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Beyond the Legacy of Mackinder

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For the Geopolitics Lecture at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting 2010, the paper examines the core features of Mackinder's geopolitical imaginary, reviews contemporary challenges to those elements and develops an alternative conception of space for a Progressive Geopolitics.

INTRODUCTION

Having spent about thirty years on the research that went into a book subtitled, 'The Legacy of Halford Mackinder,' to be then asked within a month of its publication to give a lecture entitled, 'Beyond the Legacy of Mackinder,' seemed a little harsh.[1] Nevertheless, it is an honour to have been asked to deliver a lecture for the journal *Geopolitics*, so today, I will accept the challenge and explore how we might indeed move beyond the legacy of Mackinder. I'm going to identify six elements of the geographical imaginary that is at the heart of Mackinder's work and which in turn explains why Mackinder continues to be drawn upon by some of those engaged in foreign policy debates. Then I'm going to suggests ways that these six elements were challenged by some of his contemporaries and through this not only to show that the particular context in which Mackinder worked although very important for understanding his ideas did not determine what those ideas were. Although some positivist philosophers might demur, there remained questions of moral, ethical and political choice involved in the type of Geography that Mackinder produced and by extension there are still those questions in the type of Geography that we produce.[2] I am then going to comment on the ways that these challenges to Mackinder are still pertinent, in a slightly different way, for the understanding of Geopolitics today. I will finish with some brief reflections on the nature of space within the

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alternative geopolitical imaginary, a Progressive Geopolitics (Kearns, 2009, ch. 9), which might emerge from these challenges.[3]

THE ELEMENTS OF MACKINDER'S GEOPOLITICAL IMAGINARY

The six elements that are at the heart of Mackinder' geopolitical works can be thought of as six patterns that when overlain produce the kaleidoscopic forms of international relations. The first is the geographical distribution of resources. Mackinder's work begins with his observation that resources are often clustered in space. This produces a geographical unevenness in the capacity for development and for the expression of geopolitical and military power. We all know that the central argument made by Mackinder was that there was a valuable and extensive set of resources located in a part of the world not easily accessible from the open seas. This region comprises western Russia, southwards to the Caspian and then eastwards through the Russian steppes and embraces a region rich in agricultural potential and mineral deposits. Putting these agricultural and industrial resources together you have the fuel for a likely aspirant to global hegemony. Mackinder's claim was that if adequately developed this region, the Heartland of the World Island, could sustain a World Empire. This argument is still made by such Russo-phobes as Paul Wolfowitz, Henry Kissinger, and Zbigniew Brzezinski.[4] Kissinger and Brzezinski explicitly evoke Mackinder in making their argument that this Heartland supplies the resources that tempt Russia to bid for global domination.[5]

The second element of the spatial imaginary of Mackinder is contiguity, or the argument that influence spreads and is felt most strongly near at hand and more weakly at a distance, the power of contagion. In this case, then, we have a Heartland that can sustain productive and military power, and this power will be extended until it reaches the sphere of influence, the spreading power, of another neighbour equally strong, or until the spreading influence reaches some other effective barrier. On this basis, Mackinder argued that the Heartland comprehended not only the immediate resource base but all areas over which a power situate within it might extend its influence. In this case, he extended the Heartland to include all lands draining into the Black Sea since this proximate area could be controlled by moving into this territory and then occupying the shores of the straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Similar logic encouraged Mackinder to extend the Heartland to include the lands draining into the Baltic since no comparable land power lay between Western Russia and the coastlands of eastern Denmark and southern Sweden, the shores of the Skaggerak strait and the lands needed if one wished to close access to the Baltic. The argument from contiguity is central to Mackinder because it makes what happens in one place dangerous to other places. For example, when Mackinder was trying to persuade

the British government to invade Bolshevik Russia in 1920 the argument he used was that Bolshevism was like a 'prairie fire' and if not stopped it would continue in all directions threatening even British rule in India. In short, the British must invade Russia in order to avert the loss of India.[6] The argument from contiguity is also evident in the modern geopolitical imaginary, as, for example, with the so-called domino theory, such a prominent part of Cold War paranoia.[7] In the hands of a Cold War ideologue like Richard Nixon, there was really very little constraint on how far this chain of influence might extend, reaching of course within the United States itself to its own fifth column of Soviet or Chinese dupes.

The third element of Mackinder's world view is interconnectedness, for as Mackinder put it in 1914, 'Today we have almost annihilated space.'[8] He proposed that the world was so inter-connected that distance no longer provided protection against the effects of distant events. Mackinder drew an analogy with the physical effects of the eruption of Krakatoa (1883), after which the dust cloud circled the earth. He suggested that political change was like this eruption for dramatic events in one place had consequences for everywhere else. What this meant was that there was no such thing as a limited sphere of national interest. Each country's national interest was engaged by events everywhere else in the world. This again is central to modern geopolitical argument although where Mackinder spoke of closed space, modern theorists speak of globalisation. Globalisation means that we are living in one world, a single world, and that we can't ignore things that happen in distant places. Tony Blair was explicit: 'The basic thesis is that the defining characteristic of today's world is its interdependence . . . and that unless we articulate a common global policy based on common values, we risk chaos threatening our stability . . . . The consequence of this thesis is a policy of engagement not isolation; and one that is active not reactive.'[9] In places where Western values do not reach, unfreedom breeds terrorism, and thus these places beyond the current reach of Western values pose too serious a threat to be left alone. Globalisation, or the interconnectedness of the world, is actually an alibi for universal intervention, countries can intervene anywhere and plead national interest.

The fourth element of Mackinder's geopolitical imaginary was that the world was essentially a choropleth map, comprising large territories that could be coloured differently: black or white, red or blue, yellow or brown. This map reflected the fact that, according to Mackinder, the world consisted of large spatial units that are internally relatively homogeneous while being radically different from their equally homogeneous neighbours. This is a vision of absolute space and it sustains the notion that the world consists of geographically discrete and separated civilisations (or possibly cultures, or possibly races), and that these things are so radically different, each from the others, that they pose an existential threat to each other.[10] It is not, then, just a zero-sum game about competition for resources but, rather, the flourishing of

one particular human group is a threat to the flourishing of others. For each civilisation, the conception of freedom, the conception of the good life, is so at variance with that of other civilisations that if one civilisation prevails the others must die out. Mackinder said that if, against the challenge of the Slavic and other races, the Anglo-Saxon race did not prevail, then the Anglo-Saxons would become a people who existed in the world purely 'on sufferance.'[11] The same thing is present in the modern geopolitical imaginary for many believe that there are certain conceptions of the good life, of ways of being in the world, that are so incompatible that they cannot co-exist or thrive alongside each other. They pose a radical threat to each other's possibility of existence. This is characteristic of Huntington's account of the clash of civilisations where he suggests that all existing civilisations are aggressive, apart from one.[12] He asserts that Islam, in particular, has 'bloody borders.'[13] In other words, these civilisations, based on religion in Huntington's reading, constitute divergent ways of living and while they exist in different parts of the world, they ever have an appetite for expansion. Each faces the same existential choice: prevail or go under.

The fifth element of this geographical imagination was the claim that the interaction between these radically separate civilisations was primarily based on force. Mackinder was dismissive of pacificism: 'We have had enough of that wishy-washy philanthropy.'[14] In order to survive, civilisations have to grow and to do this they must ever challenge each other through war and rumours of war. They only survive through strength. This claim is at the heart of modern realist International Relations theory, which asserts that force, or power, is at the heart of the relations between the Great Powers.[15]

Finally, and fortunately for the well-being of humanity, not all these civilisations were equal. There was one that was different. The sixth element of the global space described by Mackinder is the idea of exceptionalism. One of these civilisations had a global and not purely indigenous role as the carrier and bearer of truly universal values. For Mackinder, this was the Anglo-Saxon race, which he saw as the source of democratic values in his world. Writing in the early twentieth century, Mackinder suggested that democracy and freedom were universal goods that depended upon the strength of the civilisation which produced and grounded them. In 1916 he asserted that 'the defence of Freedom and Democracy in the world at large must rest finally on the strength and, in the days that are coming, on the instant readiness of the British Empire.'[16] The other parts of the world had values that were inimical to this. This gave Britain, the British Empire, the Anglo-Saxon race (and these were conflated) a global mission that was not only about their own survival but was also about the survival of the best prospects for human development. This form of exceptionalism is equally evident today.[17] In his initial response to the attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001, George Bush asserted that 'America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the

world.'[18] The defence of the United States is thus the interest of all people of good will, as Bush remarked in his 2003 State of the Union speech, 'we are called to defend the safety of our people and the hopes of all mankind.'[19] In the case of Bush, the exceptionalism of the United States is divine in origin as he made clear in the same speech of 2003: 'The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity.'[20] In other words, the promotion of freedom by the United States is a universal and not a national project. You have, then, a global mission that is not only about national survival but is about the survival of civilisation as such. The choice is civilisation or barbarism, the United States or its terrorist enemies.

These, then, are the six elements of Mackinder's geopolitical imaginary and they add up to a distinctive account of global geography. The geography of resources produces concentrations of geopolitical potential that in particular promises to a land-power based in Russia the prospect of extensive military reach and the temptation of global reach. It produces a vision of the contagious effect of unfreedom threatening first neighbours but ultimately, through the interconnectedness of all places, the freedom of the entire globe. It is a geopolitical imaginary that insists that the world is made up of mutually hostile civilisational blocs. Yet it is a geographical imaginary in which there is one group that is more equal than others. The West, understood in racial, cultural or religious terms is presented as special and perhaps naïve in not realising how unlike it are the other civilisations. Huntington insists that the West is uniquely and dangerously pacific. Only this civilisation has ever freely given up weapons and we now see, according to Huntington, 'a new form of arms competition' but whereas 'in an old-fashioned arms race, each side developed its own arms to balance or to achieve superiority against the other side. In this new form of arms competition, one side is developing its arms and the other side is attempting not to balance but to limit and prevent that arms build-up while at the same time reducing its own military capabilities.'[21]

THE CHALLENGES TO MACKINDER'S GEOPOLITICS

We can certainly understand Mackinder's ideas in terms of his political and intellectual context. We can look at the threat to British economic superiority posed by the industrialisation of Japan, Germany, and the United States. We can look at the challenge presented to British colonialism by nationalist movements in Egypt, India, and Ireland. We can identify a whole set of anxieties that were characteristic of domestic debate in Britain at the time Mackinder wrote. There were anxieties about racial degeneration and indeed the British parliament set up an Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, which reported in 1904.[22] In those anxious times, Mackinder set out a vision of how Britain could maintain its global primacy, could

remain master of its own destiny. It is also obvious why such a set of ideas should find echoes among those who take up a similar challenge in our times, the challenge of preserving the global reach that the United States was able to establish in the decade that followed the end of the Second World War. These people wish, in Krauthammer's terms, to prolong that Unipolar Moment when the United States, having seen off the challenge of the Soviet Union faced a world without a realistic rival.[23] The goal of these strategists was to devise policies ensuring that the United States faced no credible rival in any part of the world, a condition that the National Security Strategy of 2002 referred to as 'full spectrum dominance.'[24]

If we want instead to devise a different sort of world, one in which international relations are not based alone on force, are not the expression of national chauvinisms, do not serve to ensure the unfair exploitation of some peoples by others, then we will certainly have to go beyond the legacy of Mackinder. One way of doing so is to recall that even at the time that Mackinder was writing, there were alternative geographical imaginaries in development. I will now describe some of these alternatives and gesture towards some modern echoes.

First, then, let me turn to the question of the uneven geography of resources, presented by Mackinder as offering a provocation to the assembling and contesting of world empires. Here we might attend to the very different account of empires and imperialism offered by Mackinder's contemporary, the Liberal journalist, John Hobson whose *Imperialism: A Study* was taken up enthusiastically by Lenin.[25] Hobson looked at the contexts of resource extraction and the actions of mining companies, rubber conglomerates, and logging firms. Rather than examining how resources sustain local states, Hobson described instead the circumstances under which through coercive labour relations those resources were liberated from their places of production before being appropriated to economic development in the colonial metropole. Hobson, then, took the question of natural resources as the occasion for reflecting, not upon the possibility of empires arising to challenge Britain, but rather for reflecting upon the brutal treatment of indigenous workers and the unfair terms of trade. Where Mackinder treated resources as the basis for local development, Hobson in contrast focused upon how and with what consequences they enter the world economy. This produces a rather different vision prioritising an Economic rather than a Political Geography.

There is a significant ethical difference between Mackinder and Hobson in relation to resource extraction. The issue for Hobson is not that the concentration of resources produced a concentration of power but, instead, that a significant concentration of resources created the prospect that private companies would pervert international relations lobbying colonial powers to make wars and acquire colonies. These colonies provide those companies with ideal circumstances in which to exploit labour, acquire resources

on the cheap, and yet meet few of the social and environmental costs of their extractive activities. For Hobson, although colonial wars are presented in the metropole as being in the national interest of the colonial power in fact these wars serve rather the private interests of the mining companies and other extractive enterprises. This is still a pertinent point. It is not self-evident that what is good for General Motors is indeed good for the United States, to take the claim made by Charles Wilson as CEO of General Motors when being confirmed as simultaneously US Secretary of State for Defense. Hobson argued that the extractive industries devoted much attention to pro-paganda so that imperialistic jingoism might sustain the military campaigns that they wanted for their own commercial reasons.

Let me turn now to the second of the elements of Mackinder's geopolitical imaginary, the notion of contiguity, or spatial contagion. There are two interesting contemporary challenges to this assumption. The first was raised in discussion after Mackinder's 1904 paper on the Geographical Pivot of History. Leopold Amery, whose views on imperialism were very close to Mackinder's own, said that Mackinder's account of the land power that could make a bid for world empire on the basis of the Heartland, was about to be left behind by the development of air power. The strategic significance of holding territory, of defending it with fortified borders or occupying it with lines of trenches, would be dramatically changed by the use of airplanes which could simply hop over the lot and thus, he suggested, 'a great deal of this geographical distribution [discussed by Mackinder] must lose its impor-tance . . . . 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.'[26] Air power would render contiguity moot in ways that have current echoes in discussions of Network War.[27]

More fundamental than Amery's speculations about air power, were the arguments of Arthur Balfour in the British Cabinet when in 1919 it was dis-cussing the intervention in South Russia that George Curzon and Winston Churchill were advocating.[28] Curzon, in particular, presented an argument rather like the prairie fire analogy offered by Mackinder. The British had to invade South Russia to displace a regime that threatened to expand as far as, and then into, India. Balfour highlighted the grandiosity and unceasing expansionism of the argument from contiguity: 'Every time I come to a dis-cussion . . . I find there is a new sphere which we have got to guard, which is supposed to protect the gateways of India. Those gateways are getting further and further from India, and I do not know how far west they are going to be brought.'[29] There really does not seem to be any principled way of limiting the spatial reach of the argument from continuity.

The third element of Mackinder's geopolitical imaginary is interconnect-edness; the claim that the world was so well integrated that the national interest of the Great Powers extended to every part of the globe. Elisée

Reclus accepted that the world was now one society but he argued that while the national interest did now extend to all parts of the world, this was not a military but an ethical imperative. He focused not on national vulnerability but upon national responsibility. Everywhere in the world had been transformed by Western countries' pursuit of national interest and it was now time to accept responsibility for these effects. The translation of resources into commodities changed environments. Through global trade, relationships were established that created interdependence and grounded our duty towards distant strangers.[30] It is not that we have an interest in people in distant places because what they do may affect us, it is, rather, that we have a responsibility because we have already affected them. So, the arrow is reversed.

The fourth element I want to consider is incompatibility, the idea that the world is made up of discrete civilisations locked in endless mortal combat. There were two ways that this claim was challenged by some among Mackinder's contemporaries. In the first place, there were those who argued that humanity was essentially one race, the human race, *ab uno sanguine*, of one blood, in the motto of one contemporary anti-colonial pressure group, the Aborigines' Protection Society.[31] In other words, racial differentiation was a biological lie. This position related to a contemporary academic controversy about whether the human race evolved from a common source or whether, instead, the separate races were the product of independent biological descent, or parallel evolution.[32] The monogenist versus polygenist debate did not settle the ethical question of how to treat distant peoples but, in the hands of the anti-imperialists, the monogenist argument was deployed to argue that a common humanity implied equality of respect. The acceptance of radical difference between races invited perfidious reflections upon superiority and duplicitous and patronising strategies of colonial rule in the name of guardianship.

The second contemporary attack upon incompatibility came from Peter Kropótkin.[33] In the first place, argued Kropótkin, the suggestion that peoples or cultures were internally homogeneous was nonsense. Each part of the world had been so shaped by interaction with other parts that each was already hybrid. There was no purity from which to begin. Furthermore, far from being incompatible, far from having interests essentially hostile, the various peoples of the world had the possibility of recognising their common humanity in the face of famine, in the face of threats to the survival of forests. Environmental stewardship was a common, long-term interest even if not, for certain groups, a short-term or local interest. In Mackinder's own day, then, there were humanitarian and environmentalist arguments against the incompatibility thesis and each rested upon a radical rethinking of the implications of interconnectedness.

Now to the fifth of Mackinder's guiding principles; that societies interacted primarily through the exercise or the threat of force within a zero-sum

game where if I get something you have lost it, and if I prevail you must go under. Élisée Reclus in the magnificent set of volumes he published at the end of his life, *L'Homme et la Terre*, when he was no longer a pen for hire but was writing simply to suit himself, gave a coruscating account of the geography of colonialism.[34] One of the things that Reclus suggested throughout these volumes was that the interaction between different peoples was actually the source of intellectual, social, and economic energy. It was, for example, precisely through the interaction of Asia and Europe that the flourishing of Ancient Greece was nurtured. It was hybridity and contact that fertilised. The relations, not of force but of mutual learning, drove the development of science, technology, and culture. For his part, Kropótkin went further, arguing that the fundamental basis of all progress was cooperation rather than conflict, that conflict was profligate while cooperation was fruitful. According to Kropótkin, the social force of cooperation was at the heart of the creation of language. Humanity was essentially a social being and by expanding and articulating that sociability over ever broader spaces development was stimulated. So, Reclus proposed that energy came from the contact between diverse peoples, while Kropótkin suggested that progress came from extending the spatial scale of sociability. This is very different from Mackinder's view of a world held together by arms-length relations of conflict and competition.

Finally, to turn to the question of exceptionalism. Many of the thinkers who challenged the assumptions of Mackinder's geopolitical imaginary thought long and hard about exceptionalism. Several of them, Hobson, Reclus, Kropótkin, occasionally fell into versions of arguments about advanced and backward peoples, although each modulated in some way the typical arrogance of such a claim. Reclus argued that the gap between European and Asian civilisations was a rather recent development and that in previous times the gradient had run the other way. For Reclus, there was nothing particularly European about the nature of European dominance. Reclus proposed that in 1491 it was not evident which were more advanced, the societies of Europe or those of South America. So, Reclus develops an argument about the historical contingency of European supremacy. Unlike Mackinder, he saw nothing special about Europe beyond the geographical accident that it rather than Asia secured the resources of the New World. This of course finds an insistent modern echo in the work of Jim Blaut.[35] More radical yet were the reflections of Mary Kingsley, a geographer and anthropologist who visited and wrote about West Africa.[36] Within her ironic texts there is a functionalist account of culture that asks whether cultural difference might reflect nothing more than different local needs. By starting from the sceptical position that there was little evident superiority only varying adaptations to different local circumstances, Kingsley articulated a greater respect for indigenous culture. This is an important methodological principle but it also invites us to reflect upon how we might learn from peoples who

have lived in balance with and respect for other non-human living things in ways that Western societies have unlearned.

THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF THE CHALLENGES TO MACKINDER: A NEW CONCEPTION OF SPACE FOR PROGRESSIVE GEOPOLITICS

There are five features of these challenges to Mackinder that I think can be drawn upon to develop a new conception of space for a Progressive Geopolitics. First, *there are more than states*. The world does not consist only of a choropleth map of states, even if aggregated into civilisations as Huntington does in *The Clash of Civilizations*.[37] In the first place, there are a whole set of non-state actors that matter from transnational institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church, multinational companies, or global NGOs. In the second place, there are significant and important parts of the world that are beyond states or only weakly and problematically integrated into them. I am thinking not only of Antarctica, but also of Zomia, an upland area of South-east Asia, stretching across parts of Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Burma, India, Pakistan, Tibet and Afghanistan, and inhabited by tribal peoples continuing to resist the internal colonialism of state-building, and I am also thinking of those many indigenous peoples who struggle to retain or recreate spaces of albeit compromised and fragile autonomy within territories claimed by nation-states.[38] There are estimates that one in twenty-five of the world's people can be described as indigenous, having some degree of autonomy from the global nation-states system.[39] It is further estimated that they have stewardship of about one-fifth of the earth's land, perhaps the 'greatest remaining sanctuaries of life on earth, . . . biological arks.'[40] The indigenous peoples have care for perhaps the last reservoir of non-commodified resources. In the long story of the proletarianisation of peoples, this indigenous redout is not only a majestic source of non-capitalist reasoning, but also now humanity's last best hope for the preservation of species diversity. The first element of a conception of space that might serve a Progressive Geopolitics might be respect for the distinctiveness and fragility of indigenous stewardship of this 20% of the earth's land, currently under threat from the modern versions of those companies that Hobson saw extending commodification and colonialism into the resource-rich lands of the tropics. They are still at it.

A second element of this alternative conception of space is that it accepts that *the territories of the world are essentially porous*.[41] Clearly that's true of air pollution, clearly that's true at the level of microbes; for example, AIDS was identified in 1981 and by 1986 almost every country in the world had reported cases. There's a fantastic illustration of these porous boundaries in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. British chauvinism included a thick streak of linguistic

nationalism. The British celebrated English as the language of Shakespeare and as grounding a national literature that embodied the highest values of British culture, although by and large they meant English culture. English education included edited collections of the best examples of English prose, a genealogy of the English. As the Professor of Poetry at Oxford explained in 1900, it 'should be the aim . . . of the Universities to maintain the standard of purity in the English language. In our school of English Language and Literature at least as it might be the student may learn to trace from age to age the development of our tongue, and to observe the flexibility with which its character has adapted itself to the gradual changes in our national life and society.'[42]

In the fourteenth chapter of *Ulysses*, often referred to as the Oxen of the Sun after the episode from Homer's *Odyssey* to which it refers, Joyce satirises these English primers. He divides the chapter into sections each of which is written in a different style of English so that they form a sort of roll-call of English writers, or rather of writers in English for very many of the examples Joyce takes are either evidently derived from other languages, Latin and courtly French for example, or are parodies of the style of writers who were born or lived outside England, in Ireland for example. The final sections of the chapter include examples that draw upon the Bowery slang of contemporary African-Americans, as if the story of the development of English had now flown the national coop. But the chapter comments on the purity question in two other ways. First, it is set in a maternity hospital and the topics with which it deals follow the process of conception, gestation and birth. The foreign particle, or sperm, who enters the womb of the hospital is an alien: 'Some man that wayfaring was stood by housedoor at night's oncoming. Of Israel's folk was that man that on earth wandering far had fared.'[43] The womb can only be fertilised by something foreign to itself, the germ or seed. In the second place, this man, Leopold Bloom, is presented as rejected by those who might style themselves pure Irish, on grounds of religion incorrectly imputed on the basis of his ethnicity. Yet it is the convert Bloom who behaves like the true Christian to Mrs. Purefoy, the woman upstairs unattended during her long day and night of labour pains.

Since language is a tool of communication it will develop in the interstices where peoples meet. It is always a bridging and thus a hybrid enterprise, but then so are most social and cultural units, including those that announce themselves unrealistically as having territorial limits. This porosity is a source of great hope. It is at the heart of attempts at arms control. Because each of the super-powers was unable to exclude the possibility that the other would penetrate its space with missiles, each had to reassure the other that it would not launch a strike because even accidents and misunderstandings might trigger mutual destruction. We are unable to render our territory inviolate and thus we must moderate our threat of using force and one way of showing this intention is to scale back deployment.[44] Our

vulnerability each to the other, what Butler calls the 'precarity' of life, pro-
vides the basis for agreeing upon arms control and since nuclear weapons, at
least, are very hard to hide, the porosity of boundaries is intrinsic to the verifi-
cation procedures that reassure parties to arms control agreements.[45] Creating
boundaries that seem to defy porosity in fact makes the world less safe. The
Star Wars, or Strategic Defense Initiative, was precisely such a project. Insofar
as it promised protection against incoming missiles, it allowed first strike to
be contemplated without apprehension of Armageddon, at least not at home.
At least as regards the behaviour of states, vulnerability and transparency
encourage limiting the use or threat of force. Porosity is our friend.

A third element of a new conception of space is *the importance of local
conditions*. The idea of contagion invited us to focus upon the spread of
influence and thus to focus upon the source of change in any one terri-
tory as coming from outside, as being propagated into a place rather as a
seed is broadcast into soil. To counter the paranoid geography that this can
produce, we might recall the importance of the soil. In the first place, this
means acknowledging that there is a geography of social vulnerability or
political receptivity that means that even where the source of change is an
external influence the nature of local change depends upon local factors. For
example, while the interconnectedness of the world certainly explains why
AIDS was reported so quickly from all parts of the world very shortly after
its first identification, the geography of origins is of little value in explaining
the geography of impact. To know where HIV will go, the trajectory across
space is less useful than an understanding of the distribution of vulnerability.
AIDS waxes in spaces of marginalised people.

The second way that local conditions are important is that the conta-
gious perspective can make people misprise proximate causes. The domino
theory of the Cold War encouraged people to perceive the sources of politi-
cal change as external to countries, as being about the introduction of alien
communism into virgin territories. Yet socialist values can, as Marx predicted,
be elaborated out of the immediate experience of capitalist labour relations.
Furthermore, there are reasons other than communist economic planning for
a country to nationalise and direct its local resources. There were nation-
alist and not only communist projects of economic autarky.[46] Attending to
the local causes of political change should caution against recruiting local
struggles into overarching global projects and prevent us magnifying the
significance of political change in any one place.

The fourth element of a new conception of space must be that it recog-
nises no strong separation between here and there; *there is already here*. The
porosity of boundaries is reflected both in economic relations and cultural
identities. In this respect Reclus is right, we have geographical obligations in
consequence of the harm we have done to other peoples and the benefit we
continue to receive from the harm done to those peoples in earlier times.
The injunction to 'unlearn your privilege' entails also an obligation to repair

the harm done by unearned, and thus unfair, privilege.[47] We have obligations that come from the interdigitation of here and there. In some respects our interests in other countries might, if properly reflected upon, serve as hostage against our treating those distant peoples in a harmful or disrespectful way. In early medieval Ireland, fosterage operated in something like this manner. Children, particularly of the wealthy, would be fostered with rival, neighbouring clans.[48] This meant that the children were hostage against attacks by their biological family upon their adopted family. It also meant that these children developed emotional ties across clan boundaries.

We must understand and cultivate emotional ties of empathy and sympathy across space and we can do this in part in the form of kinship and friendship. Our neighbours' relatives are to be found in many places. We ourselves can befriend people in distant places either through visiting, corresponding, or sponsorship. Pen pal schemes are as geopolitical as weapons deployment. In 1940, a teacher in Danville Community School in Des Moines, Iowa, encouraged her pupils to take up as pen pals children from overseas and this is how in April 1940, Juanita Wagner received a letter from a ten-year-old schoolgirl in Amsterdam by the name of Anne Frank. In her letter, Anne wrote of looking up a map of the United States to see where Juanita lived. In her letter to Juanita's sister, Anne's fourteen-year-old sister, Margot, wrote of Netherlands 'having a frontier with Germany and being a small country we never feel safe.'[49]

Finally, if we want to talk about how geographical space is organised around mutual dependency, we need empirical studies of how those dependencies are created and then we need philosophical and legal studies of how those dependencies can be recognised and made effective.[50] In sum, we need *a space of international law and international justice*. Now realist International Relations theory pooh-poohs the idea of international law suggesting that there is in effect no such thing, that the United Nations is pretty much a waste of time.[51] It seems to me that if we want to recognise interdependency we have to articulate institutions to effect global justice. Some elements of this are already there. The notion of crimes against humanity is a developing area of international law.[52] I would like to see this area of law extended from the pursuit of war criminals to the prosecution of people who traffic in slaves, or for egregious crimes against children. The extensions might command general assent.

There are ways of getting nation-states to incorporate international law into national law; part of the legislation passed by member countries of the European Union does precisely this. In some cases states can be persuaded to adopt as national law, international regulations because the principle behind the regulations has such moral authority that the case for doing so is unanswerable. If we were to seriously study the occasions of such national alignment, we might more easily recognise opportunities for going further. We might even find new ways of recognising the claims that distant people

might make upon our attention, our safe-keeping, or our wealth. We might make the right to asylum triggered by a broader range of pre-existing obligations on our part. We might develop a moral economy of migration. Justice and law is the language that we must use when talking about how these global interdependencies can be made ethical. In response to the shrug of 'I don't care,' we need to be ready with empirical accounts that reply, 'Well, you should care because we have accumulated moral obligations in this way, that way, and the other way.' A geopolitical imaginary that talks about these interdependencies can fuel a moral imaginary that creates the space for a discussion of global justice. And that is something that the legacy of Mackinder would certainly preclude.

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