplomatic career as an ambassador, first to Sri Lanka, then successively to Belgium, Sweden, NATO, and Turkey. Kissinger found geopolitics a pertinent term in trying to conceptualize his view of international relations. This view was one in which the emphasis was on national interests, rather than ideological drives. These national interests were traced to long-term geographical commitments within a multipolar and competitive international system. Thus, geopolitics was linked to *Realpolitik*: indeed, becoming in part the assessment of the international consequences of the latter.

For Kissinger, such a view was important to the understanding both of US policy and of that of the other great powers. In supporting, and subsequently negotiating, disengagement from Southeast Asia within a context of continued adherence to a robust containment of the Soviet Union, Kissinger had to provide a defense of what appeared militarily necessary. This defense was made more difficult in light of pressures on US interests elsewhere, particularly the Middle East, as well as of the consequences of serious economic and fiscal problems. Alongside these realist pressures came the crucial matter of political location. The Republican charge in the late 1940s, one then stated vociferously by Nixon, elected to the House of Representatives in 1946 and the Senate in 1950, had been that the Truman administration had “lost” China to Communism, and this charge had proved a way, then and subsequently, to berate the Democrats. Similarly, Kennedy had run for president in 1960 in part on the claim that the Eisenhower administration, in which Nixon was vice president for both terms, had failed to be sufficiently robust, not least in maintaining US defenses.

Although, as president (1969–1974) Nixon was greatly helped by Democrat divisions and the leftward move of the Democratic Party, he also had to consider potential criticism from within the Republican Party and from elsewhere on the Right, not least George Wallace, who ran for president in 1968 as the leader of the newly established American Independent Party, winning over ten million votes, mostly in the South. As a consequence, Kissinger’s rationalization of US policy has to be understood at least in part as a political defense for Nixon; a point more generally true of other rationalizations of policy, whether or not expressed in geopolitical terms. In producing this defense—a defense that sought to pour the cold water of realism over the idealism of American exceptionalism—Kissinger had to argue not only that the United States could align with a Communist power but also that such an alignment could be regarded as a worthwhile means to further stability (rather than as a form of Communist deception of a duped United States) because China and the Soviet Union had clashing geopolitical interests.

This approach built on Kissinger’s own background as a Harvard scholar of European international relations in the nineteenth century, when powers with similar political systems had nevertheless been rivals.

Far more intellectually self-conscious than most politicians, Kissinger naturally looked for similarities between past and present. He found them in the concepts and language of national interests, balance of power, geopolitics, and the pressure of Russian expansionism. Indeed, Kissinger provided a key instance of the historicized nature of geopolitics, as opposed to the tendency of ideologies to treat the world in terms of a gradient of ideological congruence or rivalry. Thus, irrespective of ideological drives, the United States reaching out to China, a policy advocated by both Nixon and Kissinger, had a geopolitical logic directed against the Soviet Union; rather as Britain had allied with Japan in 1902 as a response to Russian expansionism while, as a response in a different context, Turkey (also threatened by Russia) had aligned with Germany.

Seeing himself as a classical realist determined to limit chaos, Kissinger had a theme: *Realpolitik*. He sought to use Sino-American co-operation to isolate and put pressure on the Soviet Union in order to get the latter to persuade North Vietnam, seen as a Soviet client, to reach an accommodation with South Vietnam. In turn, Nixon and Kissinger reminded China that the US alliance with Japan would enable the United States to restrain Japan if its rapidly growing economy were to lead it back to expansionism. As a reminder of changing circumstances, the extent of, and prospects for, economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s were such that a powerful Japan seemed a likely source of expansionism and geopolitical instability, rather than the powerful China that is a major issue in the 2010s.

To Kissinger, mutual interests were essentially variable, but the pursuit of interest was fixed. He advised Nixon accordingly in February 1972: "I think in 20 years your successor, if he's as wise as you, will wind up leaning toward the Russians against the Chinese. For the next 15 years we have to lean toward the Chinese against the Russians. We have to play the balance of power game totally unemotionally. Right now, we need the Chinese to correct the Russians and to discipline the Russians."³⁶

As far as the Chinese were concerned, they had started from a separate, but comparable, tradition of geopolitics. However, from the fall of the Manchu empire in 1911–1912 and the subsequent rise, in the 1920s, of the Nationalists and in the late 1940s of the Communists, this tradition has been affected by various modern strategies, while also drawing

on past Chinese precedent—for example, in the use of tributary states, which has been an attitude and policy attempted toward neighbors such as North Korea and North Vietnam. This policy proved unsuccessful in the case of North Vietnam, not least because it could look for support to the more distant Soviet Union. In 1979, China launched an attack on Vietnam. This helped to deepen the Sino–Soviet split, and thus to maintain good relations between China and the United States.³⁷ However, the unpredictable nature of the North Korean regime even more clearly emphasized the degree to which blocs have to be seen in terms of the independent agency of the powers within them.

Kissinger also appealed beyond ideological rivalries when trying to ease relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. These relations were of considerable international importance, not least because of the close relationship between this regional conflict and superpower tensions, notably from the Six Days' War of 1967. Again, the independent agency of the powers within blocs was at the fore. The Middle East was of rising significance because the Arab response to defeat by Israel in the Yom Kippur War in 1973 was an embargo that led to a major increase in the price of oil. The consequences of the OPEC price hike spelled out the significance of the geopolitics of resources. This had already encouraged strong US interest in the Middle East from the 1940s, notably by the development of links with Saudi Arabia and, from the 1950s, with Iran. This process entailed a deliberate lessening of British influence. The background to this US interest was an understanding of the strategic importance of oil, one that World War II had demonstrated, and an understanding that was encouraged by fears about the future scale of US oil production. The declining relative significance of US production ensured that OPEC was able to gain considerable influence over price movements from 1973.³⁸ A military dimension of this oil-based geopolitics was provided by the deployment of the US navy in the Persian Gulf.³⁹

The general issue of oil availability was permeated with specific political concerns and events, as is still the case today. The price of oil per barrel rose from \$3 in 1972 to over \$30 in March 1973. The prosperity, and thus politics, of the United States ultimately depended on unfettered access to large quantities of inexpensive oil. The price of oil was raised again in 1979, from \$10 to \$25, as a consequence of the successful

Iranian revolution against the Shah. In 1971, in part as a result of rising oil imports, the United States had run the first trade deficit of the century. This deficit greatly affected confidence in the dollar and in the architecture of the international economic order. Presented differently, the economic order was in fact the Western-conceived and dominated order.

Kissinger's approach to China, and his frequent use of geopolitics as a term, helped revive interest both in the subject and, more generally, in strategy as a flexible tool, rather than as a fixed product of ideological rivalry. A personal engagement with the outside world assisted in this process. Thus, after the German-born Kissinger, who served as national security advisor from 1969 to 1973 and as secretary of state from 1973 to 1977, came Zbigniew Brzezinski. Polish-born and educated, he served as President Carter's National Security Adviser from 1977 to 1980, and later taught at Georgetown University, as did Kissinger, who subsequently established Kissinger Associates, a source of geopolitical advice that also acted as a network of power, or at least influence.⁴⁰

Brzezinski and others employed the term geopolitics in order to present themselves as realists unswayed by emotional considerations.⁴¹ This antithetical juxtaposition of geopolitics and sentiment, one for which Kissinger was, and remained, notable,⁴² was part of the self-image of those who saw themselves as geopoliticians. It also demonstrated their need to justify the commitments they deemed necessary. Geopolitics as a self-conscious rhetoric as well as policy, thus became an aspect of the reaction to US failure and weakness in the early 1970s and, indeed, part of the "culture wars" of that era. In particular, geopolitical discourse could be seen as a way for Kissinger to justify his stance in the face of critical ideologues from both the Right and the Left, and also for Democrats in the late 1970s to distance themselves from the liberalism of their McGovern-era predecessors defeated by Nixon in the 1972 election. Consequently, it was unsurprising that Brzezinski was a keen advocate of such thinking.

At the same time, Kissinger in his own way had tunnel vision. He believed that the Concert of Europe atmosphere established as a result of the Congress of Vienna of 1814–1815 could be replicated between the Soviet Union and the West. This was questionable as the two sides had, at least theoretically, diametrically opposed doctrines and visions of

the international order, which was not true for the powers that met at Vienna. Kissinger persisted in his thinking and, once Nixon was out of office, the new president, Gerald Ford (1974–1977), fell under the sway of Kissinger's thinking in a way that Nixon did not. Kissinger tended to underestimate how heavily the revolutionary paradigm (to employ the term of former Kremlin ambassador, Anatolii Dobrynin) of Soviet foreign policy influenced that policy under Brezhnev, the key Soviet figure from 1964 to 1982. Thus, Kissinger had his intellectual shortcomings, some of which were acted out in practice, and he was not the guru his own prose implied.

Indeed, Kissinger, Carter, and détente with the Soviet Union in the mid-1970s were criticized as weakening the West by a group of conservative Democrats led by Henry (Scoop) Jackson, as well as by key Republicans who were influential in the Ford administration, especially his chief of staff, Richard Cheney, and secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld. They drew on advice from commentators, such as Richard Pipes and Paul Wolfowitz, who warned about Soviet intentions. The continuity of this group, from 1990s opposition to Clintonian liberal internationalism, and through the neoconservative activism of the early 2000s, is significant. At the same time, the range of American views makes it difficult to construct an agreed US geopolitical doctrine or strategic culture in other than in the broadest sense. Instead, and as more typically was the case, this doctrine was presented and debated in explicitly political ways. For example, in 2001, in *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?*, Kissinger warned against attempts to build democratic nations, as was to be attempted with Iraq in 2003.

THE LAST STAGES OF THE COLD WAR

Returning to the 1970s from an overlapping, yet different, perspective, geopolitical discussion offered an alternative to détente and was therefore part of the movement, toward the close of the Carter presidency (1977–1981), to a firmer response to the Soviet Union. This was a situation that replicated that seen with the movement toward confrontation with China and Russia in the early 2000s.⁴³ The combination of the overthrow of the pro-Western Shah in Iran in January 1979 and the Soviet invasion

of Afghanistan that December suggested a general deterioration in the US position, gave it a regional focus, and seemed to call for action. The response included the Carter Doctrine, the declaration that any attempt to gain control of the Persian Gulf would be resisted as an attack on US interests, and the establishment of the Rapid Deployment Task Force, which was to become the basis of Central Command.

That Iran and Afghanistan were the points of concern helped give the crisis a geopolitical resonance, one that drew on the old heartland-rimland binary concept. Indeed, in 1907, Britain and Russia had defined their spheres of influence in Persia (Iran), a classic geopolitical scenario while, in 1941, they had successfully invaded the country in order to overthrow German influence. Among analysts, commentators and politicians in 1979–1980, there was talk of the Soviet Union seeking a warm-water port, and of the possibility of the Soviets advancing from Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean across the Baluchistan region of Pakistan. The maps used on television and in newspapers, maps that ignored physical obstacles and covered hundreds of miles by the inch, appeared to demonstrate the feasibility of such moves. There was a failure to consider their practicability, although the development of Soviet air bases in southwest Afghanistan did indeed bring a portion of the Indian Ocean within the reach of Soviet power. More particularly, Pakistan, aligned with the United States and China, felt itself under greater pressure from the Soviet Union. In turn, the regional tension between Pakistan and India (a Soviet ally) was given a new dynamic as the future of Afghanistan was considered by the two powers in that light.

The notion of the Soviet search for a warm-water port reflected the determination to put realist considerations first, as well as the historicized resonance that many of those who saw themselves as geopoliticians liked and, indeed, required. History, in this case Russian history, became a data-set that apparently provided guidance to Soviet policy, not least a correction to the ideological formulations of those who offered alternative views. While laudable as an aspiration, and drawing often-appropriate attention to long-term trends,⁴⁴ such a reading of history was somewhat simplistic. This was particularly so because the reading generally underplayed ministerial and governmental agency in favor, instead, of the alleged environmental determinism of state interest.

There was a continuity in attitudes and policies from the later Carter presidency to the Reagan years of 1981–1989. However, the latter saw more risk-taking and a greater emphasis on a more active, in fact bellicose, approach in international relations. This policy was designed to roll back the Soviet system, most obviously by firm opposition to Soviet allies in Africa and Central America, particularly Angola and Nicaragua. This approach frequently underplayed the complexity of the relevant regional struggles by focusing on the global dimension. There was also a robust commitment to the defense of NATO, especially the deployment of new missiles in Europe, to further enforce containment. Although elderly, Strausz-Hupé was brought back during the Reagan years to serve as ambassador to Turkey, an important regional power in the Middle East, as well as highly significant in the containment of the Soviet Union, Iran, and Iraq.

Geopolitics in this context was an aspect of a self-conscious realism in international relations that focused on active US confrontation with the Soviet Bloc. Great-power rivalries made an understanding of this world in terms of long-term geographical drives seem particularly appropriate. In turn, to conventional geopoliticians victory in the Cold War in 1989–1991 came because Soviet expansionism had been thwarted by Western robustness and had also been weakened by the need to cope with the opposition of China, which was still aligned with the United States. The heartland had been divided. These views did not preclude the argument that Soviet domestic weaknesses were a key element in the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. However, these weaknesses were linked by geopoliticians to the strains arising from international competition, and these strains were seen in geopolitical terms.

TYPES OF POWER

In 1989–1991, the autocratic Soviet empire and system collapsed. The fall of the Soviet Union appeared to resolve the theory of dual state types that had been so important to Mackinder's geopolitics and, indeed, had taken forward a long-standing Western discourse, seen in the early-modern Netherlands and Britain, and then in the United States and Britain, directed against autocratic states and their large armies. In this

discussion, navies, trade, and liberty had been joined in what could be modishly referred to as a discourse of power.⁴⁵ In practice, navies indeed served as aspects of a politics of force different from that of autocratic states and large armies—one, moreover, in which assumptions about how best to organize a state militarily were linked to an analysis of relative capability on this basis.

Mackinder had suggested that what he termed the “Columbian epoch,”⁴⁶ that of maritime dominance, was over, because it had been brought to an end by the new effectiveness of land routes and powers. However, the conflicts of 1914–1918, 1939–1945, and 1946–1989 indicated otherwise. Germany was defeated in both world wars while, at great cost, Britain was among the victorious. The United States played a key role in World War II, and an important one in World War I. Of course, the defeat of Japan in World War II, alongside the victory of the Soviet Union, suggested that naval empires could fail, and land powers be victorious. Moreover, the Soviet contribution was significant to Anglo-American success in World War II. However, the situation in the Cold War was very different. The Soviet Union totally collapsed when the United States was not primarily acting as a land power, not least with no conscription, and when China had turned to capitalism.

This shift away from land power was given an arresting military–technological perspective by Peter Hugill in 2005, in an account that took forward Amery’s critique of Mackinder. Hugill argued that precision bombing had become a reality by the late twentieth century. He continued by seeing the relevant technology, of GPS and computers, as a characteristic of modern trading states. Hugill concluded: “As long as the trading states have no desire to occupy territory, merely to control flows and nodes, the air power developed in the trading states in the late twentieth century and now being deployed has restored the global geopolitical balance of power in favour of the trading states. Just as sea power did at the height of the Columbian epoch, aerospace power today allows weak control at great, now planetary, distances.”⁴⁷

This argument may appear less secure in the aftermath of the wars of the 2000s: the US “surge” that is said to have made a major difference in Iraq in 2007 was of ground troops, especially infantry, and not of air power.⁴⁸ There is also a more general need to distinguish between output, or operational success, and outcome, or successful end to a conflict,

when considering military capability. Nevertheless, Hugill took forward Mackinder's ability to discuss global politics in terms of different types of motive, power, and the related military system, and gave it a continuing technological resonance; even if the extent to which technology and type of power were linked in a causal fashion is more complex than was argued by navalists and, by descent, by air power enthusiasts. Moreover, the Iraq War supported Hugill's thesis insofar as America's problems in Iraq arose from the determination to occupy territory.

CRITICISMS OF GEOPOLITICS

The understanding of geopolitics in realist terms of national self-interest and international competition was to be challenged in the 1990s and 2000s by claims of redundancy in the aftermath of the ending of the Cold War.⁴⁹ This understanding was also already being questioned by advocates of a global order based on cooperation,⁵⁰ and on a postcolonial rethinking of North–South relations.⁵¹ Furthermore, geopolitics was questioned, if not reconceptualized, as part of the postmodern project. This provided a general left-wing critique to intellectual analyses and strategies laying claim to objectivity. Maps, for example, were re-examined, being presented either as means for appropriation or as works that lacked objectivity. A painterly approach to the latter was Jasper Johns's *Map* (1963) in which a map of the United States was strikingly remodeled as a painting.

The drive for a critical approach to the spatial dimension of power was well-developed in the 1980s, for example, in the world-economy thesis of Immanuel Wallerstein, who went on to write more explicitly about geopolitics.⁵² Moreover, a left-wing geopolitics had been developed in France with the journal *Hérodote*, which first appeared in January 1976. The first number of what set out to be an analysis of current issues from a radical geographical viewpoint, included an interview with the major French iconoclastic philosopher, Michel Foucault, and an article on the Vietnam War.⁵³ The article's author, Yves Lacoste, a professor of geography at the University of Vincennes, published a dictionary of geopolitics in 1993.⁵⁴ Lacoste argued that geography and geographers had usually served the cause of war, which was seen in itself as a cause for complaint. He attacked not only the *Geopolitik* of Haushofer, but also the traditional

and prestigious French political geography, associated with Vidal de Blache, which was presented as serving the cause of the state. Lacoste claimed that, in treating geography as a science, modern academics were apt to neglect the context of conflict within which territory was defined and the first geographers operated. *Hérodote* engaged with a different range of issues, including ecology, global poverty and the attempt to advance values and groupings different from those of the Cold War. All this was offered by Lacoste as serving his goal of moving geography from being a servile discipline, focused on the state, into, instead, an engaged and objective science. However, the implications of the serious tension between engagement and objectivity were not fully addressed.

This French development, which drew on radical ideas about meaning, representation, language, and communication,⁵⁵ played a key role in that of Anglo-American “critical geopolitics,” but the latter had other sources as well.⁵⁶ One was the attention devoted to the map projection devised by the German Marxist, Arno Peters, and deliberately presented as a radical alternative in 1973. Peters portrayed the world of maps as a choice between his equal-area projection—which he presented as accurate and egalitarian—and the traditional Mercator world view. Arguing that the end of European colonialism and the advance of modern technology made a new cartography necessary and possible, Peters pressed for a clear, readily understood cartography that was not constrained by Western perceptions or traditional cartographic norms. The map was to be used for a redistribution of attention to regions that Peters argued had hitherto lacked adequate coverage. This thesis struck a chord with a receptive, international audience that cared little about cartography but sought maps to support its call for a new world order. Peters’s emphasis on the tropics matched concern by, and about, the developing world and became fashionable. The Peters world map was praised in, and used for the cover of, *North-South: A Programme for Survival* (1980): the “Brandt Report” of the International Commission on International Development Issues. Equal-area projections were deliberately adopted in radical works.⁵⁷ However, critics pointed out the weaknesses and, indeed, derivative character of Peters’s projection and the tendentious nature of many of his claims.⁵⁸

Criticism among international relations theorists of neorealism, notably as being positivist, was also significant among changing attitudes, as

was a reaction by geographers both against the quantitative turn that had been so important to 1970s academic geography and against positivism.⁵⁹ The emphasis on quantification was closely related to a presentation of humans as economic beings primarily concerned with maximizing their benefit, and to locate their activities accordingly; and that at a time when locational analysis played a central role in the academic discipline. The turn to a very different human geography, one that engaged directly with political issues, was part of a reaction against quantification. This turn was crucial to the development of “critical geopolitics.”

Less clearly, there appeared to be a tendency to treat commitment as a means of validating scholar, student, and subject. This possibly reflected a somewhat delayed case of 1960s radicalism on the part of some geographers and, aside from proving a means of assertion, maybe owed something to a sense of guilt about the major role of geographers in supporting Western imperialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This potent mix resulted eventually in a situation in which commitment apparently became, not so much a concluding add-on, as a measure of quality and even a possible definition of at least some of the work published as “critical geopolitics.” The value of such an approach is problematic, not least because it does not really admit of critical analysis except within the parameter of “critical geopolitics.” Moreover, because of the postmodern roots of “critical geopolitics,”⁶⁰ it risks, in one strand, finding it difficult to construct much for fear of becoming akin to the “metanarratives” it spends its time deconstructing. In practice, without a metanarrative, there is no basis for a long-term view, and texts are criticized while being abstracted from broader events. In turn, the broader events can be seen in a hostile light, for example—in terms of an alleged evil US plan, as with discussion of American *Lebensraum* and wars for oil.⁶¹ These highly problematic examples reflect a degree of difficulty in adopting a theoretical framework to provide a grounded perspective.

BELOW THE GLOBAL LEVEL

Other approaches would be more fruitful. A more pertinent development of the standard geopolitical approach would be an emphasis on the geopolitics of states other than the great powers,⁶² as well as of political

movements that did not correspond with Cold War alignments. These levels of geopolitical interest, analysis, and rhetoric are commonly neglected due to the understandable focus on the great powers, as well as the misleading tendency to emphasize a systemic perspective, a perspective that is often related to this focus. A stress on the international system generally entails treating it as an entity in its own right (and not as the derivative of its members), and indeed regards its members, the states, as dependents of the system.⁶³ Such an approach encourages a focus on the dynamics of the system, notably its interaction with, and through, the great powers.

Unfortunately, this approach implies dependency and subordination for the other powers, which is inaccurate. This error arises in part from academic strategies with their stress on salience, significance, and comprehension—which leads to the situation of only so many words, and why spend any on Denmark? This error also arises from the rhetorical identity of geopolitics and its particular focus, almost obsession, with the world scale and with alleged global threats. Indeed, this is a subject that, from its outset as a defined subject, has had a preference for hyperbole or, at least, for the world scale.

Britain is an instance of a state that has geopolitical interests that are more than regional, but that cannot be simplified in terms of a subordination, in a geopolitical bloc, to the United States, however much critics might advance that analysis, not least as a result of joint action in Iraq and Afghanistan. British geopolitical interests spanned (and span) a number of traditional concerns and commitments, many dating from the period of imperial expansion, while also seeking to respond to assumptions about relations within the US-dominated West and in Europe.

France is in a similar position, although, compared to Britain in the twentieth century, its political and strategic cultures place a far greater weight on national independence, and conspicuously as far as the United States is concerned. In 2013, France sought to redefine its geopolitical concerns by putting a greater emphasis on sub-Saharan Africa. The subsequent Defense White Paper argued that the US “pivot,” or strategic balancing, toward Asia meant that Europe was responsible for providing security in its immediate neighborhood, especially in northern Africa. Developing an overview of France’s traditional interest in North and

West Africa, this white paper offered a logic for intervention in Libya (2011), Mali (2013) and the Central African Republic (2013–2014), and also for pressure for intervention in Syria.⁶⁴

Another instance of traditional concern, and one that indicated the variety concealed by that term, was that of the British presence in Antarctica and the South Atlantic over the last century, a presence that led in 1982 to Britain fighting a conventional war without allies and against the wishes of the United States. This presence was no mere footnote to empire, but rather a manifestation of a continued desire to act as an imperial power, and one that has attracted scholarly attention from the geopolitical angle. The creation of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey in 1945 signaled a determination to use scientists to consolidate influence, and the battleship HMS *Nigeria* was dispatched to Antarctic waters in 1948. The mapping of the Antarctic Peninsula and nearby areas carried out by the survey was designed to underline Britain's title to the area. Mapping was linked to naming: in 1932, the British had established the Antarctic Place Names Committee in order to ensure that British maps, at least, reflected official views. The excluded categories encompassed names of existing territories, towns or islands, names in any foreign language, names of sledge dogs, "names in low taste," and "names with obscure origins." British maps omitted names found on Argentine and Chilean maps of the Antarctic Peninsula. Mapping and naming were regarded as crucial to sovereignty claims, and thus to justifying the costs of surveys. In addition, the Churchill government (1951–1955) funded expeditions to consolidate territorial claims, while the cost and time taken by ground surveying led to greater support in the 1950s for aerial photography, leading to the taking of ten thousand photographs in parallel traverses in the summer seasons of 1955–1956 and 1956–1957. The 1959 Antarctic Treaty led to an increase in the geopolitical profile of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia, but the British government did not wish to provoke Argentina by developing an airfield in Stanley, and this left the Falklands vulnerable. The 1982 Argentinean invasion provoked a major shift in the awareness of the South Atlantic empire within Britain.⁶⁵ At least in terms of military commitment, British geopolitics was transformed in response to external action. In large part, this reflected the political legacy of the war, notably with regard to public concern and commitment.

The notion of geopolitical direction for British policy, while yet also a degree of flexibility, was captured by Colin Gray in 2007: “[O]ur freedom of choice for broad policy and strategy is really rather narrow[;] . . . compelled by the national geography, Britain’s overall military strategy must be maritime in the Corbettian sense, and the national security policy that the strategy must serve has to remain within reach of, though not always in lock-step with, that of Britain’s giant ally, the United States. This blessedly likely-permanent geopolitical reality of the British condition is not easy to explain domestically to a nationally prideful public undereducated in strategic activities. Necessity rules!”⁶⁶

Gray’s account suffered, however, from the overly convinced character (and assertive tone) of most geopolitical writing. The notion of permanence appears questionable given the possible changes over the next half century, and still more next century, in Britain itself, let alone the rest of the world, changes outlined in successive national security reviews as well as in reports from bodies such as the US National Intelligence Council, the World Economic Forum and the British Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre. Possible changes included Scottish separatism, which in 2014 led to a referendum on independence as well as changes in Britain’s relations within the European Union. Like many writers on geopolitics, Gray took his wishes and endowed them with normative force. Yet, he also valuably captured, in his phrase “not always in lock-step,” a degree of autonomy that challenges the account in terms of blocs. In 2014, the Scots voted not to leave the United Kingdom but, had they done so, there would have been key strategic and geopolitical implications, notably in the loss of Britain’s nuclear submarine base and the capacity that went with it.

Whereas British commerce and pretensions ensure a far-flung range of interest, the geopolitics of most states were (and are) regional in that global pressures and opportunities tended to have regional consequences. Thus, the Cold War played out in the Horn of Africa in terms of the geopolitics of the Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrean separatists. This often-violent rivalry had consequences in mapping. The *National Atlas of Ethiopia* (1988) produced by the Ethiopian Mapping Authority offered a work in accordance with the aggressive nationalist Marxism of the regime, not least its opposition to imperialism and to Somalia. Such

relationships provided possibilities for interventionism and thereby involved a degree of autonomy for second-rank powers: for example, South Africa in Angola, Israel in the Middle East, and France in Africa and, to a considerable degree, in Europe.⁶⁷

Geopolitical concepts played an explicit role for some of these powers as well as for others. For example, in Latin America from the 1920s to the 1980s classical European geopolitics was a core component of right-wing authoritarian-nationalist philosophy. The conduits ranged from Iberian Falangist influences in the 1920s and 1930s to German and French military missions in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. These concepts were still influential in the 1980s, notably with Augusto Pinochet's book *Geopolítica* (1968), as well as with the ideas underpinning the vicious Argentine "Dirty War" waged by Pinochet's military junta against radicals in 1976–1983. Geopolitics was seen as a way to understand the development of national power. The dictator of Chile from 1973 to 1990, Pinochet was a professor of geopolitics at the Chilean army war college when he published *Geopolítica*.⁶⁸

At the national level, the gain of independence by many states between 1945 and 1975 was followed by the assertion of national geographic identities and interests. For example, national atlases were published, such as *Atlas for the Republic of Cameroon* (1971), *Atlas de la Haute-Volta* (1975), *Atlas de Côte d'Ivoire* (1975), *Atlas de Burundi* (1979) and *Atlas for Botswana* (1988). These works proclaimed national independence as a historical goal. The *Atlas de Madagascar* (1969), prepared by the country's association of geographers, and with a foreword by Philibert Tsiranana, the founding president, emphasized unification and unity, the formation of a united people, a united state, and a "*unité morale*." The ideological dimension was at the fore here—Madagascar was a socialist state. This dimension was seen more clearly with the *Atlas de Cuba* (1978) produced to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.

To treat geopolitics solely from the perspective of the global dimension, therefore, is misleading, not least because there is no inherent reason why geopolitical elements at other levels should be ignored or minimized. This challenge was to become more apparent in the 2000s, as the narrative and analysis of global strength based on great powers and,

primarily, the great power, the United States, was seriously qualified by military limitations⁶⁹ and by the resistance of a number of other resilient worldviews. The latter had a strong spatial element, notably in particular sites of opposition to US power, but also in proposing large areas in which this power should be resisted and displaced. The ability of the United States to devise a new realist geopolitics to comprehend and counter this resistance remains unclear, but in East Asia it is focused by concern about the rise of China.

ENVIRONMENTALISM

The notion of environmental determinism as a key to human development, and thus to geopolitics, was challenged in the mid-twentieth century by a stress on human activity. Combined with technological advances, this emphasis led to a strong sense that humanity could mold the environment and could transform or transcend the limits of physical geography and environmental influence. Human action, rather than natural features (particularly rivers and mountains), came increasingly to locate routes and boundaries, both in the mind and on maps. The world appeared as a terrain to shape and a commodity to be used. There was a focus on the pursuit of power and on its use for ends, and in a fashion that assumed environmental considerations were not a problem—and, indeed, that the world's resources could be readily commodified and consumed without difficulty. Environmental determinism was thus denied during the years of the long postwar boom that lasted until the early 1970s.

These assumptions were pushed particularly hard in the Communist bloc. In China, Mao Zedong, the chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, president of the republic and, in effect, dictator from 1949 until his death in 1976, rejected the traditional Chinese notion of “Harmony between the Heavens and Humankind” and, instead, proclaimed “Man Must Conquer Nature.” This was an expression of orthodox Marxism, wherein people can force nature to serve them rather than having nature order and disorder human existence. This formulation expresses one of the optimistic sides of Marxism as well as its messianic character, a character linked to the authoritarianism and brutality it showed when in

power. In 1958, the year in which he launched his “Great Leap Forward,” an attempt to improve the economy by force, Mao declared: “Make the high mountain bow its head; make the river yield the way”; soon after, in a critique of an essay by Stalin stating that humanity could not affect natural processes such as geology, Mao claimed, “This argument is incorrect. Man’s ability to know and change Nature is unlimited.” Indeed, for Mao, nature, like humankind, was there to be forcibly mobilized in pursuit of an idea, an idea pushed with scant regard for human cost, scientific knowledge, rational analysis, or environmental damage. His “Great Leap Forward” of 1958–1962 was a failure.

Although not generally stated so bluntly, nor always linked so clearly to an authoritarian policy of modernization, these ideas were widespread across the world. Major projects, such as the building of dams—for example, in the Soviet Union and in Egypt as well as in the United States—suggested that nature and physical geography could be readily tamed, and that this was a noble goal which was crucial to development and modernization.⁷⁰ These attitudes had general as well as specific consequences. A key aspect of geopolitics was an emphasis on the military and ideological struggles of the Cold War and on individual states because, at that time, environmental constraints and influences on human geography, specifically political geography, appeared weak. Moreover, at the environmental level, geopolitics became in part a matter of human impact on the environment, rather than vice versa. The end result of planned and unplanned expansion, however, was seen to be particular drawbacks, such as dams compromising the ability of rivers, including the Nile and the Columbia, to “flush out” deltas and estuaries, so as to reduce salinity and also to replenish them with soil.⁷¹

More generally, a pernicious assault on an interdependent global environment was widely discerned and understood. Thus, the environmental movement that became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, with books such as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), can be seen as a critique of what were then recent and current geopolitics. This conclusion serves as a reminder of the degree to which the idea of geopolitics extends to cover a variety of spheres. Usage at the time, as chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 suggest, is as significant as the formal development of an explicit geopolitical theory.

Geopolitics since 1990

THE END OF THE COLD WAR POSED BOTH MAJOR CONCEPTUAL issues focused on a total recasting of geopolitics and also the question as to whether the subject itself had outlived its usefulness and therefore deserved extinction or, rather, relegation to an outdated part of historical literature. In the event, reports of the death of geopolitics proved totally unfounded. Instead, the second surge of writing on geopolitics—that linked to the Cold War—has been followed, from 1990, with a third surge. Moreover, this surge has been of considerable scale. From 1990 until 2014, over four hundred academic books specifically devoted to geopolitical thought have appeared, a number that does not include more narrowly focused national studies. In addition, these books have appeared in a plethora of languages, including Arabic, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, English, Finnish, French, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, and Spanish. To write of a surge does not imply any necessary similarity in approach, content or tone, but does capture the extent to which geopolitical issues and language still play a major role. This can be amplified if attention is devoted to references in periodical and newspaper articles,¹ and in popular fiction. For example, *geopolitics* is a term frequently used in James Ellroy's 2014 novel *Perfidia*. Dudley Smith refers to "recent geopolitical events" in explaining why "Jimmy the Jap" would make an appropriate scapegoat.²

There have certainly been major changes in the subject since 1990 and it is no longer centered on one clear topic, as was the case during the Cold War. Those interested in the heartland idea now tend to focus the heartland further east in Eurasia in order to account for China's

post-Maoist rise in prosperity and power. That, however, is not an approach that makes much sense in terms of Mackinder's 1904 paper. Moreover, as far as military factors are concerned, there is no Chinese threat to Europe or the Middle East.

As another key element of change, cities, Islam, and natural resources have all now emerged as geopolitical actors, even though they might not all possess the traditional geographical centering of the actors in the older geopolitical scheme of things.³ While received geopolitics therefore changed, the subject itself endured, and unsurprisingly so given the survival of state governments and their geographic concerns. At the same time, "critical geopolitics" added a key dimension to the debate, and, in turn, developed in different directions, including feminism and Marxism.

Whatever the approach, the closer any scholar, not least a historian, comes to the present, the greater the danger that the benefits of long-term perspective and reflection will be lost. This point is certainly true of the geopolitics of the 2000s and 2010s, as the struggle with radical Islam came dramatically to the fore with the attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001.⁴ This focus on radical Islam led to the subordination of other themes, such as growing US estrangement from China and, subsequently, from post-communist Russia as well. However, there were (and are) difficulties in assessing the meaning and events of change. On the one hand, the assessment of the relative importance of developments within an agreed analytical structure was unclear, with, for example, pronounced and persistent debate about the respective significance, for the United States, of the Middle East and the Far East. As a separate point, one that captured the range of contexts within which geopolitics was considered, the fracturing of geopolitical analysis with the prominence, from the 1990s, of a self-conscious "critical geopolitics," made it harder to present the subject as objective or, at least, free from its own politics.

Of course, geopolitics, like other disciplines, has generally not displayed a consistent approach,⁵ nor an absence of political commitment. Moreover, it is necessary to be cautious before dividing the past into neat chronological periods with their own themes and analysts, such that 1990, for example, becomes a turning point. Instead, there was,

and is, in practice, considerable continuity in the literature as well as in circumstances. For example, Mackinder spanned World War I, publishing important works and holding major roles both before and after and, indeed, lived on until 1947. In an essay, published in 1943, that noted the significance of memories and the extent of continuity, Mackinder referred to his earliest memory of public affairs, that of the Prussian victory over the French at Sedan in 1870. He linked his subsequent ideas with concern about Russia in the 1870s, a concern that nearly led Britain to war in 1878 in order to protect the Ottoman Empire.⁶ Also, a figure active before World War I, Haushofer died the year before Mackinder. Kissinger lived through World War II and the Cold War, going on to publish a major work of reflection in 2014. The first major work of Saul Cohen appeared in 1963, but he published an important article forty years later, with a second edition of his *Geopolitics of the World System* following in 2009.

Alongside continuity by individuals, the end of the Cold War encouraged a rethinking of geopolitics in some academic circles. There was an interest in a new agenda of international relations and anxieties. In Europe, this agenda included a greater concern with the geopolitical significance of the European Community, and markedly both its expansion and its governmental character.⁷ With the end of the Cold War, East versus West was replaced by Eastern and Western Europe. In turn, the power of NATO and the European Union was exerted in Eastern Europe and, subsequently, membership in both was greatly extended, in return for acceptance of their norms.⁸ Composed of six states when founded, the European Economic Community of 1957 had by 2014 become the 28-strong European Union.

In this case, and more generally, there was a degree of optimism, if not naivety, in some of the literature. This was so not only with the discussion of NATO and the European Union, but also with the hope that geopolitics, like the longer-established peace studies, could be a force for a more benign world order as well as a description of it.⁹ In practice, the expansion of NATO and the European Union created a geopolitical issue in terms of the hostile response of Russia, a response that was expressed in terms of control and influence over territory, especially Ukraine. Whether or not this response was inevitable and should have

been anticipated, it became an issue in 2014, one that also led to disagreements over the viability of nonrealist accounts of international relations. In turn, this analysis affected discussion of China.

From 1990 regional issues around the world were generally discussed in terms of a highly specific context, that of US hegemony. Moreover, in the 1990s and early 2000s, before the situation changed from the mid-2000s, US hegemony, and the apparent inception of a unipolar world system, posed an issue not only for those offering an explicitly politicized geopolitical analysis of the present, but also for scholars looking for long-term patterns. Thus, William Thompson, a leading US political scientist, having discerned a pattern over 13,000 years in which “one state gained enough coercive advantage over its rivals—based on relative endowment deriving from the organizational-technological-political-economic-war co-evolutionary spiral—to encourage an attempt at regional hegemony,” noted that the United States had gone on from being the leading global sea power to becoming also the leading global power, which led him to wonder whether this was a temporary phenomenon or the harbinger of a new era in world politics.¹⁰ The idea of a transformation or paradigm shift in terms of such an era attracted considerable attention.

THEORIES FOR THE 1990S

In the aftermath of the Cold War, a number of theories were advanced by international relations specialists and political geographers as they sought to conceptualize global power politics and predict the future, the latter a goal that attracted much geopolitical speculation. Some of these theories benefited from considerable public attention. In turn, the content and impact of this attention varied by group and country, creating a form of geopolitics of geopolitical analysis. For example, among left-wing commentators, the displacement of Cold War containment theory at a time of apparently unipolar US power encouraged an emphasis on political economy. This emphasis provided a way to link a generally hostile account of the US/capitalist structuring of the global economy with the often-related competition at every scale over resources. Spatial issues could be incorporated into this approach.

One continued theme in the literature was the preference, on the part of those offering geopolitical analysis, to claim salience for their own particular analysis, frequently with scant allowance for other views. Indeed, a rush of world visions were on offer, for the analyses presented by writers and commentators were as much prospectuses for the future as understandings of the present, and with the two shaped together. This situation was very much the case for the two most prominent accounts advanced in the 1990s: Francis Fukayama's 1989 article "The End of History," published in *The National Interest*, a prominent US neoconservative journal,¹¹ and Samuel Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations?" published four years later in *Foreign Affairs*, a leading US journal.¹²

Neither article put spatial considerations foremost nor offered an equivalent response to an apparent spatial threat, which the varied understandings of containment had done during the Cold War. However, each account had important implications for the operation of the international system and, therefore, for the relationship between particular struggles and the wider situation. Moreover, even if silent on specific geopolitical points and, more generally, limited in their discussion of political and (even more) economic geography, each account had implications for the way in which geopolitics was understood. Fukayama's approach was influential, or at least highly newsworthy, in the 1990s, and Huntington's in the 2000s, particularly in the aftermath of the terror attacks of 2001.

In one sense, Fukayama—a former pupil of Huntington and the deputy director of policy planning under George H. W. Bush, Republican president from 1989 to 1993—proposed the end of geopolitics when he wrote of "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Fukayama saw this process as specifically occurring thanks to the acceptance of liberal economics by Asia, particularly China. It tends, however, to be forgotten that, toward the end of his article, he wrote, "clearly, the vast bulk of the Third World remains very much mired in history, and will be a terrain of conflict for many years to come," and, later, that "terrorism and wars of national liberation will continue to be an important item on the national agenda." Fukayama has been frequently criticized by those who have not read him. Moreover, like Mackinder, he was not always read with reference to the nuances

in his argument or allowing for his qualifications, whether explicit or apparent. On the other hand, the tone of neither man put qualifications to the fore.

Fukuyama went on to publish his work in book-length: *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). By then, his argument seemed especially prescient, as the collapse of the Soviet state in 1991 had followed that of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, while China's engagement with the Western economy was becoming more pronounced. Adopting a commonplace approach, for example, that of the Enlightenment stadial writers, such as William Robertson and Adam Smith, Fukuyama's account was not only spatial but also teleological, with certain states presented as more successful because they were progressive, indeed post-historical in his terms. The Fukuyama thesis proved highly conducive to American commentators arguing that US norms and power now defined, or should define, the world. In a continuation of the process by which British commentators in the eighteenth and nineteenth century had seen Britain as a Rome, America was presented as a "new Rome," but a Rome on a global scale,¹³ and one thereby able to advance and protect a "global commons" of liberal norms.

This was an arresting form of geopolitics. A significant cartographic change accompanied this move to US dominance. The Soviet geopolitical menace was abruptly reduced in the Robinson projection adopted by the National Geographic Society in 1988. This offered a flatter, squatter world, and one that was more accurate in terms of area. Compared to the Van der Grinten projection, the Soviet Union in the Robinson projection moved from being 223 percent larger than it really is to being only 18 percent larger, and the United States from 68 percent larger to 3 percent smaller.¹⁴

Some critics presented Fukuyama as a triumphalist neoconservative who failed to relativize his own position—which was ironic, as in 2006 he was to repudiate "the Neoconservative legacy," going on to write works that were more centrist in content and tone.¹⁵ There was also the problem posed by Fukuyama's relative optimism about the prospect for a new world order; although his warning about the world of Islam as resistant to this new order was to be noted by those writing after September 11, 2001.¹⁶ Already, bitter conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s,

particularly in Bosnia and Kosovo, had indicated the strength of ethnic, religious, and regional animosities that had only just been contained there during the Cold War by authoritarian communist rule.¹⁷

At the same time, a new form of geo-power was employed in 1995 in the successful attempt by the United States at Dayton, Ohio, to broker a new order for Bosnia, part of the former Yugoslavia, by agreeing to a new political system and a new border between the warring communities. The use of high-tech geographic information-processing systems speeded up the process of negotiation. Ironically, *Powerscene*, the prime system used, had been developed by the US Defense Mapping Agency for military purposes, notably the US air attack on the Bosnian Serbs in 1995. It is a computer-based terrain-visualization system, in which digital cartographic data, overlaid with remote sensing imagery, permits users to explore the landscape as a three-dimensional reality.¹⁸

Samuel Huntington was considerably less optimistic than Fukuyama. In “Clash,” which was expanded into a highly successful and much-reprinted book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), Huntington rebutted Fukuyama.¹⁹ Huntington predicted, not the triumph of Western values but, rather, the rise of “challenger civilizations,” especially China and Islam. The ideas of rise and decline, strength and challenge, were key concepts in the dynamics of geopolitics, often being unproblematic, in the sense of undefined agents of change. These ideas were somewhat simple in conception and application. According to Huntington, the rise of “challenger civilizations” would be as part of a relative decline of the West that, he argued, had to be addressed carefully, a theme that was to be addressed, albeit in a very different fashion, by Kissinger in *World Order* (2014). Huntington provided not a book about the threat to the West from a heartland but, instead, one that proposed a different geopolitical shaping of the Eurasian question, with the rimland far more problematic than the heartland, insofar as these categories could be employed in this case.

Huntington also offered a new reading for the “declinist” interpretation of America’s global position. This interpretation owed much to Paul Kennedy’s *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (1987). Based essentially on the interplay of resources and strategy, Kennedy’s work had a great influence in

1988, only to appear somewhat redundant as a result of the collapse of the Cold War and US success in the 1991 Gulf War with Iraq.²⁰ In contrast to Kennedy, Huntington's stress was on culture, not on resources. Each has a geographical location, but a differing dynamic.

Huntington's analysis could be applied to consider geography at a variety of scales and to incorporate a range of material. The emphasis on ideology and an ideological challenge in the shape of Islam, was one that put the inner-city immigrant communities of major places within the West, such as Paris and London, in the front-line of contention. Huntington drew on the analysis of Islam by another influential US scholar, Bernard Lewis, specifically his 1990 article "The Roots of Muslim Rage."²¹ Huntington argued that, in the light of the rise of what he presented as "challenger civilizations," the established and rival concept of a global community of nation-states accepting a shared rule of international law and a set of assumptions (a community that had been the aspiration of Wilsonian and Cold War US policies and that seemed achievable, indeed achieved, in the 1990s) could, in fact, no longer be the answer to the world's problems and, thus, satisfy global political and social demands.²² This represented a critique of the moral universalism that had been central to US interventionism from the 1910s.

Terrorism was to drive this lesson home, and Huntington's book, which had been over-shadowed during the triumphant globalization and Clintonian liberalism of the late 1990s, now appeared prescient after the attacks on September 11, 2001, and, indeed, was to be translated into 33 languages. The focus was on relations with Islam, and Huntington was generally regarded as an exponent of the likelihood of conflict between Christendom and Islam, and was praised or criticized accordingly. To some, Huntington, who was in fact a lifelong Democrat as well as a self-declared conservative, was, in practice, a key neoconservative who had sketched out the prospectus for the new ideological confrontation of the 2000s, as well as for the assertive US policies that followed the September 11 attacks.²³

While the idea of a clash of civilizations is arresting, it also led to criticism of Huntington on the grounds of misplaced simplification. Thus, from the Left, Edward Said wrote an article, "The Clash of Ignorance," published in the *Nation* on October 22, 2001, arguing that there

was a danger that the September 11 attacks would, as a consequence of Huntington's arguments, be misleadingly treated as an assault by a monolithic Islam.²⁴ Indeed, subsequent violence within Iraq after the overthrow of its government by US-led conquest in 2003 was to demonstrate the depths of animosity within Islam. In every half-century of Islamic history, more Muslims have been killed by other Muslims than by non-Muslims.

From the perspective of specialists in geopolitics, there was also skepticism, not least based on the highly problematic nature of geography in Huntington's work. In particular, there was an unresolved tension in his use of geography, between a realist understanding of it, as an objective and autonomous element in the political process, and, on the other hand, Huntington's emphasis on the "primacy of subjective, non-geographical factors of social psychology."²⁵

It was far from ironic that the idea of a clash of civilizations was also pushed hard by Osama bin Laden and his supporters, albeit to very different ends and with a very different vocabulary. This clash was given particular geographical force by al-Qaeda as it saw Islam as a civilization with a spatial sway, and a converting and controlling faith, rather than as a religion limited in its span to the devotion of the faithful and with that group essentially static. Moreover, adopting a very long timespan, al-Qaeda treated Islam as having been driven back from spaces it should control, especially Palestine/Israel and *al-Andalus* (southern Spain). In addition, the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia following the Gulf War of 1990–1991 was seen by them as another instance of cultural spatial violation.²⁶ This idea provided a degree of geopolitical coherence as well as a basis for geopolitical expansion, and ensured that different struggles could be linked. The geopolitical imagination of al-Qaeda was one that offered no prospect of peace nor of understanding of other cultures. This imagination, which was to be seen anew with the aggressive and expansionist Islamic State (ISIS) movement—suddenly pushing to the fore in 2013—and its claim to a revived caliphate of great scope, also served as a reminder of the political consequences of psychological senses of space and alienation.

In addition to the world scale, Huntington addressed developments within America although, again, in a somewhat simplistic fashion and

not open to the nuances of geographical variations. In *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (2004), he warned about a change of consciousness and a challenge to American-ness as a consequence of large-scale immigration. This was transnationalism seen as a threatening geopolitical force. In the book, Huntington expressed concern about the applause from Mexican-Americans for Mexican teams competing with Americans. As with the *Clash of Civilizations*, he seemed to find both multiple identities and interdependence unwelcome concepts and, as a result, was reduced to the notion of incompatible groups operating through rivalry. Such an attitude is crucial to the habit of presenting geopolitics in binary terms. Looked at differently, binary concepts lent themselves to geopolitics and that, indeed, was an aspect of the problematic character of the use of this approach.

Although drawn by some critics, the path from Huntington's clash of civilizations to the policies of the George W. Bush administration of 2001–2009 was in fact at best indirect. Huntington himself was critical of the neoconservatives and of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He was particularly unimpressed with the attempt to install a Western-style democracy, which he saw as misplaced cultural superiority leading to a flawed transference of ideas and structures, a view held across the political spectrum. Huntington had little time for the triumphalism about Western rule and civilization offered by some commentators, who were applauded by neoconservatives, such as the historian Niall Ferguson.²⁷

Neoconservative geopolitics was linked more to the “Project for a New American Century” (1997) than to Huntington's thesis. This project or, rather, prospectus, was the product of a movement that arose from a reaction against the policies of President Clinton (1993–2001). Linked to this was an attempt to revive the essential elements of the Reagan administrations (1981–1989) or, rather, what was presented, with some considerable simplification, as these elements, and to reposition them for the post-Cold War era. As with earlier generations of US interventionists,²⁸ this drive entailed a commitment to Eurasia: “America has a vital role in maintaining peace and security in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East” declared the “Project,” and these responsibilities were seen as fundamental to US interests. The “Statement of Principles” issued on June 3, 1997, had 25 signatories, including Cheney, Fukuyama,

Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, George H. W. Bush's vice president, Dan Quayle, Eliot Cohen, Donald Kagan, Norman Podhoretz, and Stephen Rosen. It began: "American foreign and defense policy is adrift" and blamed this not only on the policies of the Clinton administration but also on a failure by conservatives to advance "a strategic vision of America's role in the world." The signatories aimed to change this. Emphasizing the need to "shape circumstances," they pressed for a stronger military, the promotion of "political and economic freedom abroad," and the preservation and extension of "an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles."²⁹

The specific policies that flowed from the assumptions of the "Project" were, in many respects, traditional Cold War policies, notably strong support for Israel and Taiwan. Indeed, in some respects, the general suppositions can be seen as formulaic and trite hyperbole that sought to provide rationale and structure for a series of specific commitments.

That remark is not intended as a criticism specifically of the neoconservatives, as it could be made, in addition, about most attempts to offer a global geopolitics, including liberal and left-wing attempts. Looked at differently, the deductive processes of geopolitics at the global level are weak, and the specific goals that arise can best be understood as individual and lacking a general structure. Thus, geopolitics as a global analysis emerges not only as a vital recovery of the spatial dimension, but also as somewhat implausible as an inductive method, and as overly weak as a deductive one. The global analysis is, perforce, weak as it is difficult to provide coherence at that level, and, more particularly, to link specific interests to a global account that also works at a dynamic level—in other words, capable of explaining change.

In the 1990s, while the fall of the Soviet Union, the anchoring of East Asia to the US economy, and economic growth were all leading to optimism among US commentators global politics had also been reshaped in a more challenging fashion for the United States.³⁰ On the one hand, there were positive outcomes. In particular, an imploding Soviet Union did not challenge US hegemony and—unlike revolutionary France in 1789–1792 and, to a lesser extent, Russia in 1917–1920—Russia in the 1990s did not swing from revolution to dangerous expansionism. This situation provided a background for the restatement of a classic

geopolitics in Brzezinski's *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (1997). Across much of the world, however, identity and conflict in the 1990s were shaped and expressed in terms of an aggressive ethnic politics that did not accord with US interests or with Western views of geopolitics.

As a separate process, changes in values affected the position of particular states, or at least debate within them. This was clearly the case with China as it became more prosperous and assertive and with Russia. In the Soviet Union, formalized "theories" of the interrelationship, or interdetermination, of geography and politics had had little purchase because of their blood-and-soil connotations and, therefore, lack of ideological acceptability. However, these ideas came to enjoy widespread credence and popularity in post-Soviet Russia as a new territoriality was developed, especially by Aleksandr Dugin, a polemical commentator close to President Putin, with an assertive account of national space and the supposed biological imperatives of the nation. Indeed, Huntington's thesis of a clash of civilizations was echoed in the emergence of ethno-geopolitics in post-Soviet Russia. However, unlike Huntington's, this ethno-geopolitics explicitly imbued the civilizational entity with specific ethnic characteristics of its own. Some of the Russian work, in contrast, has been better-informed and not partisan.³¹

More generally, the results of expressing identity in terms of ethnic suppositions were frequently very much defined in spatial terms, not least as the goal of many activists were ethnically homogenous territorial spaces. This process was seen, for example, with Serbian ethnic and spatial ambitions, and offered a restatement of earlier political themes and territorial demands that had been superseded under communism.³²

This emphasis on ethnic territoriality led to tension, if not violence, and was not an approach that matched the ethos of US leadership nor its attempt to reconcile change, globalization, populism, and religion. Moreover, as a separate but related issue, in some countries, particularly in the Middle East, hostility to globalization, a hostility that could be expressed in terms of pan-Islamism, meant opposition to modernism and modernization, and thus could draw on powerful interests and deep fears.

THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE 2000S AND 2010S

The September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington led to regional hostility and ideological developments in the Islamic world, becoming a key geopolitical issue for the United States, with resulting geostrategic concerns in terms of the possibilities for supporting force projection. These concerns entailed a different geopolitics, one initially focused on Afghanistan, Central Asia and Pakistan, with Iraq rising in prominence from 2002 as the 2003 invasion was prepared. This was a geopolitics different from that of the Cold War, when forward operating capabilities sought to meet different requirements, notably those of containment. The end of the Cold War had led to a lessening of political support for America's overseas posture, which affected the geostrategic options facing its forces and the military strength available.³³

The "War on Terror," in contrast, led to a revival of geopolitics at a number of levels. These included the focus on area commands by the Pentagon (notably the wide-ranging Central Command), the interest in power-projection, and also the extent to which conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq obliged newspapers and the television news to include maps. Most of these maps, however, were flat maps, devoid of information on such factors as terrain or religious affiliation.

The attacks on September 11 resulted in a dramatic reconfiguration of US commitment. A determination not to be restrained by the need for international agreement and not to work through international bodies was made clear. Addressing a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush stated, "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." In practice, the call for a "War on Terror" was also a call for a more broad-based action to maintain order in the world or, rather, a vision of order. Both the "War on Terror" and this call were universal missions in which geographical limits were regarded as an irrelevance that was to yield to will. In short, there was an open-ended commitment in both time and space, one that was emphasized by the US leadership. The "War on Terror" thus served as a concept to structure the complexities of world affairs and to help direct alliances.

The Cold War had offered the same, but with a far more cautious, deterrence-based approach toward action. The "rollback" of Soviet

control had not been adopted as the policy of the West. In opposition to the “War on Terror,” al-Qaeda sought to use *jihad* as a call for action and an organizing concept that could incorporate Islamic activism and disputes across the world, as in 2009 when Osama bin-Laden pressed for *jihad* over Gaza, where Hamas was in conflict with Israel. In turn, autonomous Islamic groups across the world proclaimed a degree of coherence with al-Qaeda.³⁴

In September 2002, the National Security Strategy argued the need for preemptive strikes by the United States. This was a key policy innovation that was advocated in response to the dual threats of terrorism and “rogue states,” notably Iran and North Korea, developing weapons of mass destruction. These states were seen as another variant on terrorism. The global extension of American values was presented as the answer to the danger posed by these threats: “The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom. . . . These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society—and the duty of protecting these values against their enemies is the common calling of freedom-loving people across the globe and across the ages. . . . We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.”

To that end, George W. Bush pressed for democracy in the Middle East and China, a call that appeared to ignore any suggestion of geographical limits. In many respects, and here emphasizing the plasticity of the concept and placing of geopolitics, this call—for not only democracy but also for modernization—was a denial of the geopolitics of *Realpolitik* advanced by Kissinger and others, including, in this period, John Mearsheimer, in his *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, 2001). The assumption, under George W. Bush, was that a change in the values of a society, as well as of the operations of its domestic politics, would alter the country’s position and activity in international relations.

Thus, building on the oft-repeated claim that democracies do not declare war on democracies, the drive for democracy was a move away from the argument that particular nations were somehow fated to a malign political system. The latter approach offered a form of political environmentalism that more readily lent itself to classic geopolitics, and to the conventional understanding of international relations as a realist

structure. Moreover, the call for democratization was an aspect of a strategy seeking to maintain stability and prevent wars, as much as to win them. Opposition to weapons proliferation was part of the same policy.

Bush also argued, in a 2005 speech given at Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, that the peace settlement of 1945 at the end of World War II had been flawed because it had left Eastern Europe under Communist control. This remark, again, underplayed the suggestion of geopolitical limits for the West, while also offering a critical comment on the Democratic administrations of the 1940s, on the Republican unwillingness to promote “rollback” in the 1950s, and on the *détente* of the 1970s, particularly as supported by Jimmy Carter.

In practice, the US preference in the 2000s was for democracy in the Middle East, rather than in China. The former appeared a more practical goal, as well as one made more necessary by the challenge apparently posed by Islamic fundamentalisms as well as the threat to the security of Israel. Whether it is helpful to view this prioritization in a geopolitical light is unclear unless the latter is understood, as is so often the case, as a rationalization of the obvious. For, in practice, despite the call for universal freedom, there was, as ever, a “cartography,” or geographical expression and limitation, of concern and action. In this “cartography,” prudence and pragmatism about introducing democracy played a greater role than ideological rhetoric might suggest. This point is not intended as a criticism of policy, but underlines the extent to which geopolitics can, in part, be seen as an exercise in prudence, or rather in debating strategies of prudence in terms of international concerns. This is particularly so if the emphasis is on a realist geopolitics. As such, there is a parallel with the early US republic in which the call for universal rights enunciated in the Declaration of Independence (1776) was very much compromised by the exigencies of power politics in the new republic and the Americas more generally, as well as by the racial politics of the United States itself in the shape of the treatment of African American slaves and of Native Americans. So also, at the international level, with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which did not amount in practice to its pledge to defend republican independence across the New World.³⁵

After 2001, the China issue was overshadowed for the United States by the “War on Terror,” as the country was apparently able to employ

its military preponderance to ensure a freedom of action in the Islamic world.³⁶ The Bush doctrine, which was reiterated in the version of the National Security Strategy issued in March 2006, was the opposite of isolationism, a point underlined in Bush's address to the United Nations in September 2005. At the same time, this was multilateralism in a War on Terror very much on US terms. Donald Rumsfeld's argument, in an interview with Larry King on CNN on December 5, 2001, that "The worst thing you can do is allow a coalition to determine what your mission is"³⁷ was, in one perspective, a call to reject the political counterpart to environmental determinism, and thus to impose one's will. This rejection was perceived by critics as a departure from the existing constraints of the international order, a departure reflecting the weaknesses of the latter and the gravity of the US unilateral challenge. American unilateralism had a number of sources, including a strong and lasting conviction of national exceptionalism, as well as the consequences of the US 1947 National Security Act. Nixon, an admirer of Charles de Gaulle, was also a source of unilateralism.

The strategic counterpart for the United States in the 2000s, a counterpart driving such a challenge, was that deterrence, by the Americans and/or others, no longer seemed effective when confronted by terrorism or states governed by fanatical rulers. The apparent ineffectiveness of deterrence was such that preemption appeared necessary as a strategic means and goal. Specific consequences resulted from this situation, consequences in terms of the geopolitics constructed round particular challenges. At one level, the promotion of democratic governments appeared an aspect of this preemption. It was linked to the idea of "draining the swamp," or removing the factors that made particular areas, such as Afghanistan, prone to serving as bases or potential bases for terrorism. Looked at from the other perspective, terrorists, like guerrilla groups, require space as a base for operations. What were termed shatterbelts provided this. These shatterbelts were the focus of US concerns about the strength and stability of states,³⁸ although strength was, and is, difficult to define, and should be discussed with reference to particular national and regional political structures. In practice, under Bush the serious weaknesses of policy were dramatically accentuated by the many fundamental deficiencies in execution.³⁹

Alongside the immediacy of the varied issues posed by the Islamic world, China aroused growing US concern. As a reminder that geopolitics does not determine force structure, the Chinese abandoned the military ideology of asymmetry that had been followed during the period of control by Mao Zedong (1949–1976). Instead, in response to the American capability displayed in the 1990s, the Chinese changed their military ideology in pursuit of their own “revolution in military affairs.”⁴⁰

The US 2006 quadrennial *Defense Review* described China as having “the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional US military advantages.”⁴¹ This potential was as significant as China’s ability to operate as a sea power as well as a land one; in the Pacific and Indian oceans as well as in Asia.⁴² Confronting the Chinese challenge entailed not only appropriate force structures and doctrine, but also an understanding of the political dimension, both from the Chinese perspective and from that of other Asian powers.⁴³ These needs were in a dynamic relationship such that, for example, “a larger number of [US] submarines could be warranted, depending on how the geopolitical situation in the Pacific plays out.”⁴⁴

At the global level, tensions over resources, especially oil, water, food, and space, also played a major role in geopolitics, both local struggles and international concerns.⁴⁵ This role was particularly sensitive in the Middle East and notably added a key strand in relations with the United States. US oil imports—close to 2 percent of GDP in 2005—led to a dangerous dependence on the politics of the Middle East and the stability of particular regimes, such as those of the Shah in Iran in the 1970s and the Saud dynasty in Saudi Arabia. In 2003, Saudi Arabia held 25 percent of the world’s oil reserves and Iraq another 10 percent, with the Middle Eastern OPEC states having two-thirds of the world’s reserves. The geopolitics of oil supply and the resulting strategic vulnerabilities ensured political support in the United States for the expansion of drilling in environmentally sensitive areas, notably offshore and in Alaska and, by the 2010s, for fracking. Indeed, the latter attracted geopolitical and strategic interest around the world.⁴⁶

Although the role of oil in the US decision to attack Iraq in 2003 was exaggerated in what was a reflection of the more general tendency

to simplify motivation and causation, oil certainly played a major role in the geopolitics of US strategy. Indeed, this was an aspect of the cost that oil dependence forced on the United States, and thus the burden placed on its economy and consumers. In 2004, the United States imported 58 percent of the oil it consumed, compared to 34 percent in 1973. Fracking indicates a very different trajectory, with a move toward oil self-sufficiency.

Natural gas was another key resource. The development of an infrastructure to supply Soviet natural gas and oil to energy-poor Western Europe had been a major issue in international relations in the last decade of the Cold War, creating tension between the United States and Western Europe. Thereafter, Russian gas became a key weapon in Russian efforts to maintain its influence. Disputes with Ukraine in 2006 and 2009 led Russia to shut its pipelines, while a renewed crisis in 2014 raised the issue anew. By then, Russia provided about a quarter of the gas used in the European Union, as well as nearly all the gas used in the Baltic republics, Finland, and Bulgaria. As a result, the arrival in the spring of 2014 of a floating gas terminal in Lithuania's port, Klaipėda (formerly Memel) was described as "a weapon of geopolitics as important as any warship."⁴⁷ This view was offered because Lithuania's reliance on Russian gas was thereby reduced. The routes of projected pipelines became a key geopolitical issue, notably in the Caucasus and the Balkans. This issue helped account for the importance attached to particular states.

Population growth drives resource issues alongside economic demands.⁴⁸ At the global level, population changes are also an important element in geopolitics. In particular, most of the expansion in the world's population is occurring, and will continue to occur, in East and South Asia and Africa, with the West only providing a declining minority of the world's population. Population rises ensure a concern with food supplies—a concern that emphasizes the interdependence of supplier and consumer. The consequences were readily apparent in particular states, especially as the population increasingly masses in sprawling cities that are under only limited control.⁴⁹ For example, political instability in Egypt in the early 2010s owed much to rises in the price of bread. Resource issues and access may demonstrate Mackinder's point that the great wars of history arise from the unequal growth of nations, a point

frequently made in literature about the causes of wars. Certainly, instability linked to population growth will complicate the conduct of “war amongst the people.”⁵⁰ The unequal nature of economic opportunity was also an issue for those who adopted an approach to geopolitics in which economic factors, notably capitalism, were at the fore.⁵¹

CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS

The geopolitics of, and attributed to, the George W. Bush administrations (2001–2009), lent added force to the expression of the self-styled “critical geopolitics.” “Critical geopolitics” is itself a diverse project, as a 2013 collection ably displays, one with multiple ideas, sites, and agents,⁵² but is better described as radical geopolitics. This type of geopolitics deliberately sets out to subvert the understanding of established categories and geographical relationships by calling into question fundamental distinctions as well as realist terminology: for example, the state and society, military personnel versus civilians, and national security. “Critical geopolitics” deconstructs and challenges our common understandings of definitions, categories, and relationships and, instead, suggests and applies new perspectives and insights.

In a hostile reading, however, these understandings are, in some cases, replaced by utopian wishful thinking, by political commitment instead of an objective appreciation of the causes of conflict, by fore-shortened historical understandings and by a loss of clarity in communicating ideas. “Critical geopolitics” self-consciously stands as a form of postcolonial study, one suspicious of the state, of the course of Western power and of what were presented as their accompanying geographical activities.⁵³ Although not all postcolonial work adopts a geopolitical stance, there is often an attack on US power, portrayed as hegemony, power that is presented as the latest version of Western colonialism. This attack frequently involves calls for a different world order, one with a distinctive spatial character,⁵⁴ indeed a product of the “counter-space” created in opposition to existing political structures.⁵⁵

A prominent book in the field of “critical geopolitical” thought, Neil Smith’s *American Empire: Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (2003), provides a good example. British-born, Smith was

professor of anthropology and geography at City University of New York when the book was published. Although his book is large and complex, it is notable that Smith displayed scant reluctance in offering judgments. Thus, he wrote that the Cold War “was provoked amid a 1940s battle by U.S. capital and the U.S. government for global economic access to labor and commodity markets.”⁵⁶ Such simplistic, not to say misleading, arguments are an aspect of a wider problem with a strand of geographical study—for example, the critical approach adopted in much work on mapping.⁵⁷

Smith’s book appeared in the series *California Studies in Critical Human Geography*.⁵⁸ He referred in it to “deep sighs of epochal relief from the Western ruling classes after 1989,”⁵⁹ and to the United Nations as “the jewel in the crown of the postwar American Lebensraum.”⁶⁰ With its direct reference to Nazi attitudes and expansionism, this was a term presumably chosen to shock, but one that fails to capture fundamental differences in intentionality and method. Smith was highly critical of the United States, and this criticism can be seen in the language he employed. Writing of Isaiah Bowman, the prominent academic geographer who was an advisor to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the State Department during World War II, Smith noted of Bowman in the year 1944: “Pushed to the political wall by the strength of the Soviet come-back against Germany and by British colonialist obstinacy, which he quietly admired, his Wilsonian moralism became an ideological runt to an increasingly over-nourished nationalism. Americanness increasingly dominated his postwar vision of global Lebensraum.”⁶¹

Such a tone and approach was unfortunate because Smith’s subject is important, and indeed he captured a central point, even if it could have been phrased better: “By one account, then, the American Century took us beyond geography; by another, it *was* the *geographic century*. This contradiction between a spaceless and a spatially constituted US globalism is latent in the global history of the twentieth century [and] . . . points to the powerful necessity of understanding the preludes to globalization in a geographical register.”⁶²

Smith responded to the attacks on September 11, 2001, by arguing that they were a local and global event misrepresented as a national tragedy: indeed, that the “need to nationalize September 11 arose from the

need to justify war.”⁶³ Smith’s point that the attacks had local, national and global scales worthy of consideration, especially how these scales interlink with one another, is valid. However, his approach was in part set by his clear hostility to the US government and its policies. Furthermore, his point offered an example of how he wanted to assert the overriding importance of a global scale, one that overrode the local and the national. Therefore, to Smith, September 11 was nationalized by the United States, despite, in his view, the attacks being local but having a global meaning. This approach, however, risked privileging the ideology of globalization and the binary divides thereby identified, over the nation. Moreover, the attack on the Pentagon was clearly an attack on the United States, while the other plane brought down by the passengers before it could reach Washington had apparently also been intended for a major national target.⁶⁴

In turn, Jennifer Hyndman offered a feminist analysis of September 11 in *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* (2003):

The events and aftermath of September 11th ineluctably ended the already precarious distinction between domestic space, that within a sovereign state, and more global space where transnational networks, international relations, multilateral institutions, and global corporations operate. . . . Feminists have long argued that private–public distinctions serve to depoliticize the private domestic spaces of “home” compared to more public domains. . . . Terror in the US on September 11th has been met with more terror in Afghanistan. . . . A feminist geopolitics aims to trace the connections between geographical and political locations, exposing investments in the dominant geopolitical rhetoric, in the pursuit of a more accountable and embodied geopolitics that contests the wisdom of violence targeted at innocent civilians, wherever they may be.

Hyndman also argued the need to emphasize links between the CIA and bin Laden, via Pakistan’s ISI, a proposition, however, that did not explain the policies of either. Hyndman’s analysis can be unpacked by noting the consequences of her treatment of the 2001 attacks as supporting the feminist position on the private/public distinction. Hyndman proposed no clear definition of terror, leading the reader to suppose that terror equals violence, and, moreover, as the distinction is denied by feminist critical thinkers, equals violence in the home or by the state. Insofar as the state was allegedly built on patriarchy and violence, for radical feminists it is illegitimate anyway.

US power more generally appears to pose problems for some academics who discuss geopolitics. In “Oil and Blood. The Way to Take over the World,” a piece from *World Watch Magazine* (2003) reprinted in the second edition of *The Geopolitics Reader*, Michael Renner concluded: “By rejecting U.S. participation in the Kyoto Protocol [to reduce climate change, 1997] early in his tenure, George W. Bush sought to throw a wrench into the international machinery set up to address the threat of climate change. By securing the massive flow of cheap oil, he may hope to kill Kyoto. In a perverse sense, a war on Iraq reinforces the assault against the Earth’s climate.”⁶⁵

A focus on economies was also adopted in Pierre Grou’s *Atlas Mondial des Multinationales* (1990). This proposed that polarization was a product of the emergence of economic space.⁶⁶ The assault on US policy was intense. Derek Gregory, in his *The Colonial Present* (2004), claimed that the use of the “War on Terror” created geopolitical spaces where the United States could use its massive firepower with impunity. Control over space thus became a way of rethinking, or rather newly expressing, standard political themes.

In his *Geopolitics. A Very Short Introduction* (2007), Klaus Dodds made clear his views on US policy. For example: “In November 2004, much to the disappointment of many US voters, presidential candidate John Kerry was not able to deny the George W. Bush administration a second term.”⁶⁷ This is a sentence that, while accurate, scarcely admitted that Bush’s re-election reflected a democratic mandate reached by a significant majority of voters, approximately five million more than those who voted for Kerry. Alarm was expressed by Dodds about the policies of the Bush administration,⁶⁸ and Dodds announced that “the Bush Doctrine based on pre-emption and highly selective multilateralism is the single most important danger confronting the current geopolitical architecture.”⁶⁹ These were, of course, frequently repeated assertions. However, such repetition did, and does, not amount to demonstration. Inevitably, there was also a “presentist” feel to the argument.

There could also be an explicit call to action, a call that reflected heightened tension during the “War on Terror.” John Agnew, professor of geography at UCLA, was a key figure in the discipline. Co-editor of the journal *Geopolitics* from 1998 to 2009, he was president of the Association

of American Geographers for 2008–2009. Originally published in 1998, the second edition of his *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics* (2003), a popular work (i.e., often set as a text) reprinted three times in 2006 and again in 2007, concluded:

What is clear is that the state-territorial conception of power is not a transcendental feature of modern human history but, rather, a historically contingent feature of the relationship between geographical scales in the definition and concentration of political practices. . . . Political geographers and others must finally choose whether to be agents of an imagination that has imposed manifold disasters on humanity or to try to understand geographical communalities and differences in their own right. In other words, it is past time to choose sides. But first we need to understand and overcome our own bad habits of thinking and doing: *vincit qui se vincit*.⁷⁰

Agnew's argument captured the assumption that the world, as it is, is illegitimate and must be changed. As such, these critical thinkers differ in emphasis from realist or classical geopolitical thinkers, such as Mackinder, Mahan, and Spykman—who sought to appreciate the world as it is, and then to describe, prescribe, and predict. The perspective of the latter group was/is that power, conflict, and violence all exist and cannot be banished. Temporary fixes are possible, and indeed desirable, and can be obtained through a balance of power, or collective security, or pre-emptive war, or some action taken within an appreciation that all ends have costs and consequences, and that means can overwhelm even the best intentioned of ends. Thus, realist geopolitics tends to base itself on the argument that principles and practices of strategic thought and action cannot be ignored or wished away. More critically, Mackinder and Spykman and others can be discussed in terms, not only of seeking to appreciate the world as it was, but also of trying to defend it accordingly. They certainly saw themselves as trying to defend a set of values, values presented most clearly in the success of particular states.

Developments in the 2010s, notably in East Asia, the Middle East and over Ukraine, suggest that, as argued by Kissinger in 2014, realist-informed policy analysis is necessary in order to understand the *Realpolitik* that characterizes inter-state behavior.⁷¹ A contrast with the 2000s was readily apparent. When the United States was not only the major power but also the one launching wars, then critical geopolitics took on energy and weight as an aspect of the political debate within the West and, more specifically,

as a means of discussing the United States. As the context changed from the late 2000s toward a more multipolar world,⁷² and notably in the 2010s, so the relevance of this critique became less pertinent. However, US military action, for example, air attacks against Islamic State militants from September 2014, led to a revival of such criticism in some quarters.

In discussing “critical geopolitics,” it would be foolish, as noted above, to neglect the major role of commitment in classical geopolitics, commitment in particular to the state and, at least implicitly, a form of call to action accordingly. What is notable about the self-styled “critical geopolitics” is that the commitment is different in type, especially with an attempt to reorient to “a geography for peace,”⁷³ and is generally far more overt. For example, commitment was a theme in Colin Flint’s *Introduction to Geopolitics*: “Participation in geopolitics is also a matter of questioning and challenging the ‘common sense’ assumptions generated by the geopolitical structures in general (difference, conflict, etc.) as well as by the representations and actions of key geopolitical agents, the US and British governments for example.”⁷⁴

The critique here of the application of a binary conception of power politics draws in part on concern about the conventional discussion of imperialism and, indeed, of the role of geographers in the process. This hostile discussion tends, however, to underplay the extent to which imperialism was practiced by non-Western powers as well⁷⁵ and, moreover, sometimes neglects historical work that emphasizes the complexities of imperialism and the extent to which it entailed compromise and negotiation, which are themes pursued in chapters 2, 3, and 5. These complex “geographies of power”⁷⁶ cut across the crude strictures too often expressed by those propounding a binary approach.

The explicitly political criticism that is offered draws on the justification that geopolitical discourse is inherently contestable, if not contested, and thereby political. This argument has considerable value, but all too much of the criticism is weakened, even vitiated, by resting on a fixed set of preferences and antagonisms. In particular, difficulty in coming to terms with imperialism in the past, or US power today, poses significant issues. Adopting an inherently critical approach toward such overlapping categories as American public culture, consumerism, the West (an abstraction that somehow tends not to include the critic in

question), neoconservatism, imperialist geopolitics and claims to objectivity, is not only repetitive, discursive, and somewhat exhausting, but it also suffers from the difficulties of coming to terms with these forces and categories in subsequent analysis—other than in a somewhat crude fashion that sometimes relies on problematic theory, scant use of evidence and argument by assertion.

The *New Imperialism* (2003) by David Harvey provided an instructive example. A former member of the Oxford School of Geography who went on to teach at Johns Hopkins University before becoming distinguished professor of anthropology at the Graduate Center of City University of New York, Harvey (who was much influenced by Marx's priorities)⁷⁷ based his book on the Clarendon Lectures⁷⁷ he delivered in Oxford in 2003. In the preface, he acknowledged the help of Neil Smith in shaping his insight. Seeking to expose "deeper currents" in US policy, Harvey stressed "All About Oil," the title of his first chapter; he argued that Bush's foreign policy was designed "to impose a new sense of social order at home," established a binary divide between "accumulation by dispossession," as a result of neoliberal policies, and "an even rising tide of global resistance," and presented geopolitics as the product of economic forces:

[T]he really big issue is what happens to surplus capitals generated within subnational regional economies when they cannot find profitable employment anywhere within the state. This is, of course, the heart of the problem that generates pressures for imperialist practices in the inter-state system. The evident corollary of all this is that geopolitical conflicts would almost certainly arise out of the molecular processes of capital accumulation no matter what the state powers thought they were about. . . . that the political state, in advanced capitalism, has to spend a good deal of effort and consideration on how to manage the molecular flows. . . . It will, in short, necessarily engage in geopolitical struggle and resort, when it can, to imperialist practices.⁷⁸

While offering a dynamic account of the state that was different from that of simple control over territory, such an approach to US policy adopted the very Manichaeism for which the Bush administration, and also neo-conservative thought in general, could with reason be heavily criticized. Indeed, aside from marked differences between states, the 2000s and 2010s also saw the continuing role of nongovernmental organizations, such as Oxfam, which had their own geopolitics, as well as the strength

of other transnational movements and pressures. “Critical geopolitics” is, in part, an aspect of this remolding and representation of interests and spatiality but, notably in the focus on America, some of the work can also fail to engage adequately with the extent of this development.

More widely, the strident and partisan approach adopted by some writers unfortunately ensures that the value of “critical geopolitics” will be less than its undoubted potential as an arresting call for a new departure in the subject. Alongside Manichaeism, comes the problem of projecting one’s own frames of reference onto others. A historical account of geopolitical thought reveals a long tradition of doing so, one that predates “critical geopolitics,” but it is a practice that needs to be questioned, if not resisted. To do so is not, however, to imply the possibility of objective perfection as an alternative. Indeed, in their *Historical Atlas of Louisiana* (2003), Charles Goins and John Caldwell commented on the tendency to advance present-day values, notably in commenting on the impact of technology. They proposed, instead, that change takes place only within the context of its own time and space, which, they urged, should be the basis of an analysis that moved away from present-day values.⁷⁹

It would be misleading to imply a coherence for all the literature that could be referred to as “critical geopolitics.” Moreover, the policies of the Bush government (and of its British ally) were debated (and criticized) across the political spectrum, including on the Right. For example, the supposed nature of US policy as imperial (a long-standing theme given new energy in the 2000s) was argued widely in a literature that brought together politics, geography, and history, with some of this literature critical, and part of it supportive. The extent to which these works had a geopolitical aspect varied, as there was often more of an interest in characterizing the central ethos and thrust of policy than its spatial dynamic and manifestations, but the attempt to move beyond the analytical confines of the Cold War was valuable.⁸⁰ In an important work, *American Empire. The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (2002), Andrew Bacevich searched out themes and continuities that moved him away from turning points predicated on the start and end of the Cold War, and also looked at the relationship between America’s global power and her domestic political culture,

a key geopolitical theme. He concluded: "The question that urgently demands attention . . . is not whether the United States has become an imperial power. The question is what sort of empire they intend theirs to be. For policymakers to persist in pretending otherwise . . . is to increase the likelihood that the answers they come up with will be wrong. That way lies not just the demise of the US empire but great danger for what used to be known as the American republic."⁸¹

Bacevich considered how American policy had developed with a pursuit of morality increasingly linked to the furtherance of what he saw as a potent imperium: "[T]he politicoeconomic concept to which the United States adheres today has not changed in a century: the familiar quest for an 'open world,' the overriding imperative of commercial integration, confidence that technology endows the United States with a privileged position in that order, and the expectation that American military might will preserve order and enforce the rules. . . . Those policies reflect a single-minded determination to extend and perpetuate American political, economic, and cultural hegemony—usually referred to as 'leadership'—on a global scale."⁸²

Bacevich threw light on the extent to which the defenders of liberal internationalism had offered a mythic rendition of America's ascent to global power, specifically what he termed the myth of the reluctant superpower. Bacevich also showed how, as the American imperium focused on globalization, so those who resisted the latter were seen as opponents of the United States. He argued that after 1945 US writers and policymakers, inheriting British ideas from the nineteenth century, focused on free trade and the unfettered movement of money, as political as well as economic goods and goals, and thus as central goods and goals for government. The state thus became a protection system for an economic worldview that, in turn, helped fund this US state. Rather than (mistakenly) seeing this relationship as the product of an economic conspiracy and class self-interest, Bacevich focused, instead, on the ideas that played a crucial role, specifically on the pursuit of a benign and mutually beneficial world order that reflected an imperium, rather than an empire of control, constraint, and coercion. The democratic objective at the heart of US capitalism was seen by Bacevich as both cause and consequence of freedom.

Drawing attention to rival geopolitical understanding of the West and the Anglosphere, Bacevich located the US determination to overthrow the European colonial empires in terms of the American hope that newly independent peoples would support democratic capitalism and thus look to the United States. This approach can be regarded as a foolish aspiration, although the alternatives were not welcome, as any consideration of the US dilemma at the time of the Anglo–French intervention against Egypt in the Suez Crisis of 1956 would indicate. Bacevich underlined the degree to which this US economic goal, seen at once as in America’s and the world’s interest, and as conducive to liberty as well as prosperity, provided a continuous theme that bridged the close of the Cold War. Democratic capitalism had to be supported and, if necessary, fought for. Yet, Bacevich argued that, in the 1990s, a greater reliance on coercion as an instrument of US policy, and the tendency of serving officers to displace civilians in implementing foreign policy, were manifestations of the increasing militarization of US statecraft after the Cold War: “Before the 1990s ended, evidence of civil–military dysfunction had become increasingly difficult to ignore. Meanwhile, events had exposed the limitations of the proconsular system—and of Americans’ reliance on gunboats and Gurkhas to police the world.”⁸³

That last was a phrase that looked back to earlier British policy, although it was a less than adequate characterization of this policy. Bacevich took his arguments forward in the *Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (2008). There was also a particularly pronounced, persistent political preference on the part of the officer corps, one toward the Republicans.

Moving from Bacevich back to “critical geopolitics,” the critique of modern US power, its geopolitical imagination and spatial manifestations, was matched by criticism of past geopolitical arguments that were held to anticipate modern neoconservative attitudes. Thus, Turner’s thesis of the frontier was challenged in part for ignoring economic, social, political, and ethnic divisions on the frontier, and also because it failed to consider victims adequately, especially Native Americans. Both charges were well-founded. The idea of the West as a site for contest within US society, specifically over land and profit, was advanced by Patricia Limerick in *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the*

American West (New York, 1988). In the striking *Atlas of Native History* (1981), Jack Forbes offered a dramatic repudiation of the conventions of US historical cartography. He employed the “names used by the native people themselves” and sought to “present real political conditions,” ignoring the claims of white governmental units, which, he argued, had come to compose a “mythological map.” Forbes also represented his atlas as part of an intellectual process that the country had to go through, “discovering truth free of ethnic bias and colonialist chauvinism.”⁸⁴ In addition, the different geopolitical visions and practices of Native American societies attracted attention.⁸⁵ In a reaction to Frederick Jackson Turner (see chapter 6), the concept of frontiers, rather than *the* frontier, has since been advanced as a more relevant concept.⁸⁶

THE GEOPOLITICS OF TIME

The major role of continuity and memory in framing responses to crises, not least highlighting perceptions of national interest and, thus, the strategic nature and resonances (or memories) of particular geographical (and chronological) spaces, is another theme to emerge from recent scholarship. In *Making War, Thinking History: Munich, Vietnam, and Presidential Uses of Force from Korea to Kosovo* (2002), Jeffrey Record showed how historical lessons, particularly Munich (1938) and Vietnam (1963–1975), were misinterpreted in the United States, and he suggested that “the tendency to regard violent nationalism in the Third World as the product of a centrally-directed international Communist conspiracy was a strategic error of the first magnitude.”⁸⁷ This tendency reflected, and helped ensure, a difficulty in confronting events that were without obvious parallel in the period being plundered for examples. Thus, alongside the role of space, the geopolitics of time and memory play a key role. This is an element, moreover, that is emphasized if the stress is on the role of perception in assessing, not only power but, more particularly, threats. Thus, the linkage of history with geography is of major significance.

In part, the geopolitics of time and memory play a key role because commentators and politicians frequently continue writing and remain influential for many decades. Thus, Zbigniew Brzezinski, national

security advisor under President Carter in 1977–1980, and an academic who was a prominent user of the term geopolitics, published *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership* in 2004. The previous winter, in an article for *The National Interest*, he had employed the concept as well as language of geopolitics in referring to “the crucial swathe of Eurasia between Europe and the Far East” as the “new ‘Global Balkans,’” a phrase intended “to draw attention to the geopolitical similarity between the traditional European Balkans of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the unstable region that currently extends from approximately the Suez Canal to Xinjiang [northwest China]. In the case of both areas, internal instability has served as a magnet for external major power intervention and rivalry[;] . . . the ferment within the Muslim world must be viewed primarily in a regional rather than a global perspective, and through a geopolitical rather than a theological prism.”⁸⁸ Subsequently, Brzezinski referred in the article to “the current geopolitical earthquake in the Persian Gulf.”⁸⁹

In practice, this language served Brzezinski as a call for diplomatic action and, in particular, for an active strategic partnership between a politically mobilized United States and a determined and united EU, a situation that had not pertained at the time of the Iraq Crisis of 2003. The extent, however, to which the vocabulary of geopolitics really advanced the argument in this or other cases is unclear. However, in terms of rhetorical strategy, whether the vocabulary used advanced a particular argument was a matter of the assumptions of the likely audience and their likely perception of the use of this vocabulary. As a reminder, moreover, of the malleability of geopolitical perspectives, the power politics of this “crucial swathe” were to be reexamined by Robert Kaplan, a prolific American author who took geopolitics into a more popular format, but this time from the very different perspective of power centered on the Indian Ocean.⁹⁰ This malleability is one of the most striking features of geopolitics.

CURRENT GEOPOLITICS

Current geopolitics poses analytical problems, not least because the long-term is more than a series of short-terms. It is understandable that

commentators frame questions and answers in terms of immediate issues—the September-11-ization of US policy or, for example, in 2013 the responses to the developing crises in Syria and the East China Sea and, in 2015, those same crises but also Iraq and Ukraine. These issues are then taken to support particular arguments in international trends.

It is also necessary to consider issues in international relations in the longer term. Internationalism challenges many traditional assumptions (as it confirms others). The extraordinary growth of the US national debt and of foreign borrowing under the George W. Bush administrations (2001–2009), amply demonstrated this, as it arose in part from the cost of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars,⁹¹ combined with a failure to raise taxes. Foreign borrowing also altered the geopolitics of international finance, and especially the fiscal and political relationships within the dollar world. Foreign ownership of US debt created a new geopolitics of US international concern, notably over the policies, stability, and security of debt-holders.⁹² Thus, Taiwan emerged as of particular significance. As a different point, for the imperial power, the United States, the internationalism made necessary by global interdependence posed, and poses, the difficulty of responding to the expectations of allies and, more seriously, to those whose alliance is sought, as well as the issue of how best to answer calls for decision-making, judgment, and arbitration through international bodies that the United States both distrusts and yet finds it necessary to use.

Alongside these issues is the question of the concepts that can be employed in discussing international relations. For example, there are the ongoing problems of what geopolitics means, and to whom, and of the degree of agency involved. When Charles Kupchan wrote, “The North-South divide will become a geopolitical fault line only if America turns it into one,”⁹³ there was the commonplace assumption that agency, and therefore responsibility and blame, rested essentially with the United States, or had done, or should do. This approach, however, taken by many critics outside the United States, as well as by most American commentators, underplays the role of others, deliberate or unintentional, and its interaction with US policy. More systematically, it is appropriate to ask to what extent geopolitical argument at the international level is overly dependent on the idea of a hegemonic power and on the responses to

that power; or, alternatively, on the idea of a binary struggle between two potential hegemonies.

For other powers in the 2000s and 2010s there was the problem of how best to protect and further national goals, whether or not conceptualized as traditional while, at the same time, reacting to the demands of the hegemonic power or powers at a time that it or they appeared particularly assertive. This issue is a key geopolitical quandary, but one that is generally underrated due to the tendency to focus on the leading power, or on the leading power and its principal rival. In practice, the global range and application, and the regional implementation of US policy, frequently competed, and compete, with the particular geopolitical concerns of individual states. For example, America sought to hamper Brazil's interest in a hemispheric security based on military build-up, including nuclear capability.⁹⁴ In a different context, notably with a pronounced ideological clash at play, Venezuela under Hugo Chávez, president from 1999 to 2013, had a distinct geopolitics. This conflated a traditional left-wing Latin American opposition to the United States with the particular dynamics of Venezuela and Latin America in the 2000s, especially Venezuela's oil wealth and competition with Colombia. Venezuela under Chávez also sought to create a regional anti-US movement, notably with Bolivia, Cuba, and Ecuador, as well as to adapt to changes at the global level, not least in aligning with other opponents of the United States such as Iran. There was a geopolitical dimension to this politics, but it is unclear that it should be analyzed in geopolitical terms.

As a recent instance of the interplay of geopolitics and politics, Ukraine and Armenia in 2013 rejected, under Russian pressure, the EU offer of signing up to the Eastern Partnership. Free trade was to have been provided in return for democratic reforms. In what was explicitly presented as a geopolitical competition, Russia, instead, sponsored a Eurasian customs union that in part represented a revival of the Soviet Union. The 2014 overthrow, under popular pressure, of the Ukrainian government led to the rejection of this relationship with Russia, only to be followed by successful Russian military intervention, first in Crimea, and then in favor of separatist groups in eastern Ukraine.

At a very different scale, geopolitics involves the formulating, shaping and sustaining of distinct local identities as part of a way in which

local autonomies, possibilities, and claims are advanced and given a geographic identity. An example is provided by the Padania of the *Lega Nord* (Northern League) in Italy. In 1996, Umberto Bossi, the president of this alliance of northern Italian regional parties, proclaimed the Republic of Padania, with the intention of establishing a state in Italy north of the River Po. Although there was widespread dissatisfaction with the redistribution of money to poorer southern Italy, the idea of a separate republic did not gain traction. The spatial politics of identity and grievance are important in the local process of managing more complex and larger-scale pressures and demands. A frequent, but not invariable, element of this spatial politics is an opposition to what is presented as globalization. Frequently, this opposition to globalization entails a transfer and reconceptualization of earlier opposition to imperial structures and demands. Thus, geopolitics serves as a spatial envelope for changing political pressures, and for the new expression of long-standing political tensions that have a spatial character.

A consideration of such issues underlines the emotional and symbolic as well as pragmatic, political, military, and economic issues faced by an interventionist internationalism. Addressing both goals and methods, geopolitics is a potentially valuable analytical tool in considering these issues. At the same time, it has weaknesses. For example, geopolitical discussion can as much lead to an elision between goals and policies as it can help maintain a rigorous distinction between the two. However, what are presented by contemporaries as geopolitical means, or operational policies, can become ends or strategic goals in themselves by gaining symbolic and practical weight.

The extent to which classical geopolitical theory is still valid for the post-Cold War period is problematic. On the one hand, the concept of mobilizing a nation's mass human resources to protect the "organic state" from military or ideological conquest by foreign aggressors seems better suited to periods when great imperial systems were competing for global primacy, and notably so if they were linked to rival ideologies, whether liberal-democratic, fascist, or communist. On the other hand, both real and perceived spatial considerations continue to play a major role in power politics irrespective of the ideological dimension. For example, definite consequences and issues arise from the distribution of Kurds,

Sunnis, Shia and other groups, and this situation was made very clear in the Middle East from 2003, leading to repeated problems for states as they sought to minimize or thwart the results of ethnic and religious difference.

Spatial considerations play a role within a dynamic context that is greatly affected by major changes in, for example, resource availability, trade routes, and military capability. The last can be seen with Israel's military commitment to retaining land conquered in 1967. Geopolitical factors focused on security constituted a prominent Israeli argument against the demand that Israel should return occupied land. For example, the argument used to be that the Golan Heights gained in 1967 (as opposed simply to the positions from which Israel was shelled up to 1967) should be kept because from Mt. Hermon it was possible to look deep into Syria and Lebanon and keep an eye on Syrian preparations to attack; also, with the tank being the backbone of the Israeli army, the Golan had to be retained to provide space for concentrating forces and for maneuver. These arguments are still made, but they are now less valid as it is possible to look into Syria from space, while, with attack helicopters, Israel does not to the same extent need the land for maneuvering. Moreover, with the Israeli doctrine of warfare becoming more similar to the US concept of "Rapid Dominance," and with firepower replacing concentration of forces, land, while still significant, is less clearly important than hitherto in military operations.

The same is the case with the West Bank. Immediately after its conquest and occupation in 1967, the Israelis came up with the Allon Plan (drafted in June 1967) to keep much of the West Bank and to build settlements along the River Jordan in order to stop a potential attack by an eastern bloc of Syria, Iraq and Jordan. However, missiles do not really care much about such buffer zones, and the strategic, operational and tactical arguments for such a zone was challenged by the use of rocket attacks on Israeli cities, a policy that began with Iraqi Scud attacks in 1991. In turn, the arguments employed were qualified by the Israeli use of the "Iron Dome" interception system to block most attacks, notably during the Gaza crisis of 2014. As far as the idea of a buffer is concerned, there were also inconsistencies. One neighbor, Jordan, has peaceful relations with Israel, while hostile Iran lacks a common border with her.

The changing validity of a military strategic rationale for continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Golan Heights throws attention back onto political debates within Israel focused on the need for, and value of, Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, and on the nature of peace that might be possible, and the role of Israeli withdrawal in such a peace settlement. These points serve as a reminder that the geopolitics of a particular question has a number of often-clashing angles. This can be seen, more generally, in the case of weapons procurement and systems as, for example, with the discussion, in the 2000s and 2010s, of whether there is a “geopolitical niche” that requires a British nuclear deterrent separate to that of US cover.⁹⁵

THE MARITIME DIMENSION

Given the significance of the maritime dimension in the geopolitical ideas of Mackinder, and his stress on the changes affecting a navy’s strategic potency, it is instructive to revisit the topic. In the face of air power and then rockets, the map projections and perspectives, and linked assumptions associated with the great age of naval power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (for which Mahan provided key geopolitical ideas) came to appear as redundant as the global transoceanic empires it had sustained and displayed. To survive, navies apparently had to adapt. This was an argument pursued over the following century, first with an emphasis on aircraft carriers, notably from the 1940s, and subsequently with submarine-based rocket launchers, especially from the 1960s. Moreover, as a further erosion of naval distinctiveness, “jointness” came to the fore in the military in the late twentieth century, as both doctrine and, less successfully, practice.

Irrespective of this adaptability, the idea of aerial self-sufficiency was taken forward further in the 1990s and early 2000s as a key aspect of what was termed by its US originators and advocates the “Revolution in Military Affairs.”⁹⁶ Air power appeared best to provide the speed and responsiveness that would give force to what was proclaimed to be a revolution in information technology. Midair refueling apparently provided a power-projection for aircraft that made carriers, however dramatic a display of naval power, less relevant.

From a very different direction, the sea also appeared geopolitically more marginal. Unprecedented and continuing population growth, combined with the breakdown of pre-existing patterns of social and political deference, increased the complexity of government. This situation contributed to what was termed, from the 1990s, “wars among the people.” These wars, or at least serious unrest, led in conflict, and in planning and procurement for conflict, to a focus both on major urban centers and on marginal regions that were also difficult to control. Again, this focus scarcely corresponded to an emphasis on the sea. “War among the people”—a term that originated with Rupert Smith, a British general who rose to be deputy supreme commander of Allied Powers Europe, in 1998–2001—was very much a doctrine that suited armies, which propounded it.⁹⁷ This doctrine left navies apparently redundant, their ships as one with the heavy tanks now deemed superfluous. Air power and rapidly deployed ground troops appeared to provide the speed, precision and force required. The geopolitics of service politics was clearly seen to be important in this debate, as in other ones.

Moreover, this shift from naval power appeared demonstrated in the 1990s by a series of developments. These included the continued decline of the once-foremost naval power, Britain, as well as the extent to which the United States and Russia, the leading naval powers of the 1980s, no longer focused on this branch of their military. In particular, there was a major rundown in the US navy, which nevertheless was even more the foremost navy, while much of its Russian counterpart literally rusted away. The disastrous loss of the Russian submarine *Kursk* in 2000 suggested that Russia lacked the capacity to maintain its ships effectively. In addition, the degree to which, in the 1990s, the navy and the oceans were not then the prime commitment (militarily, politically and culturally) of the rising economic powers, China and India, appeared striking.

These indications however, were, and are, misleading; trends in the 2010s pointed in other directions. In practice, naval power remains both very important and with highly significant potential for the future. In addition, any reading of the recent past and of the present that minimizes the role of this power, both neglects the place of naval power in power-projection and risks extrapolating a misleading impression into the future.

Geography, as ever, is a key element. Here, the prime factor is the location of population growth and the related economic activities of production and consumption. Most of this growth has occurred in coastal and littoral regions and, more generally, within 150 miles of the coast. There has been significant inland expansion of the area of settlement in some countries, notably Brazil, as well as population growth in already heavily settled inland areas of the world, particularly in northern India. Nevertheless, the growth of coastal and littoral regions is more notable. In part, this growth has been linked to the move from the land that has been so conspicuous as gasoline-powered machinery became more common in agriculture from the mid-twentieth century. As a result, rural areas lost people: in the United States (particularly the Great Plains) and Western Europe from midcentury, and in Eastern Europe and China from the 1990s. The process is incomplete—especially, but not only, in India and Japan—but it is an aspect of the greater significance of cities, most of which are situated on navigable waterways, principally on the coast or relevant estuaries. Shanghai, not Beijing, is the center of Chinese economic activity, and Mumbai, not Delhi, its Indian counterpart.

The economic growth of these cities is linked to their positions in the global trading system. In this system maritime trade remains foremost. The geopolitical implications of the economic value of seaborne trade require emphasis. In large part, this value is due to the flexibility of this trade and its related transport and storage systems. Containerization from the 1950s proved a key development, as it permitted the ready movement and transshipment of large quantities of goods without high labor needs or costs, and with a low rate of pilfering and damage. Air transport lacked these characteristics, and the fuel cost of bulk transport by air made it unviable other than for high-value, perishable products, such as cut flowers. The significance of container vessels was enhanced by the ability and willingness of the shipbuilding industry to respond to, and shape, the new opportunity.

As a result, qualifying assumptions about the centrality of land routes, assumptions that were at the fore in Mackinder's 1904 "Pivot" lecture, the character and infrastructure of global trade by sea has been transformed since the 1950s. Moreover, this transformation continues and is readily apparent round the world. A good example is provided by

the massed cranes in the new container facilities at the docks of Colombo, as well as the new harbor being built with Chinese help further along the Sri Lankan coast, and the numerous container ships passing by off the southern coast of the island.

Politics played a key role in this transformation. The development of the global economy after the end of the Cold War focused on integration into the Western-dominated maritime trading system of states that had been, or still were, communist: for example, China and Vietnam, or that had adopted a communist- (or at least socialist-) influenced preference for planning: for example, India. Furthermore, in the 1990s and 2000s, the general trend was toward free-market liberalism, and against autarky, protectionism and barter or controlled trading systems. This trend remains far from complete, but it encouraged a major growth in trade, notably of Chinese exports to the United States and Western Europe. This trend remained significant in the 2000s and early 2010s, despite political tensions, particularly between the United States and China, as well as the consequences of the serious global economic crisis that began in 2008. Crucially, that crisis did not lead to a protectionism comparable to that of the 1930s. Both prior to the crisis and during it, the focus on trade between East Asia and the United States ensured that maritime trade expanded greatly.

Speculation about developing trade from East Asia overland to Western Europe has not been brought to fruition at any scale. Only the Trans-Siberian Railway was in a position to provide a link. To that extent, Mackinder's analysis proved flawed. The ambitious railway-construction plans of China notwithstanding, there is no sign that this will change. The Chinese railway boom has much to do with high-speed lines to carry passengers and troops. It is driven by politics rather than economics, as with the building of a line to Lhasa in Tibet. Overland trade from the Far East to Europe has not prospered for economic as well as political reasons. Railway transport costs remain stubbornly higher than sea-borne shipping; indeed, container ships have widened the gap. Chinese railways, old and new, provide no links to Europe.

The growth in trade after World War II, much of it maritime, was linked to the enhanced specialization and integration of production and supply networks that were a consequence of economic liberalism, as well

as of the economies of scale and the attraction of locating particular parts of the networks near raw-material sources, transshipment points, or the centers of consumption. This growth was further fuelled by the opportunities and needs linked to population increases. The latter helped ensure that regions hitherto able to produce what they required were obliged now to import goods, not only food and fuel, but also manufactured products. Trade links that would have caused amazement in the nineteenth century, or even the 1950s—such as the export of food from Zambia to the Middle East and from Canada to Japan, or of oil from Equatorial Guinea to China—became significant. Most of the resulting trade was by sea. According to the *Financial Times* of July 10, 2014, \$5,300 billion worth of goods cross the South China Sea by sea each year, which helps explain the sensitivity of threats and developments there. The trade and these threats were the active elements in a regional geopolitics of global economic significance.

Naval power was the key guarantor of this trade and played the role of providing security for what was termed the “global commons.” This concept presented sea power in a far more benign fashion than had been the case when it had been seen as an expression of imperial power.⁹⁸ Instead, there was an emphasis on shared value. This emphasis was greatly enhanced from the late 2000s in response to a major increase in piracy, notably in the Indian Ocean. This increase exposed the broader implications for maritime trade of specific sites of instability. It was not only that pirates from Somalia proved capable of operating at a considerable distance into the Indian Ocean, but also that their range of operations affected shipping and maritime trade from distant waters. This was not new. Muscat raiders in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries had operated from Oman to the west coast of India and to the Swahili coast of Africa, challenging European trade to India. However, in the 2000s, the challenge appeared greater, both because piracy had largely been stamped out in the nineteenth century, and because the scale of international maritime trade and the number of states directly involved were far larger.

If the operations against Somali piracy—operations that reduced its extent and enabled states such as China and India to display their naval power and train their crews—proved a clear demonstration of

the importance of naval power and its ability to counter failure on land, its potential significance was further demonstrated by the expansion of piracy elsewhere, notably off Nigeria in the 2010s. This threat suggested a multilayered need for naval power. For most of the twentieth century, naval power had very much been a form of power dominated by the major states, while most other states, instead, focused on their armies, not least for internal control and policing. In the early twenty-first century, however, such control and policing increasingly also encompassed maritime tasks. Control over refugee flows, the maintenance of fishing rights, and the prevention of drug smuggling, proved prime instances. As a consequence, naval power became as much a matter of the patrol boat as of the guided-missile destroyer. Drug money is a threat to the stability of Caribbean states which, however, have tiny navies. As a result, it is the navies of major powers that have a Caribbean presence: the United States, Britain and France, each of which also has colonies there that play a key role, one that is greatly facilitated by aerial surveillance and interception capabilities.

Naval action against pirates, drug smugglers and human traffickers, the last a particularly major task for the navies of Australia, Greece, Italy, and Spain, is reminiscent of the moral agenda of nineteenth-century naval power. Such action is also an implementation of sovereignty as well as of specific governmental and political agendas.

Moreover, the utility of naval power in the early twenty-first century in part reflected the extent to which the “end of history” that had been signposted in 1989 with the close of the Cold War proved a premature sighting. Instead, there was a recurrence of international tension focused on traditional interests. Territorial waters proved a significant source of dispute, not least when linked to hopes over oil and other resources. Indeed, by 2014, there were key disputes over competing claims in the East and South China Seas, disputes that drove major regional naval buildups, particularly between China and Japan, but also involving the states of Southeast Asia, notably Vietnam and Malaysia. These disputes were characterized by aggressive Chinese steps, as in 2012 when China took over the Scarborough Shoal west of the Philippines. Moreover, control of the naval base of Sevastopol and over maritime and drilling rights in the Black Sea were important in the crisis over Crimea and,

more generally, Ukraine in early 2014. Once the Russians gained control over Crimea, they announced an expansion and modernization of their Black Sea fleet, with new warships and submarines.

Concern about coastal waters encouraged a drive to ensure the necessary naval power. The disputes over the East and South China Seas and the Black Sea, and the prospect of their becoming more serious, or of other disputes following, led to a determination on the part of regional powers to step up naval strength and preparedness. In the case of Japan, there was, with the National Security Strategy and Mid-Term Defense Program formulated in 2013, a major strategic shift in focus from the defense of Hokkaido—the northern island threatened, in any war, by Russia—to concern about the southwest part of the Japanese archipelago and in particular the offshore islands in the East China Sea. This led to a greater emphasis on the navy and air force, and on a more mobile, flexible and versatile power-profile. Moreover, military exercises were increasingly geared to maritime concerns and naval power. Regional disputes in East Asian waters also directed attention to the situation as far as other, nonregional, powers, principally the United States, were concerned. These powers were troubled both about these regions and about the possibility that disputes over sovereignty would become more serious in other parts of the world, for example, the Arctic.

As a result, the nature and effectiveness of naval power increasingly came to the fore as a topic in the mid-2010s. So also did the extent to which governments and societies identified with this power. This was of particular significance in East and South Asia as, with the exception of Japan, there was little recent history of a regional naval power. Moreover, the relevant Japanese history was complicated by the legacy of World War II and the provisions of the subsequent peace treaty.

CHINA

However, the situation was transformed from the 2000s as a result of changes in China. In part, as an important aspect of a presentation of a geopolitical role, there was an emphasis on past naval activity, notably the early fifteenth-century voyages of Zheng He into the Indian Ocean. Indeed, the *Zheng He* is the name of the Chinese officer-training ship.

There was also a presentation of Chinese naval strength as a product of government initiative, an aspect of great-power status, and a sign of modernity. These elements were seen in the treatment of history, which thereby played a major role in geopolitics. In particular, *Da Guo Jue Qi* (*The Rise of Great Powers*), a Chinese government study finished in 2006, attempted to determine the reasons why Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Russia and the United States became great powers. This study was apparently inspired by a directive from Hu Jintao, the Chinese president, to determine which factors enabled great powers to grow most rapidly. The study drew together government and academic methods—as many scholars were consulted, some reportedly briefing the Politburo—and popular interest. In 2006 a twelve-part program was twice broadcast on state-owned television channel, and an eight-volume book series was produced, which sold rapidly. The president of the television channel made the utilitarian purpose of the series clear. The book project argued the value of naval power, but also the need for a dynamic economy with international trade linking the two, a factor seen as suggesting a lesson about the value of international cooperation.

Chinese naval strategy, nevertheless, focuses not on the history of other states, but on that of China. The traditional land-based focus on “interior strategies”—the development of expanding rings of security around a state’s territory—has been applied to the maritime domain in a major expansion of geopolitical concern. In part, this is in response to a reading of Chinese history in which it is argued that, from the 1830s, the ability of foreign powers to apply pressure from the sea has greatly compromised Chinese interests and integrity. “Near China” has therefore been extended as a concept to cover the nearby seas. This provides both an enhancement of security and a sense of historical validity, one that offers a mission and purpose to the Communist Party.

However, the definition and implementation of the relevant attitudes and policies ensure there are both considerable problems and mission creep, as the security of what may seem to be the near seas apparently requires regional hegemony and an ability to repel any potential oceanic-based power, which at present means the United States. The Chinese desire may be motivated by security, but it challenges that of all others

and, crucially, does not adopt or advance a definition of security that is readily capable of compromise or, indeed, negotiation. In part, this is a reflection of the Chinese focus on “hard power,” a power very much presented by naval strength as a support for nonmilitarized coercion in the shape of maritime law enforcement. The Chinese navy offers a force to support the application of psychological and political pressure. However, a real and apparent willingness to resort to force creates for others a key element of uncertainty.⁹⁹

The Chinese emphasis on naval strength as a key aspect of national destiny, and the rapid buildup of the Chinese navy, have helped drive the pace for other states, leading Japan and India, in particular, to put greater emphasis on a naval buildup, while also ensuring that the United States focuses more of its attention on the region. In 2015, the Australians turned to Japan in order to provide a new generation of submarines that are clearly designed against China, while China, in turn, was reported to be discussing buying Russia’s newest submarine, the Amur-1650. Talk in 2014 that conflict over the East China Sea might lead to a broader international struggle, with the United States backing Japan, underlined the significance of maritime issues and power. The previous year, the United States agreed to base surveillance drones and reconnaissance planes in Japan so as to patrol the region’s waters from the air. China’s development of anti-ship missiles capable of challenging US carriers (particularly the BF-21F intermediate-range ballistic missile fitted with a maneuvering reentry head containing an anti-ship seeker) poses a major problem. As a result, US carriers may have to operate well to the east of Taiwan, beyond the range of the US Navy’s F-35s jet aircraft. Chinese analysts emphasized the geopolitical value of Taiwan to China’s maritime perimeter.¹⁰⁰

The ready willingness of Chinese Internet users to identify with these issues reflected their salience in terms of national identity and interests. Moreover, this willingness suggested a pattern that would also be adopted in other conflicts over maritime rights. They proved readily graspable. The Chinese government is struggling to ride the tiger of popular xenophobia. In China, as earlier with Tirpitz and the *Flottenverein* in Germany, popular support for naval expansion has proved easier to arouse than to calm.

Thus, the utility of naval strength was symbolic, ideological and cultural, as much as it was based on “realist” criteria of military, political and economic parity and power. It has been ever thus, but became more so in an age of democratization when ideas of national interest and identity had to be reconceptualized for domestic and international publics. The ability to deploy and demonstrate power was important in this equation, and navies proved particularly well suited to it, not least as they lacked the ambiguous record associated with armies and air forces after the interventionist wars of the 2000s and as a consequence of the role of some armies in civil control.

Therefore, 110 years after it was delivered, Mackinder’s lecture appears not prescient but an instance of the weakness of theory when confronted by economic, technological and military realities. China, not Russia, is the key power in Mackinder’s “heartland,” but this is a China with global trading interests and oceanic power aspirations, and not, as Russia seemed to be, the successor to the interior power controlling some supposed “pivot,” centered in West Siberia.

NAVAL CAPABILITY

The likely future trajectory of Chinese naval ambitions and power is currently a (if not the) foremost question for commentators focused on naval power politics,¹⁰¹ and that itself is a clear instance of the continuing relevance of naval strength. China’s navy has proved far more successful than either armies or air forces in combining the cutting-edge, apocalyptic lethality of nuclear weaponry with the ability to wield power successfully at the subnuclear level. Moreover, this ability is underlined by the range, scale and persistence of naval power, all of which provide, alongside tactical and operational advantages, a strategic capability not matched by the other branches. Despite aerial refueling, air power lacks the continuous presence, and thus persistence and durability, that warships can convey. Moreover, operating against coastal targets, warships offer firepower and a visual presence that is more impressive than that of many armies.

The significance of coastal regions underlines the value of amphibious power-projection.¹⁰² In turn, the potential offered is affected by

technological change. In July 2014, in an exercise in Hawaii, the US Marine Corps displayed the prototype of the Ultra Heavy-lift Amphibious Connector, a vehicle designed to cut through the waves in order to carry vehicles to the coast. The tracks are made from captured-air foam blocks that stick out like flippers. The full-size version is designed to be 84 ft. long and 34 ft. high and should be able to transport at least four vehicles. Also in 2014, the building by France for Russia of Mistral-class warships intended to support amphibious operations created a serious issue when an arms embargo of Russia was proposed. Such warships were seen as a particular threat in the Black Sea. In 2015, France refused to supply the warships.

At the same time, the ability of land-based power to challenge navies is much greater than was the situation when Mackinder was writing. Indeed, his views, both of the relationship between land and sea and of the capacity of technological change, did not really comprehend this challenge. It had begun as soon as cannon greatly enhanced the capacity of coastal defenses to resist naval attack. The major improvement in artillery in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries considerably increased this capacity, and the surviving sites of coastal defense—for example, off Auckland designed against Japanese warships—remain formidably impressive. In the twentieth century, the range and nature of such defense was increased first by aircraft and then by missiles. Both are now central to the equations of naval power projection, and not least in the key choke-points, such as the Taiwan Strait and the Strait of Hormuz. Moreover, longer-range weapons allow ships to project power far inshore, but at the same time they permit coastal defenses to project power far offshore, and the limited number of naval targets and the greater vulnerability of warships mean that this range factor does not balance out capabilities.

Indeed, this capability has led to the suggestion that the very nature of naval power has changed with consequent implications for the ranking of the major powers. In particular, whereas air power, especially at the cutting-edge, is dominated by the major powers, and notably the United States, the possibility of lesser powers using new technologies to counteract existing naval advantages is significant. This reflects a long-standing aspiration and practice, for example, as seen with the ideas of

the French *Jeune École* in the 1880s and of Soviet naval planners in the 1920s.¹⁰³ The extent to which small and/or unconventional forces may be as effective in their chosen spheres as major navies therefore raises the question whether this sphere can extend in order to deny the latter advantage in large areas or, more plausibly, to make that advantage very costly, not least at a time of rising price tags for cutting-edge warships. That is the doctrine that Iran, with its policy of, and procurement for, asymmetrical swarm attacks, appears to be pursuing. Advanced C-series Chinese-supplied missiles make the Strait of Hormuz a choke point vulnerable to Iranian power, a risk exacerbated by the availability of Russian Kilo-class submarines, as well as by Iran's mine-laying capability, speedboats, midget submarines, and cruise missiles. The possible assertion of naval power in this fashion complicates the traditional military hierarchy and legacy.

In most states, navies have far less political clout than armies and play a smaller role in national self-image. This is the case, for example, of Turkey, Iran, India, Israel, and Pakistan. Yet, issues of military need and power politics complicate such situations, as with Iran. Another situation arises from India's quest for a regional political role judged commensurate to its population size, economic development, resource concerns and political pretensions, as well as acute concerns about China and rivalry with Pakistan. This quest ensures that India will continue to seek naval strength. Warships provide states with the ability to act at a distance, notably in establishing blockades, as with Israel and Sri Lanka.

There is, however, an important contrast between the extension of national jurisdiction over the seas (which covered more than a third of their extent in 2008) and the fact that many states cannot ensure their own maritime security. This is the case for Oceania, the Caribbean, and Indian Ocean states such as Mauritius, the Maldives and the Seychelles. These weaknesses encourage the major powers to maintain naval strength and intervene, but have also led to initiatives for regional solutions, such as that supported by India from 2007.

There are therefore a number of levels of naval asymmetry. The possibility of making advantages in naval capability, notably, but not only, those enjoyed by the leading naval powers, too costly to use, or, indeed, maintain, is enhanced by the extent to which the procurement structure

of naval power has driven leading navies toward fewer, more expensive vessels. For example, each of the new British D class Type 45 destroyers, the first of which was launched in 2006, has more firepower than the combined fleet of eight Type 42 destroyers they replaced, destroyers that came into service in 1978. This is because the missile system of the D class can track and attack multiple incoming aircraft and missiles. The successful maintenance in service of each of such vessels thus becomes more significant, and this enhances vulnerability, irrespective of the specific weapons characteristics of these vessels and their likely opponents. The availability of fewer, larger and more expensive warships reduces their individual vulnerability, but makes them more difficult to risk. A similar process has affected aircraft.

The cost element helped drive US military retrenchment from the 1990s. Having risen rapidly in the early and mid-2000s, US military spending fell with the end of the commitment in Iraq and its rundown in Afghanistan. The size of the accumulated federal debt and of the annual budget deficit had an impact as did the political preference, notably under the Obama administration (2009–2017) for welfare expenditure and economic priming. Whereas the US share of global military expenditure peaked at about 42 percent in 2010, it fell to 37.9 percent in 2013, when the United States spent \$582.4 billion. While the army and marines were scheduled for significant cuts in the 2010s, there were even more substantial cuts in the navy, which is scheduled to be reduced to 280 vessels, of which only about 90 would be at sea at any one time. Partly as a result, the ability of the United States to inflict a rapid defeat on Iran was called into question in 2013. Moreover, the reduction in US naval strength created concern among regional allies, such as Japan, worried about Chinese naval plans and expansionism.¹⁰⁴ The Japanese defense budget was increased in 2013.

The net effect is to introduce a volatility to naval power that is greater than the situation during the Cold War, a volatility that challenges maritime security at the level of state power. This volatility is not indicated if the emphasis is on the strength of the leading navy (the US) and its new weapons systems, for example: the US Aegis BMD defense system that is intended to engage missiles in flight and at a greater distance or the projected electromagnetic railgun capable of

launching projectiles at six or seven times the speed of sound. Instead, it is appropriate to think of naval power as complex, contested, broad-ranging and multipurpose. This range will be enhanced by competition over resources, as many untapped offshore oil and gas fields are linked to territorial claims. At sea, therefore, we are moving rapidly from the apparent unipolarity of the 1990s, the supposed "end of history," to a situation in which, for a large number of powers and their rivals, the capacity to display, use and contest strength is significant. That spread of capacity does not automatically lead to conflict, for the processes of international relations will be employed to seek to lessen tension. However, insecurity, in the sense of an absence of confidence that deterrence will be successfully employed, has become more apparent, and this is a process that will continue. Moreover, this insecurity will probably provide more opportunities for nonstate actors keen to use the seas in order to pursue particular interests that create another level of insecurity. Insecurity itself conditions thinking about geopolitics, about its need and its applicability.

CONCLUSION

A discussion of the maritime dimension today underlines the extent to which there is only limited continuity in the understanding or use of natural environments, irrespective of the extent to which these environments themselves continue essentially unchanged, allowing for a measure of degradation through overuse. Similar points could be made about the land environment. This demonstrates the extent to which the strategic aspect of geopolitics changes in accordance with a range of factors, including technology and tasking, and, in changing, creates new challenges, opportunities, and capabilities that affect the military value, understanding, and use of territory.

Underlying the range of issues that can be approached today in terms of geopolitics, there is the question of global information systems, of US dominance and use of the Internet, of critical or hostile responses, notably in China and Iran, and of the spatial and political dimensions of these topics. The meanings of space and control over space are particularly unsettled in this context. In his 1996 "Declaration of the Independence

of Cyberspace,” John Barlow wrote: “Governments of the industrial world, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from cyberspace. You have no sovereignty where we gather. . . . We will create a civilization of the mind in cyberspace. May it be more humane and fair than the world your governments have made before.”¹⁰⁵ From a very different direction, another presentation of geopolitics, that of the relationship between geography and human destiny, has attracted attention with popular works that stress the role of environmental factors, rather than (or alongside) race and culture.¹⁰⁶ More generally, the current relevance of geopolitical issues and debates provides, in the next chapter, a point of departure for looking at the future, because much of the current discussion hinges on the issue of future consequences.

The Geopolitics of the Future

DEBATING GEOPOLITICS

Current debate over the character and value of geopolitics, including, indeed, criticism of its validity, can be seen as exemplifying what Harvey Sicherman, protégé and friend of Strausz-Hupé, termed in 2002 “the revival of geopolitics.”¹ To a degree, this revival—frequently noted by commentators over the last decade and, even more, the last five years—reflected the need, after the Cold War, for a new or revived vocabulary of explanatory terms when dealing with new concerns. This revival was also linked to an awareness, especially once the “War on Terror” started, that geographical and cultural factors were indeed significant. The growth in Chinese power and ambition from the early 2000s, and concern about Chinese intentions, proved important to the revival, notably for US and Japanese commentators. So also did issues of prioritization in policy.

The ambiguities of the term geopolitics remain, however, while the issue of implementation and, more broadly, the move from theory to practice, continues to be significant. Furthermore, the impact of particular theories about geopolitics have left the subject, when conventionally understood, heavily historicized. Nevertheless, these theories are not crucial to the central question of the impact of geography on the political character, interests, and interaction of states.² Here, the key issue is not Mackinder, Haushofer or Bush, nor the body of literature that self-consciously employs the language of geopolitics and/or the critique of critical geopolitics; but, rather, the relationship between environmental factors, and human action and intentions.³

The lines of debate in this relationship are essentially still those of the early twentieth century, namely those focused on the extent and nature of environmental determinism and influence. In terms of the dialogue of, and debate over, structure and agency, moreover, environmental determinism had, and has, a parallel with the continuing emphasis on the role of the system in accounts of international relations. Both the environmental perspective and that focused on the international system offers an approach that lends particular character to the related geopolitics.

The past value of these accounts can, and should, be discussed, but the issue here is the geopolitics of the future. Given the volatility of international relations, of environmental developments such as population growth, resource availability, global temperature change, and pandemics, and of other aspects of the future, such discussion may appear very problematic. It is, for example, unclear how far the rise of China, and more generally the non-West, will lead to specific political and military outcomes. The relative position of the United States, and the extent and consequences of decline, are also matters for debate.⁴

However, the disruptive consequences of rapid population growth appear to be a constant factor, although the rate of that growth changes. In 2014, projected figures were revised significantly upwards. Technological change is another constant factor.⁵ It is not necessary to go as far as an improbable possibility—the discovery of intelligent life elsewhere in the solar system, oft-predicted but never yet realized—to appreciate that a new sphere of geopolitical relationship and analysis may arise, and that present-day parameters may change or, rather, be totally transformed. Always intellectually fruitful, Mackinder himself suggested in 1943 that “someday, when coal and oil are exhausted, the Sahara may become the trap for capturing direct power from the Sun.”⁶ Rather than assuming an ability to predict the future, especially that beyond several decades, it is appropriate to ask which analytical approaches may well be useful and which may well be employed.

At the level of public policy and public rhetoric, commentators will largely attempt to respond to immediate issues and crises. In short, there will be a continuation of the reactive character of (and to) geopolitics. This character was seen with key past elements of geopolitical argument.

Examples include Mackinder conceptualizing both the apparent Russian challenge to the British Empire in 1904 and that from Communist Russia to the European system in 1919; and also the geopolitics of Cold War containment. Indeed, much of the predictive use of geopolitics is in practice reactive to the particular circumstances and concerns of the present. This is a situation shared by many other subjects. In that perspective, it is instructive to consider geopolitical literature as an aspect of futurology. The emphasis in the literature on drives that are inherent to a geographical situation ensures that analysis of present and future are as one; and each is employed to justify policy prescriptions in, and for, the other.

A PREDICTION FROM 2002

For example, to take a book that appeared to great attention in the United States in 2002, a work that conceptualized geopolitical relationships as dynamic: Philip Bobbitt's *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History* argued that the fundamentals of the international system were changing because the nation-state was no longer able to cope with the challenges of the modern world and, instead, there had been a shift to what he termed the market-state. Underplaying the role of China, Bobbitt saw the society of market-states "as dominated by three important actors," Europe, Japan, and the United States.⁷ There was therefore a superficial resemblance to Haushofer's three pan-regions, although in practice there was no connection. In contrast to the emphasis in classical geopolitics on rivalry and conflict, for example, Bobbitt correctly pointed out the co-dependency that arose from investment and debt. Looking to the future, he presented economic developments as the means for a rapid change in the global system. Bobbitt suggested, in his chapter on "Possible Worlds," that by 2020 70% of the world economy would be in the former Third World and China. Some of his other suggestions, such as Pakistan and India joining in a free-trade area in 2010, appeared distinctly problematic at the time, and have been disproved.

As far as military projections were concerned, Bobbitt offered a number of scenarios, for example, a successful North Korean invasion of South Korea in 2018, followed in 2020 by the first pre-emptive strike,

by an ad hoc coalition, against a Central Asian state possessing a ballistic missile system. Alternatively, the earlier acquisition by South Korea of nuclear weapons was seen as preventing a North Korean attack. Proliferation was presented as encouraging aggression, as in the possible Chinese use of neutron bombs to gain Taiwan. In contrast, the further proliferation arising from states rushing to acquire defenses, was predicted as likely to produce multiple regional standoffs: “[T]he Iron Triangles, a series of interlocking deterrence relationships around the world in which, it was believed, a mutual stability was achieved through nuclear proliferation among regional adversaries: China-Korea-Japan; Germany-Russia-Ukraine; India-Pakistan-China; Iran-Israel-Iraq; Australia-Indonesia-Malaysia; Chile-Argentina-Brazil: these were the main Iron Triangles, with subsidiary triangles such as Singapore-China-Viet Nam, Germany-Poland-Russia, France-Germany-Great Britain.⁸

However much a state or a group of states might dominate the power stakes, and however much diplomacy might resolve many problems, the cost (as a result of proliferation) of trying and failing to coerce a “rogue” state were likely, Bobbitt claimed, to rise to a point that encouraged caution. This would not only be a *Realpolitik* scenario, but it would also be the politics of prudence that most military leaderships are apt to encourage. On the other hand, as the experience of the Vietnam War and Gulf War II (2003) conflicts suggested, US politicians, while themselves inexperienced about military matters, generally listen only to the advice they wish to hear. Moreover, politicians engage in promotion politics to ensure they receive this advice, a tendency taken much further in ideological and/or authoritarian regimes such as Iraq under Saddam Hussein. The strategic culture of the governing group is sustained through promotion policies. Thus, the politics of prudence are countered by the imperatives of commitment.

Bobbitt was at pains to stress that he was writing not what he considered futurology, but, rather, about current choices: a careful distinction. He saw cataclysmic war as a real possibility in Asia, with China, India, and Russia each facing the risk of a civil war that could, however, be succeeded by aggression. Bobbitt also suggested that the rise of civil disobedience and civil strife would provide opportunities for powers to wage indirect war. This was an instructive approach to geopolitics that,

for example, echoed the role of religion in early-modern Europe. Russian intervention in Ukraine in 2014 demonstrated this process.

Furthermore, Bobbitt predicted endless, low-intensity conflicts with states and nonstate groups whose plights are, and will be, the consequence of an evolving pluralist society of market-states. The opponents of globalization were thereby seen as a threat to not only themselves but also to global stability. This was a correct assessment, but needs to be matched by an awareness of rivalry between the major states.

Bobbitt concluded that there would be an overturning of accustomed notions of national stability: that it is national (not international), public (not private), and seeks victory (not stalemate). Bobbitt also argued that “a state without a strategy for war would be unable to maintain its domestic legitimacy and thus could not even guarantee its citizens’ civil rights and liberties,”⁹ an assessment that was a challenge to internationalism via the agencies of world cooperation, notably the United Nations.

Works such as Bobbitt’s emphasized a theme of challenge, one that extended to the fundamentals of international and domestic politics. Geopolitical arguments provided a means of advancing such arguments and also of debating them. Indeed, geopolitics as a type of analysis served as a form of rethinking past, present and future. At the same time, the number of states that Bobbitt and others saw as able to take initiatives created a further challenge for geopolitics by lessening the dominance of great powers. This analysis gathered pace in the 2010s alongside, but separate to, that of the apparent relative decline of the United States.

USES OF THE LANGUAGE

In many respects, current debates over the value, context, and future of geopolitics can be fitted into the model of geopolitics as a form of response to problems. There is felt to be a need to react conceptually, or at least polemically, to such challenges and developments as large-scale terrorism, nuclear proliferation, US interventionism, globalization and the rise of China, as well as to more specific events, such as the crisis over Ukraine in early 2014, and that over Iraq and Syria that same year. Thus, Niall Ferguson, in the September 2008 issue of the London monthly, *Standpoint*, wrote of “The End of ‘Chimerica’” China–America, with

the sub-heading, “The delicate balance of power between China and America is unstable and the geopolitical consequences will affect us all.” This account of the economic crisis and of China’s rapid growth asked: “What are the geopolitical implications of all this?” concluding with, “One is that the great reconvergence between East and West is speeding up. . . . The second . . . is that the days when the dollar was the sole international reserve currency are coming to an end. . . . A third . . . is that troublemakers get richer.”¹⁰ There was then an attempt, in the article, to add geographical factors, notably China’s scramble for African resources, a topic that engaged many commentators, as well as an aspect of a continuing Asian challenge to the West that began with Japanese expansionism in the 1900s.

The extent to which this argument should be seen as geopolitical in any profound sense is unclear: for example, because there is only a somewhat crude juxtaposing of West and East—although a critic might suggest that this point is true of most geopolitical work. Such an assessment would draw attention to the extent to which the earlier attempt at precision offered by accounts of environmental impact in particular countries (of the type that the mountains made the East difficult to control) has been lost with the replacement of such specificity, most of which was grounded in physical geography. Moreover, taking a different tack, much of the use of geopolitics is, in practice, part of a commentary driven by political factors.

As a specific point, Ferguson is correct in arguing that the pursuit of resources has a geographical dimension, in this case a focus on Africa by China. This focus encourages Chinese interests in the security of maritime routes across the Indian Ocean. The geopolitics of the latter has become more prominent since 2001 as that ocean has played a far greater role than hitherto in discussions of both US and Chinese policy, not least with analysis of the latter in terms of the establishment of a “string of pearls”: a series of maritime bases. At the same time, Chinese geopolitics entails the interaction and prioritization of a number of spheres, both continental and oceanic. The discussion of this interaction and prioritization involved the vocabulary of geopolitics, although other issues and languages were significant, notably that of historical position.¹¹ Outside commentators also saw geopolitics as part of the equation, with a sense

of the interplay of the great powers over the East China Sea in 2013–2015 being best understood in geopolitical terms.

The same was the case in the 2010s with rapidly increasing international attention in the Arctic, notably as its potential as a set of routes and resources opened up with the melting of the ice linked to global warming. This issue served as a reminder of the extent to which the physical foundations of geopolitics were far from fixed. As an aspect of this attention, the routes towards the Arctic became more significant, leading, in the early 2010s, to greater Chinese interest in Iceland and in the possibility of Scottish independence, with the consequences the latter would have of handicapping the British nuclear submarine force. That this force depends on one base, Faslane on Holy Loch, in Scotland, a base also important to the United States, exemplified the geographical nature of international politics. The Arctic issue also further underlined Japan's blocking position across Chinese maritime routes.

Terminology is an ever-relevant issue. Aside from the argument employed with reference to cultural arenas and Huntington, that the terminology employed by "followers of geopolitics" is over-simplistic,¹² "geopolitical" frequently serves as a term simply meaning "the international dimension." Thus, an editorial in the *Times* of January 28, 2009, on Russia's position, argued that, with the resource boom over, "Mr. Putin remains politically powerful, but geopolitically he is weakened." In this context, geopolitics simply serves as a means to discuss nonideological international relations. So also with the reference five years later to Putin as "a geopolitical grandmaster."¹³ Putin, in turn, saw the collapse of the Soviet Union as a geopolitical disaster.

Returning to the general point, more is involved when considering geopolitics than a simple conceptual and/or polemical response mechanism to problems or, more critically, the combination of the cacophony of competing politicized responses with the academic need to input theory into events and events into theory. There are also serious questions of intellectual strategy. These questions include how best to assess geographical influence at a time of large-scale environmental change and resource pressure; as well as the comparable impact, in political geography, of transnationalism and, in some parts of the world, of the apparent weakness of nation states. There are also significant questions

of the level and type of analysis. Geopolitics widens the perspective of analysis and provides an appreciation of global dynamics, rather than interpreting events only from a parochial or national perspective. Geopolitics also encourages attention to the role of natural phenomena, such as climate. However, at the level of decision-making, the role of geopolitics has to be tempered by the need to consider each event in terms of cultural perspectives and collective and individual drives, as well as structural factors.

THE FACTS OF PLACE AND DISTANCE

To return to the example of China, the relationship between the geographical facts of place and the dynamics of human and political geography remains important, despite the ruthless Chinese determination to overcome the constraints of nature, both in China and overseas, in their struggle for resources and growth, a struggle translated from the totalitarian-state economy Maoist regime to its post-Maoist totalitarian-capitalist successors. More generally, as an instance of the significance of place, proximity remains a key issue for international politics. This has been underlined by developments as varied, for example, as tensions over headwaters and river rights among many rivers (e.g., the Blue Nile and the Mekong) and over maritime claims (e.g., the East and South China seas, the Persian Gulf, the Arctic, and the Black and North seas) and, alternatively, the spreading use of medium-range rockets.

Alongside such realist criteria, the psychological impact of international politics is significant, but it is again related to place. Thus, in the case of perception, there is a realism: in practice, a realism that is based on geographical facts. For example, the potential impact, including the psychological fear in Europe of Middle Eastern politics is greater than in Canada due to the factor of proximity. In 2013, Bulgaria began a border fence designed to restrict the entry of refugees from the civil war in Syria. Yet, proximity is not the sole factor: that potential impact is magnified in the case of Europe by the high birth rate in Muslim immigrant communities and the related social and political issues and anxieties.

As a complicating factor, there are also the proximities created by the media with its apparent ability to overcome some of the effects of

physical distance. In addition, political concerns can act as a counter to distance. In the case of the United States, the fact of distance from the Middle East is altered by political geography due to the strong commitment to Israel. Such a point underlines the value of those maps that present a spatial distortion in order to capture mental perceptions: for example, different scales in the individual map. Humorous instances are provided by maps of the world from the perspective of an inhabitant of Manhattan or Chelsea. However, more seriously, mental perceptions of spatial concern are of importance. At the same time, in the case of US attitudes to the Middle East and Cuba, such perceptions need to be understood in terms of different views by particular constituencies within the United States. Alongside this point comes that of varied willingness on the part of leaders and the public. Thus, in the view of influential American commentators in the early 2010s, and certainly in the case of Syria (2013) and Crimea (2014), the Obama administration appeared unwilling to seek to bring stability to the international order.

A similar situation can be seen in other countries. These different views are frequently linked to political programs. Thus, again, geopolitical arguments are, in part, a product of differing perceptions. That point does not reduce their value but, instead, underlines the need for careful scholarship in comprehending this situation and its implications.

Another level of complexity will continue to be provided by the level of decision-maker and commentator under consideration. Issues of geography are more important, or even dominant, to regional, and even more local participants, than to great powers.¹⁴ The West Bank provides a good example, not least with differences between Israeli and US sensitivities to Israeli security; although, in this case, both American and Israeli are in part abstractions or, seen differently, contested spaces and identities, each in fact covering a range of different, and frequently clashing, views.

This factor of scale will go on being significant, both in the Middle East and elsewhere. At the same time, scale takes on different meanings thanks to weapons capabilities, and is also transformed by technology, as shown, for example, by the deployment of longer-range missiles by Hizbullah and Hamas against Israel in the late 2000s, and as exemplified in the Gaza crisis of 2014. At the same time, these developments can be highly specific, such that there is a repeated revenge-taking, of the local

and specific, on more general speculations about revolutions in military technology bringing fundamental change to the nature of war and to the related parameters of power projection.¹⁵

THE ROLE OF SCALE

Thus, despite talk of globalization, one of the key challenges in geopolitical analysis will continue to be not just the understanding of what globalization entails (not least for different constituencies that can be seen as spatially encoded), but also the relationship between the differing influence of geography at both local and global levels. Writing about the global level provides much of the literature noted as geopolitical. This will probably continue to be the case, given the emphasis on globalization and on global environmental change, as well as on the academic, popular and publishing claims bound up with the statement that a coverage is global. Yet, the local—understood in this case as state and sub-state levels—is a prime area of geographical and spatial impact on politics and deserves more attention as a field for geopolitical study.¹⁶ In 2009, Rupert Smith, a former British general, offered an instructive contrast between facts and matters that are slow to change, and the more recent and changing events that are proximate causes, suggesting that if this distinction was not drawn, there was a danger of mutual incomprehension between powers as they would classify, comprehend and act on information differently. As a further distinction, Smith argued that it was necessary to distinguish between politics and strategy, which were essentially activities, and history and geography, which were bodies of information and theoretically based interpretations. He added: “To run the two pairs together except in pursuit of a particular goal of one or both of the activities seems to me to be nonsense.”¹⁷

Indeed, conceptualizing the nature of the geographical and spatial impact on politics is likely to continue to be an important challenge, as is applying the resulting concepts.¹⁸ At the same time, the very diffuseness of this impact makes it difficult to reduce to the clear-cut clarity of theory, not least the apparent clarity offered by the use of binary opposites to evaluate and emphasize international challenges. Thanks to humans’ hard-wired proclivity to think in bifurcated ways, the

temptation for dialectical thinking will ever be present and, therefore, so will geopolitics in this form. The nature of geopolitical discussion in the future may therefore reflect the tension between the preference of some commentators for engaging with the complexities of the particular and, on the other hand, the seductive simplicities of broad-brush approaches. These simplicities will continue to engage most attention, but they not only offer less than the full map, but also scales and projections that are frequently misleading.¹⁹ This is an aspect of the broader nature of geopolitics, an ambiguity that poses instructive problems but also perpetuates the subject.

Conclusions

GEOPOLITICS HAS MANY BENEFITS AND OFFERS MANY insights. Like many other subjects, it is a means for argument as well as analysis, for polemic as well as policy, and these categories are not rigidly differentiated. Geopolitics focuses on human society, but also on the contexts within which, and through which, it operates. Geopolitics thus highlights the basic (but often silent) structure and infrastructure of human interaction, as well as the issues involved in formulating and implementing policy. This structure and infrastructure is both man-made (whether frontiers or transport systems) and natural (notably place, distance, terrain, climate, and resource availability), the two interacting and being linked in their influences. Many elements of geopolitics represent an interaction of structure and infrastructure: for example, coast-hinterland relations. This very range of the subject poses problems for any attempt to offer a precise and concise definition and typology.

From a different perspective, contrasting definitions of geopolitics and its application pose a series of problems. The extent to which politics, both international and domestic, can be variously interpreted indicates the difficulties with any narrow definition of geopolitics and, indeed (whether linked to that or separate), the problems with any overly didactic account of geographical determinism. Yet, returning to the point made in the Introduction, there are objective factors, such as location, space, distance, and resources; and it is pertinent to consider their impact on the formulation and execution of policy. Concern with such factors asserts a commitment to objective reality based on material factors. However, linked to this, there can be a misleading tendency

to downplay the role of the human perception of the situation and the extent of choice. The nature of choice and the factors involved in the latter play significant roles, as with related aspects of the study of international relations.¹

To take another approach, the tendency to treat geopolitics as a subject focused on international relations presents two questions. First, why should geopolitics not address other forms of politics that have a spatial dimension, including the dimension of activity on city streets² and the politics of urban development? This question is particularly valid given the more general issue of geographic perspectives on history.³ The likely consequences of smaller-scale geopolitics within individual states on the geopolitics at the state level will probably increase the variations between these latter geopolitics.

Second, if attention in geopolitical studies is restricted to, or focuses on, international relations, how far is the treatment of the subject to depart from the classic political agenda? This is an agenda primarily of states, but also of international institutions, agreements, and attitudes. These can be seen as the accumulation of state views, or as an international system in which the system has a role of its own. States are the constituent parts, but alongside a system that affects their attitudes and behavior.

The second question has engaged most attention. In some circles there is a preference for alternative voices, as well as for transnational and comparative approaches and concerns. This development is of considerable value.⁴ Nevertheless, there can be a tendency, not least in some of the work on transnationalism, to underplay the place of the state and, indeed, to argue that it has been greatly weakened by the energy and demands of global capitalism.⁵ However much it may have taken on unsustainable domestic goals,⁶ it is far from clear that effective governance can be organized in alternative forms to that of the conventional state. Furthermore, liked or not, the state remains the key player in international and domestic politics, as well as a vital source of identity.⁷ Indeed, an emphasis on the state as a key player became more pronounced as a consequence of the recession that began in 2008. Despite assumptions about the decline of the state, that recession encouraged protectionism in both government policy and public attitudes, notably in opposition to large-scale

immigration. Thus, there was pressure against such immigration from the governments of Australia, Britain, France, Germany, and the United States in 2013–2015.

There is a distinction between an appreciation of the role of geography and geopolitics and, on the other hand, grand geopolitical theories.⁸ Nevertheless, whichever the focus, key issues can be addressed as geopolitical, not least the availability of resources and the resulting significance of particular regions when considering other regions or localities with different characteristics. Geopolitics is also definitely useful as a concept when discussing the influence of geography (for example, distance, and propinquity) on inter-state politics. Linked to this is the issue of communications, with geopolitical considerations providing an explanation of reasons for change and a key measure of the importance of changes. Thus, just as the consequences of the opening of the Suez and Panama canals in the late nineteenth century and the building of the Trans-Siberian Railway involved geopolitical and geostrategic elements, so also with the likely opening of sea passages through the Arctic, to the north of both North America and Russia, as the ice melts under the impact of global warming.

The value of routes is also a matter of cultural expression for political goals, as with the Chinese welcoming of Gavin Menzies's tendentious theory that the Chinese circumnavigated the globe in 1421.⁹ The *China Daily* was happy to claim in July 2004 that the Chinese did so well before Columbus and Magellan, and their admiral of the early fifteenth century, Zheng He, was commemorated in 2005 while his voyages were highlighted in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Some other uses of spatial elements in the past, such as patterns of settlement or territorial extent, constitute a geopolitics that is designed to be of political value in the present and the future. These elements constitute the prime basis for territorial claims.

Changes to communications and transport routes serve as a reminder of the dynamic spatial dimensions, not only of power, but also of interest: specifically state interests and those of, for example, major companies, and of the concern that accompanies them. Interests lead to and reflect commitments and tasks, both of which are very important to geopolitics. The spatial component of state interests is made dynamic by not only changes in particular states and in the means of state action,

for example, military technology, but also in relationships within, and between, larger regions. Thus, for example, the geostrategic interests of the great powers have been very important for the Baltic/Nordic region and have helped direct its geopolitics. This dynamic interaction has ranged across issues such as trade, notably in naval stores and iron, as well as: the Danish Straits being a choke-point into the Baltic; Finland as a threat to, or security zone for, St. Petersburg; and the Norwegian fjords as bases for forces attacking trans-Atlantic communications or for threatening Russia's White Sea ports.

At the same time, it can be very difficult to establish likely policy developments from a discussion of geography. Thus, alongside the recent emphasis on Chinese expansionism¹⁰ can come the more prosaic argument that the Chinese will continue to cede safeguarding their export routes across the Pacific to the United States Navy, but are less certain about the ability of other navies to defend the maritime routes to, and in, the Indian Ocean. The 1990s policy of Deng Xiaoping, 'to observe carefully, secure our position, hide our capacities, bide our time, be good at maintaining a low profile, never claim leadership'¹¹ (a maxim released in 1995), is not one that inherently can be explained in geopolitical terms. In contrast, the Chinese concern that a North Korean collapse would lead to Korean reunification around South Korea, which brought US power to China's border, is much more readily discussed in these terms. In practice, it is unclear how far a reunified Korea will look to the United States.

Attempts to consider how best to manage US–Chinese relations¹² face the problem that compromise in terms of geographical zones of influence does not correspond with the political views of either party, while the range and overlapping character of modern weapons technology acts as a further complication. There is also the key issue of the views of other powers, such as Japan and South Korea, that will not be happy to accept the idea or consequences of zones of influence. The idea that zones of influence will prove the best way to manage the transition in Sino-American relations appeals to realists but does not capture the range of factors involved in global politics, nor the pressures rising from these factors.

Such points indicate the value, but also the complexity, of geopolitics and, moreover, the need to assess it in terms of competing as well

as changing values. If geopolitics is seen along the line of Mackinder's "Who controls the Heartland commands the World-Island,"¹³ or similar adages, then geopolitics can be too general and vague, and of use mainly for rhetorical purposes. A geographical situation does not dictate preparedness, strategy, or doctrine. Indeed, the changing nature of values and their clear consequences for conventional geopolitical assessments were clearly demonstrated in 2014 when it emerged that, short of resources and poorly prepared, the German military would be totally unable to meet its NATO commitments, a point publicly admitted by the defense minister. Moreover, some of the geopolitical concepts, such as that of a geopolitical center,¹⁴ are problematic.

However, if what is meant by geopolitics is that geography is an essential factor in understanding a country's foreign policy, but not one to be seen or presented in automatic terms, then geopolitics is very important. For example, it is impossible to understand the history of US, British and Russian strategic and foreign policies without taking into consideration their geographic circumstances.

Looked at differently, state interests can be approached in terms of the ability of competing groups to define these interests in light of their particular views. In this perspective, geopolitics emerges as a central part of the debates in which such views are advanced and are identified with those of states. Thus, geopolitics becomes an argument about power rather than solely a discourse of power in which there is no argument or debate apparent. Indeed, in considering the treatment of Mackinder's heartland theory in post-Soviet geopolitical discourse, Mark Bassin and Konstantin Aksenov have emphasized the conceptual plasticity of the theory, going on to suggest that "the popular appeal of geopolitics more generally rests significantly on its ability to generate what it calls "objective" geographical models of political relations which in fact are open to reinterpretation and even realignment, in response precisely to those shifts in historical, political, and ideological context which it claims categorically to transcend."¹⁵

These responses provide an obvious subject for study by those interested in a historicized approach to geopolitics, including historians. Similarly, the changing use of particular arguments is best understood in terms of a discussion of the historical context.¹⁶ More generally,

conceptual plasticity helps explain the appeal, or at least use, of a range of geopolitical theses.

The self-styled “critical geopolitics,” with their emphasis on how material realities are inserted into discursive contexts, and the more recent attempts to develop a Marxist or, at least, Marxisant geopolitics, can be readily and valuably incorporated into an account of geopolitics as an argument about power, an aspect that is particularly effective in terms of academic concerns in recent decades. From this perspective, the nature of “critical geopolitics” becomes an understandable factor in light of the dynamics of the debate and the determination to advance concepts of interest. Yet, some of the literature is so uncompromising that it scarcely invites such incorporation. For example, in 1996, Gearóid Ó Tuathail closed his critical account of geopolitics, one in which the latter is presented as “organically connected” to militarism, by claiming: “Critical geopolitics is one of many cultures of resistance to Geography as imperial truth, state-capitalized knowledge, and military weapon. It is a small part of a much larger rainbow struggle to decolonize our inherited geographical imagination so that other geo-graphings and other worlds might be possible.”¹⁷

There was no attempt in this passage, or elsewhere, to conceal the sense of political imperative that at least some of the “critical geopoliticians” espouse. In short, “critical geopolitics” is an aspect of a politicized debate. At the same time, it is important to stress the diversity and dynamism of “critical geopolitics” literature which, indeed, has different proponents, including feminist, postcolonial, and poststructuralist wings.¹⁸ The same is the case with Marxist geopolitics.

This book is not the place to discuss the epistemological and philosophical aspects of objectivity. Instead, reprising my argument in the discussion of cartographic accuracy, I would argue for objectivity as valid and possible as an aspiration, whatever the difficulty in execution; and I would also draw attention to the role of autonomous subcultures, for example, cartographers. That geopolitical arguments (often in the form of maps) have been exploited for propaganda purposes, often brilliantly so, does not mean that they are without value, or, indeed, simply systems to control territory by allocating it, or by manipulating the understanding of spatial issues.¹⁹ It is necessary to understand the

nuances of perception, and therefore representation, and to “unpick” texts, at the same time as appreciating the inherent problems of geopolitical analysis and exposition. For example, a “Map of the West Coast of Africa . . . including the colony of Liberia,” published in Philadelphia in 1830, can readily be castigated for its assumptions and languages. Tribes are stereotyped, as with the Dey, “an indolent and inoffensive people,” and the interior is presented as lost in benighted obscurity: “At a distance of from 30 to 60 miles inland, a belt of dense and almost impassable forest occurs along the whole of the coast, of from one to two days journey in breadth, which nearly prevents all intercourse between the maritime and interior tribes, and some of the principal causes why the inland parts of this section of Africa are so entirely unknown to the civilized world.”

The last remark now seems ridiculously Western-centric, but there was still the practical problem in 1830 of how best to depict Liberia with the information available.

Geopolitics can be regarded as similar to cartography and worthy of discussion in these terms, notably those of the inherent difficulty of the subject and the practical problems involved. At the same time (as emerges from this book), there is no coherence to geopolitics. The lack of coherence is not a matter of chronological change, nor of differing national cultures or understandings of geopolitics; although each of those factors is relevant. Instead, there are differing understandings and uses of geopolitics, not least between political geographers and political scientists, and between scholars and those in the public sphere, whether as commentators or as planners.

Such a typology and matrix needs to allow sufficiently for overlaps and mutual impacts. Moreover, categories in geopolitical use and presentation shift and are capable of a variety of analyses. This point is particularly the case with political geographers, a group that can be taken to cover geopolitics in its varied manifestations. “Critical geopoliticians” are prone to regard old-school political geographers as reactionaries. Thus, one aspect of the history of geopolitics is of the differing definition of geography and geographers and of the changing use of political geography. This is a point that can be greatly amplified by considering the varied definition of geography and the contrasting use of geographers around the world at present.

A further dynamic dimension in the use of geopolitical analysis is that of time. Space and distance seem fixed by the scale, but the very notion of both has changed over time (as have their depiction and measurement²⁰), and these changes have greatly affected the understanding of power. Moreover, the rates of change, both actually and in perception, are not constant. For example, journeys and concepts of space and time in 1780 were more similar to the situation 230 years earlier than 230 years later. As a separate element, time is more generally significant because a lack of historical awareness weakens some of the use and understanding of geopolitics. For example, inappropriate geopolitical continuities can be advanced.

To sum up, geography and politics are closely intertwined, although that no more means that all geography is political than that all politics is geographical. A key dimension in which geopolitics is useful is that of the global scale, but geopolitics is also of crucial value in the understanding of particular states and communities, their characters, composition, development, and interactions. If the interconnection of areas in a region is a sphere for geopolitical consideration, then there is no reason why the region in question should solely be that of the globe. Indeed, more attention in geopolitics needs to be devoted to sub-global levels than to the lure of the world question. Moreover, the quest for a single explanatory factor or, indeed, means of analysis, is unhelpful.²¹ Linked to this, geopolitical writing would benefit greatly from a measure of skepticism in assessing influences and in drawing conclusions, and also from offering more questions than answers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

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