Geography, geopolitics and Empire

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Halford Mackinder's work is drawn upon repeatedly by those who would promote imperialism. Mackinder argued that geography could find a new relevance after the Age of Explorations by serving instead the cause of the New Imperialism. Mackinder's geography was not only a science of empire, it was also a way of promoting the cause of Empire. In the face of the revival of Mackinder's work allied with the promotion of an American Empire, we can turn to those among Mackinder's contemporaries who challenged the use of geography to serve Empire. From the scholarship of these dissidents we can sketch ways to challenge the claims that force is the most important dimension of international relations, that the world divides naturally into mutually hostile camps, and that there are some uses of force that are sanctioned by the promotion of democracy.

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Introduction

Prince Hassan of Jordan begins a recent article about the security dilemmas of West Asia by discussing the work of the geographer Halford Mackinder, affirming that '[t]his thinker of a century ago has many resonances for the political power-plays of today' (Hassan 2009). The Russian fascist and ultra-nationalist Aleksandr Dugin draws upon Mackinder for his own argument that Russia and Germany need to fight on behalf of a continental identity rooted in pre-Enlightenment values of mystical heroism, but threatened now by the cosmopolitan influence of the maritime United States (Ingram 2001; Shenfield 2001). The journalist Robert Kaplan proposes that now, more than ever, geographical facts shape foreign policy options, and goes on to refer to Mackinder as 'perhaps the most significant guide to [this] revenge of geography' (Kaplan 2009, 99). The British historian Tristram Hunt (2009a) produced a radio documentary for the BBC about the paradox of the continuing importance of Mackinder's ideas even while his name remains virtually unknown. Both the *Times* and the *Guardian* carried articles by Hunt (2009b 2009c) retailing Mackinder's currency. Various academic theorists of international relations promote a greater recognition of the materialist

forces of the environment and for this reason they too wish their discipline to take up afresh the work of Mackinder (Deudney 2006; Grygiel 2006). The currency of Mackinder also extends to literature where Thomas Pynchon's (2006) recent *Against the Day* features a thinly disguised Mackinder as a pairing of a British geopolitician of sea-power and a German geopolitician of land-power. Finally, Faber and Faber have just republished in the United Kingdom the 1942 US edition of Mackinder's 1919 work, *Democratic ideals and reality*.

Reflecting upon the legacy of Mackinder offers an opportunity for reconsidering both the nature of geography and the value of geographical perspectives upon international relations. Mackinder's central claim was that geography could aid statecraft, and for Mackinder this meant promoting imperialism through education and directing it through politics. He was prominent in both fields. Holding academic posts at Oxford and Reading, he was also the second Director of the London School of Economics. In addition, he was a Member of the British Parliament, chair of the Imperial Shipping Committee, and at one time British High Commissioner to South Russia. The central features of the imperialist geography, evident both in Mackinder's advocacy and practice, include the following: the

belief that the environment shapes cultural identity in ways that produce a world that is a patchwork of mutually hostile peoples; the argument that international relations are primarily based upon force and to suggest otherwise is foolish idealism; and the claim that while most often force is deployed for aggressive territorial gain, one's own state, uniquely, is driven by a defensive desire to spread freedom and democracy abroad in the face of the selfish aggression of others. While tribalism, force and exceptionalism are common elements of the world-view of those who appeal to the legacy of Mackinder, this by no means defines the limits of a geographical perspective upon international relations and among Mackinder's contemporaries there were those who insisted that: cooperation was every bit as real as competition; identities were polyvalent and that the hybridity of modern life required that we recognise mutual interdependence rather than pursue mutual hostility; all claims to national exceptionalism were hypocritical cloaks for national selfishness; and that the contemplation of the webs of life that connected people to their environment might rather engender a greater respect for all forms of life rather than a purely instrumental view of nature as a storehouse to be despoiled with reckless haste. These challenges to Mackinder's style of geography were evident in public and academic discourse when Mackinder wrote, and they remain available now to those who quail at the imperialism promoted by so many of Mackinder's admirers.

The paper is in four parts. First, I look at how a scientific approach to imperialism offered a way for geography, as a discipline, to move beyond the perceived limitations of its associations with exploration. Then, I note the paradox that to promote the values upon which imperialism seemed to rely required precisely a return to the geographical practice of the period of the great explorers. This tension between analytical and affective geography was not resolved by Mackinder. In the third section, I set out the contemporary alternatives to Mackinder's imperialist geography. Finally, I trace these issues and contradictions through to our present geographical practice.

Post-exploration geography and geopolitics

While he returned to his ruling obsessions throughout a long career, the legacy of Halford Mackinder in geography and geopolitics is largely shaped by two papers that he presented to evening meetings of the Royal Geographical Society. On the 31 January 1887, Mackinder spoke on 'The scope and methods of geography', remarking that the teaching of geography hitherto had been the rote learning of 'a mere body of information' and, while explorers had been extending the knowledge base of geography in exciting and thrilling ways, the geographers were 'now near the end of the roll of great discoveries' (Mackinder 1887, 141). For Mackinder, geographers needed to synthesise the empirical knowledge thus far gathered in order to explicate the broad relations between nature, society and politics. Moving from inventory to explanation, a 'new geography' might aspire to be a science of environmental history, environmental causation and spatial arrangement.

In 1902 Mackinder gave an object lesson in the 'new geography' with his own *Britain and the British seas*. By his account, the environmental history of Britain cleft highland from lowland Britain along economic, racial and geological lines. He claimed that the highland areas of Britain and Ireland were what remained of an earlier Atlantic landmass of Atlantis. Over time, the erosion of this landmass produced to its south and east the lowland areas of England. Ireland, Wales, Scotland and highland Britain were the relatively isolated and 'rooted' districts, the reserves of brawn and minerals (Mackinder 1902, 15). In contrast, the south of England was a more 'cosmopolitan' society, facing Europe; with this 'stimulus from without', it 'avoided stagnation' (Mackinder 1902, 179). Not surprisingly, perhaps, Mackinder identified London as, for this set of environmental reasons, the 'brain of the Empire' (Mackinder 1902, 312).

These cultural differences were reinforced by a racial geography with what Mackinder, following the contemporary anthropologist John Beddoe, described as dark-haired Mediterranean pre-Celts displaced to the west by the arrival of blond Teutons into the south and east. Mackinder reproduced Beddoe's index of nigrescence in his book, noting the 'mercurial' character and 'emotional temperament' of the Celts (Mackinder 1902, 192). For Mackinder, this racial geography had been stable for a millennium. He identified a distinctive English race with the inhabitants of 'the English Plain', a group whose pure blood was the 'fluid essence' of 'John Bull' (Mackinder 1931, 326), and

who had a talent for responsible government. This talent was 'something physical, and therefore not wholly transferable except with the blood' (Mackinder 1925, 726), a blood that had moved with British emigrants to the colonies and ex-colonies inhabited or ruled by the larger family of Britons. Mackinder's *Britain and the British seas* ended on, or rather should I say ascended to, an imperial note with Mackinder warning his readers that

> [a]ll the Britains are threatened by the recent expansion of Europe, and therefore all may be ready to share in the support of the common fleet, as being the cheapest method of ensuring peace and freedom to each. (Mackinder 1902, 351)

Mackinder's 'new geography' collated the details of geological history and then correlated these with the emergence of a geography of settlement based upon racial difference. The geography of Britain, then, was 'the intricate product of a continuous history, geological and human' (Mackinder 1902, 229–30). It was a geography that had produced a precious bloodline, needed foreign dependencies abroad to resource it, and would require racial hygiene at home to preserve it. The British, wrote Mackinder, had to be taught to 'value the Empire as the protection of their manhood' and he went on to say that '[h]erein, half consciously, lies the reconciliation of Colonial Liberalism with protection, the exclusion of coloured races, and imperialism' (Mackinder 1905, 143). The 'new geography' must, in this way, 'depart from the impartial views of science' because the British people faced a crisis of national and racial survival. Geographical education was thus vital for

> the practical citizens of an empire which has to hold its place according to the universal law of survival through efficiency and effort. (Mackinder 1911, 83)

This version of the scope and methods of geography bid fair to

> satisfy at once the practical requirements of the statesman and the merchant, the theoretical requirements of the historian and the scientist, and the intellectual requirements of the teacher. (Mackinder 1887, 159)

The second of Mackinder's seminal papers addressed directly the 'practical requirements of the statesman' and in doing so more or less established the modern science of geopolitics (Ó Tuathail 1996; Kearns 2009a). On 25 January 1904, Mackinder took up where he had left off 17 years earlier by remarking that

> [o]f late it has been a commonplace to speak of geographical exploration as nearly over, and it is recognized that geography must be diverted to the purpose of intensive survey and philosophic synthesis. (Mackinder 1904, 421)

On this occasion, Mackinder wished to develop the implications not for the subject of geography, but for the foreign policy of the United Kingdom.

His argument was that with no new lands to chart, stakeout or claim, imperial expansion would drag and any established power would now only gain a relative advantage over another by filching from the other's colonies. This, then, was a newly interconnected world in which

> [e]very explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos, will be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe. (Mackinder 1904, 422)

The world was suddenly more dangerous with the end of the Age of Discovery, but by contemplating the shape of the passing era, its 'correlation between the larger geographical and the larger historical generalizations', the geographer might identify

> something of the real proportion of features and events on the stage of the whole world, and may seek a formula which shall express certain aspects, at any rate, of geographical causation in universal history. (Mackinder 1904, 422)

Cultivating in this way the wisdom of hindsight, geography might serve modern statecraft.

Mackinder believed that geography had shaped for the British a unique combination of imperialism and democracy. This view of British exceptionalism had deep roots, although Mackinder refined it in distinctive ways. In 1674, reflecting upon the struggle between England and the Dutch Republic for global supremacy, John Evelyn had concluded that:

> [A] spirit of commerce, and strength at sea to protect it, are the most certain marks of the greatness of empire, deduced from an undeniable *sorites*; that whoever commands the ocean, commands the trade of the world, and whoever commands the trade of the world, commands the riches of the world, and whoever is master of that, commands the world itself. (Evelyn 1859, 41)

For Evelyn, global hegemony secured political liberty. The eighteenth-century political historian, John Millar, believed that the insularity of the British gave little justification for the creation of a large standing army and thus removed the temptation

for monarchs to suppress internal dissent with troops raised for external protection. Not only did the British monarch lack a large standing army but the force it did command, a multitude of sailors, was of little domestic use, being, Millar argued, generally 'at too great a distance, and their operations of too peculiar a nature, to admit of their being employed occasionally in quelling insurrections at home' (Millar 1818, 122). Thus,

> having no sufficient military force to support their claims, [English monarchs] were laid under the necessity of making such concessions, and of permitting the erection of such barriers against oppression, as the awakened suspicion and jealousy of the nation thought indispensable for securing the ancient constitution, and restraining the future abuses of the prerogative. (Millar 1818, 124)

Echoing this traditional British eulogy to sea-power (Deudney 2006), Mackinder invited British schoolchildren to reflect upon the happy insularity that showered 'the great blessings of peace and freedom at home' (Mackinder 1910, 57). He went further than Millar, though, suggesting that sea power was pacific not only for the home nation but also for its overseas rivals. Sea power was no basis for territorial conquest, since 'warships cannot navigate mountains' and thus even when it held sway as the indisputable continental hegemon, the British had 'not sought to make any permanent European conquests' (Mackinder 1919, 74). However, Mackinder was much less sanguine than contemporaries such as Alfred Mahan about the continuing predominance of sea- over land-power. From his studies of military history, Mahan had suggested that sea-power was ever decisive in resolving great power rivalries. Writing of the global struggle between Britain and Spain, 1660–1783, he had concluded that:

> [i]t can scarcely be denied that England's uncontrolled dominion of the seas, during almost the whole period chosen for our subject, was by long odds the chief among the military factors that determined the final issue. (Mahan 1918, 63–4)

In turn, these battles for maritime dominance were vital for economic development since, Mahan reminded American isolationists, 'beyond the broad seas, there are the markets of the world, that can be entered and controlled only by a vigorous contest' (Mahan 1897, 4).

Reviewing global relations at the cusp of the new 20th century, Mackinder was more pessimis-

tic. The self-confidence of the British project of Empire had met three checks, inducing anxieties of imperial decline. In the first place, the productivity gap of the early industrial revolution had been closed by Germany and the United States so that British goods were no longer the first choice in all open markets. New industrialisers, furthermore, were protecting their home markets to nurture local industries, which meant that the global emporium was now a less friendly place. Secondly, the British faced challenges to their colonial rule from nationalists in Ireland, Egypt and India. In South Africa, the second Boer War (1899–1902) had seen one quarter of a million British troops prevail only with great difficulty against the Dutch-African farmers. The war was dear in both treasure and reputation and the savage policy of isolating the Boers from food and rural support by concentrating them in camps scandalised global liberal opinion. Finally, evidence from recruiting stations showed that many British adult males were unfit to fight. This resulted in a national debate about a perceived deterioration of the physical capacity of the British urban working class and the creation by the government of an Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Degeneration (Searle 1971).

Mackinder expressed in geopolitical terms the anxiety that the British people were no longer ready or able to meet the global challenge of international competition (Semmel 1958; Ó Tuathail 1992; Heffernan 2000). He argued that there was a crisis for Britain, produced by a shift in the way the environment directed human history. Mahan and Evelyn had indeed once been right, but they were now out of date. In the life of the world organism, suggested Mackinder, the relations between technology and strategy were about to change producing a new post-Columbian age. Reviewing the period before 1492, Mackinder identified constant pressure upon the Western Powers from the East, and he believed that in Europe's 'secular struggle against Asiatic invasion', Asia had operated rather like a 'repellent personality perform[ing] a valuable social function in uniting' and indeed stimulating European civilisation (Mackinder 1904, 423).

The steppes of Russia had been a pathway along which nomadic tribes from Mongolia in the east came periodically westwards to hammer against Christendom, thereby annealing European culture by martial test. The Europeans had withstood the test and indeed had been driven to establish

extensive empires overseas as, with Columbus, they turned their attention to the seas and away from their land border with the Asian steppes. But now those steppes were wheatfields, and now railways snaked across them and into the new Russian territories of Siberia bringing wheat, coal and oil together into a gigantic common market. This could now be the basis for a new land-power, and one that enjoyed a significant immunity to challenge from the sea for, noted Mackinder, this region of 'Euro-Asia is characterized by a very remarkable distribution of river drainage', with rivers that 'have been practically useless for purposes of human communication with the outer world' for they drain either to internal lakes or into the seasonally frozen waters of the Arctic Ocean (Mackinder 1904, 430). Euro-Asia was now developing, defensible and threatening.

The iron horse had transformed the space relations of the world organism. At precisely the moment when Britain had sent an army overseas to South Africa to sustain its desperate struggle against the Boers, Russia had sent an army to Manchuria in its own war against Japan. For Mackinder this underlined the new realities providing 'as significant evidence of mobile land-power as the British army in South Africa was of sea-power' (Mackinder 1904, 434). After 'nearly 200 years of intense competition between the empires of Russia and Britain', Mackinder's emphasis upon Euro-Asia was to some extent a return to a familiar battleground, although with renewed urgency and pessimism (O'Hara and Heffernan 2006, 55).

Euro-Asia, then, was the 'geographical pivot of history', the region through which Asiatic pressure had stimulated European invention driving the western Europeans onto the seas, and now the foyer of a new land-power with the resources, the invulnerability and the inbred proclivity to challenge for global domination. The British would need the resources of its empire and an alliance with the United States if it were to keep the newly mobile land-power away from the sea. These, then, were the geographic realities and Mackinder's wished to awaken among the British a sense of the desperate threat since the coming struggle would depend upon 'the relative number, virility, equipment, and organization of the competing peoples' (Mackinder 1904, 437). The British needed to prepare for war, to train soldiers, build battleships and educate their young for imperial and racial responsibilities. 'The British tradition', he wrote for

schoolchildren, was 'worth fighting for [. . . , for] no other national tradition has equally conduced to the development of what is happiest and highest in mankind' (Mackinder 1915, 288).

For Mackinder, the end of exploration posed a crisis for geography and required a 'new geography' of geographical explanation rather than the continued accumulation of mere geographic description, but it also brought on a crisis for the British Empire. With no new lands to conquer, conflict between powerful states was inevitable. This struggle for survival in a finite world meant that the British Empire would face the strategic possibility of mobile, aggressive land-power displacing mobile, pacific sea-power. In this way a scientific geography could serve as an aid to statecraft by identifying the major foreign policy dilemma facing the British and by training children to become fierce imperial citizens. Yet, this educational role required that geography both inspire as well as instruct, and this made evident a contradiction between the analytical and the affective uses of geography.

Masculinity, science and Empire

As geopolitics, a new scientific geography met the needs both of scholarship and of the British Empire. Yet the links between scientific geography and geopolitics were as much affective as deductive, and these affective relations destabilised the neat trajectory from 'scope and methods' in 1887 to 'geographical pivot' in 1904. Indeed, with hindsight, Mackinder picked not 1887 nor 1904 as 'in some ways the culminating year of my life', but rather he identified 1899 as including his most significant achievement, 'my Kenya year' (Mackinder nd). Thirteen years after announcing the end of exploration and the consequent need for a 'new geography', Mackinder was back at the Royal Geographical Society on the evening of 23 January 1900 and on this occasion, as on no other in his career, his entry to the lecture hall of the Society was greeted with prolonged cheering. He was lionised as the conqueror of Mount Kenya, the first European to ascend the second highest peak in East Africa, snatching a prize in a region where German alpinists had bagged most of the other trophies (Barbour 1991).

Mackinder spoke of this as exploration, noting that 'it was still necessary at that time for me to prove that I could explore as well as teach'

(Mackinder nd) and also that 'there was the ambition no longer to count as a mere armchair geographer' (Mackinder 1991, 31). Masculinity was a crucial and disturbing element in the relations between science and geography at this time. On one hand, in the debates over the admission of women as Fellows in the 1890s, some male Fellows saw the exclusion of women as crucial to the status of the Society, with one Fellow insisting that the question resolved itself into a simple choice: '[i]s the Society to be a scientific or a pleasure society?' (*Times* 30 May 1893, 9e). Science was more serious than entertainment and as such was manly, yet it was also contemplative and thus, paradoxically, less manly than active life. In 1924, Joseph Conrad averred that '[o]f all sciences, geography finds its origin in action, and what is more in adventurous action', but the academic turn drained all excitement from the subject leaving only the 'bloodless' certainties of 'bored professors' (Conrad 1926, 3). Clements Markham, the president of the Royal Geographical Society when Mackinder went to climb Mount Kenya, and who announced Mackinder's triumph to an evening meeting of the Society praising it as a 'model exploring journey' (*Times* 14 November 1899, 3e), himself addressed the Society on the field of geography in 1898, placing expeditions at its heart for their bravery:

> Of this splendid courage, which knows no turning back from duty, no fear, no thought of self, our best discoverers and explorers are made. It is with such stuff that the greatness of our country has been built up; as well as by that moral courage which prompts men, in positions of responsibility, to decide upon the right course, which is usually the boldest course. (Markham 1898, 6)

Fidelity to duty at risk of life and limb was celebrated as patriotic virtue. Certainly Mackinder had risked his life in climbing Mount Kenya but, in pursuing his prize, he had been reckless also with the lives and heedless of the comforts of others.

He impressed, or rather hired as slaves, some 170 African porters and he barely fed them. He had difficulty in raising food locally. The building of the Uganda railway was continuing and required that 16 000 labourers be provisioned from the villages through which Mackinder marched. The whole area had been disrupted by a smallpox epidemic with consequent loss of farming work. Finally, the year before Mackinder arrived, the British had gone with a force of 5000 into the region, torching villages and spilling the blood of a

hundred Kikuyu people for the murder of the unannounced traveller, Captain Alfred Haslam. Mackinder pronounced it 'rather comic!' that one local administrator had tried to recall his expedition for the order had arrived only once Mackinder was on his way back down the mountain (Mackinder 1991, 246).

Only days earlier the situation had seemed dire and Mackinder had worried that even the Europeans would run out of food; the Africans had already been starving for much of the trip anyway. At least one porter died of dysentery and several more appeared even to Mackinder as 'mere famine stricken skeletons' (Mackinder 1991, 158). Yet, these men had to be driven, for Swahilis had, according to Mackinder, 'no morals' (Mackinder 1991, 56) and were at best 'faithful dogs' since 'slave blood still runs in their veins' (Mackinder 1991, 200). Nor were matters even vaguely amusing when Mackinder shot off rounds from his gun to underline for his porters the 'moral suasion of my Mauser' (Mackinder 1991, 160). Mackinder even kidnapped a local chief as hostage against the provision of food for his expedition. His colleague Campbell Hausburg 'lashed at the men vigorously' (Mackinder 1899a, 298) to prevent them from feeding on the sugar cane in fields through which they walked. Still, as men collapsed from fatigue, Mackinder ordered beatings for those that discarded any part of their load, and, while Mackinder was sure that the Swahili among his porters 'did not cling to life' (Mackinder 1991, 241), it was finally hardly 'rather comic!' when eight recalcitrant porters were 'shot by orders' (Mackinder 1899b).

The scientific achievements of the expedition were modest and, although Mackinder made careful notes of location and altitude, his singular aim was to get to the top and back down again before anyone else, and the transect was proof of his success. Primacy was everything. He said that he kept his plans secret because 'I had no wish to find myself competitor in a race up a virgin peak' (Mackinder 1945, 231). When he got there he recorded in his diary, '[h]urrah. Kenya is no longer a virgin peak' (Mackinder 1899b, 65), and he immediately diminished the mountain, chipping off the top and bringing it back to his desk at Oxford as a trophy.

Mackinder not only expressed his conquest in sexual terms, he also shared Markham's view of an expedition as both a microcosm of society and a test of patriotism and moral fibre. When his porters

begged for a halt to one day's march, his reason for refusing was based purely on his belief that '[i]n the interests of discipline I determined that my will must prevail' (Mackinder 1991, 111). The expedition was society writ small. Like the expedition, society at large rested upon force rather than upon a consensual social contract. Using his gun to frighten his porters into taking up again their loads gave him the 'strange experience' of being 'brought face to face with the ultimate sanctions of society' (Mackinder 1981, 160), and when he once decided not to retaliate against a village that had killed two porters he had sent foraging for food, he described the self-restraint as 'much against natural impulse' (Mackinder 1991, 182).

Mackinder understood force, and hence masculinity, as the primary basis of the social contract. Mackinder opposed women having the vote, arguing that extending the franchise to a weaker sex obscured the fundamental relation between force and decisionmaking, and he told the House of Commons that he was only 'willing to obey the majority if that majority has all the physical force necessary to coerce me – if it is a considerable majority, if it is a virile majority' (*Hansard* 19 February 1912, 368). In that sense, he believed a vote to be 'a cheque or draft on power, and ultimately, on physical power' (*Hansard* 5 May 1911, 763) and that government by majority was ultimately only a representation of the balance of force in society, '[t]he sanction [. . .] of party government is that there must be the possibility of civil war' (*Hansard* 5 May 1911, 761). Since the vote of a woman did not represent an equal threat of force, Mackinder considered it a counterfeit.

For Mackinder, international relations were also defined by 'the whole conception of permanent struggle', a struggle, moreover, which his own country could neither evade nor afford to lose (Mackinder 1905, 141). Mackinder gloated that the reality was that 'the principle of nationalities has carried the day', rendering idealistic and irrelevant those who 'dream of a general philanthropy which is slowly to efface all frontiers' (Mackinder 1905, 141). Mackinder thus insisted that diplomacy rested upon calculations about 'the relative strength and preparedness of the contending nations' (Mackinder 1915, 197). For example, North Germans were described by Mackinder as a 'virile race' (Mackinder 1919, 110), whereas, for him, Indians were 'an effeminate race' (Mackinder 1981, 55). International relations was a kind of mathematical balancing of nations, each expressed as the product of its population, military, virility and strategy. In proposing a toast to the 'Armed Forces' at a public dinner, Mackinder praised them as the 'force [. . .] behind our diplomacy' but, and with equal significance, as necessary at home 'to maintain order in the presence of industrial strife' (*Glasgow Herald* 12 October 1911).

In his *Civics* textbook, Mackinder (1922) subtitled the chapter on the army, simply 'international relations'. It was because he believed force to be society's one foundation and the basis of international relations that Mackinder insisted that the 'great organizer is the great realist' (Mackinder 1919, 18) and that the British, in their idealistic belief in legality and democracy, had 'neglected materialistic geography' (Mackinder 1919, 28).

With its title of *Democratic ideals and reality* (1919), Mackinder's most famous book stated plainly that if the world after the Great War of 1914–18 were to be remade as a purely legal order, then statesmen would be ignoring the material realities of force, of unbalanced economic growth between nations. A policy based on geographical realism would instead caution continual preparedness for war as the best way to deter attack. The lesson of the last war had been that, blinded by democratic hopes and moral ideals, 'Western democracies were unprepared' (Mackinder 1919, 31) for the struggle. Thus Mackinder urged his own strategy in opposition to the 'ethics of the democrat' for the democrat had 'refused to reckon with the realities of geography and economics' (Mackinder 1919, 33).

At first blush, the relations between geography and geopolitics, between 'scope and methods' on one hand, and 'the geographical pivot' on the other, might appear to be between science and its application. In the context of the end of an age of exploration, a geographical education, according to Mackinder, was not only to prepare students for their imperial responsibilities simply through instruction, but pupils had also to recognise the heroism of force. As he wrote for Indian pupils: '[t]here is a splendid side to war. There are occasionally magnificent scenes in it. There is always room for skill and courage' (Mackinder 1909, 98). In 1942, at one of the darkest periods of the Second World War, Mackinder wrote to the secretary of the Royal Geographical Society hoping that 'all goes well with you in these tremendous days' (Mackinder 1942).

Mackinder recognised that his instruction to schoolchildren frequently expressed more than 'the impartial views of science' (Mackinder 1911, 83). One of his textbooks closed with this peroration to emigration within the Empire:

> Those who can find work to-day in Britain should stay among friends, but those who have no work should cross the ocean and make new homes for themselves in Canada, or Australia, or New Zealand, or South Africa. In all these lands they will remain the subjects of our King Edward VII; the same flag will be theirs and they will not be among foreigners. (Mackinder 1906, 298)

Clearly, geography was a training in values as well as in material realities. Certain attitudes were taught by imperialism and others were necessary for its perpetuation. Their maritime adventures made the British the bravest people on earth, for Mackinder believed that

> [t]he rocks and the tempest demand courage and endurance more persistently than the wild beasts and sand storms of the wilderness. So the man who goes down to the seas becomes in the end master of the world. (Mackinder 1913, 102)

Mackinder argued also that the Empire taught a global perspective and gave many British people direct experience of ruling others, encouraging among them and their relatives a governing frame of mind:

> The effects of Empire are not, however, wholly economic; for good or for bad they are also moral. Most British families, whether rich or poor, have relatives in the colonies, and a widened outlook is the consequence. But in addition to colonists, properly so-called, and to mercantile agents within the tropics, there are in Asia and Africa at least ten thousand officers, civil and military, drawn largely from the middle classes, yet accustomed to the rule of subject races and to the thoughts of statesmen. (Mackinder 1902, 348)

Retaining the Empire required a martial attitude and here Mackinder's geography continued to be shaped by the values celebrated by Clements Markham as the heritage of exploration. Like Markham, Mackinder saw dangerous expeditions as both training for and example of the fortitude needed by an imperial people. It is striking that the duty that justified Mackinder's violent behaviour in Kenya was the patriotic desire to best an imperial rival, Germany, and that the same appetite for national pre-eminence informed his geopolitics. Prevailing in science seemed to require the same discipline, force and command over

others that were needed to prevail in international relations. In a world shaped inevitably by force, insisting that it was the patriotic duty of the British to retain global hegemony required that the British believed their own use of force did more than merely reflect the behaviour of their rivals. Mackinder argued that when the British used force they did so defensively and in order to bless the world with democracy. Mackinder's masculinity, then, excused the use of force in expeditions in the name of science, and in international relations in the name of democracy.

Mackinder retreated from his earlier repudiation of exploration not only because he needed the support of the expeditionary lobby to get a renewal of support from the Royal Geographical Society for the School of Geography at the University of Oxford (Kearns 2009a), but also because geography had to be more than science if it was to inculcate values. The traditions and practices of exploration and expedition celebrated competition between nations, the importance of physical bravery and the idea that success attends those who pursue their interests with forceful determination. Physical trial and force were part of an international competition in which scientific excellence was more alibi than goal. Identifying force as the basis of social contracts encouraged a majoritarian understanding of democracy and a martial view of international relations.

Challenging Mackinder

Certainly Mackinder was a creature of his time, an era when social Darwinism dominated social and political thought, yet the central terms of these relations between geography and geopolitics, between science and masculinity, between force and law, were contentious. Mackinder may have been comfortable taking geography outside the bounds of pure science in the service of Empire, but others at the Royal Geographical Society were less so. When, at the very time Mackinder was presenting his paper on 'Scope and methods', the Prince of Wales approached the Council of the Royal Geographical Society for assistance in establishing a new Imperial Institute to promote enthusiasm for and emigration to the colonies, the Council refused to circulate its members about the initiative with its President, Lord Aberdare, declaring that these imperial aims bore no close relation to the central purpose of the Society,

which was 'the promotion of geographical knowledge and scientific exploration' (Royal Geographical Society 1887, 2–3).

The Society tried to remain above politics, re-establishing scientific relations with German academics with what some saw as indecent haste after the First World War and welcoming with regularity and enthusiasm republican anarchists and honouring them for their scientific achievements (Kearns 2004). And while George Curzon was prominent in the successful campaign to suspend the admission of women Fellows after the experiment began in 1892, and, while he protested that he would 'contest *in toto* the general capability of women to contribute to scientific geographical knowledge' (*Times* 31 May 1893, 11d), when he was President in 1912 he advocated successfully the admission of women on the basis of their 'valuable and serious' 'additions to geographical knowledge' (Anderson 2006, 91). Others were more immediate in their rejection of the suggestion that geographical science could be served only by men. Not only did many other geographical societies precede the Royal in their admission of women (Bell and McEwan 1996), but both the President, Monstuart Grant Duff, and the Secretary, Douglas Freshfield, resigned over the rescinding of the 1892 decision to admit women (Bell and McEwan 1996; Goldie 1906). Freshfield challenged the presumption that most Fellows conformed to the heroic image of a robust man braving danger to return with the golden fleece of fresh discoveries. As he observed, only 'a comparatively small proportion of our Fellows can be makers of knowledge; most of us are content to be receivers and transmitters only' (*Times* 6 June 1893, 6e). Such humility was not universal but it is significant that it was available within the highest reaches of the Society.

Nor did everyone accept that explorers had a right to be unmindful of the lives of indigenous peoples as they raced each other to chart rivers or scale peaks and some contemporaries were very critical of the violence of such explorers as Henry Stanley (Driver 1991). Mary Kingsley learned, as Mackinder did not, enough of the local pidgin English to converse with her porters. She considered threatening porters with a pistol 'utter idiocy', thinking there 'something cowardly in it' (Kingsley 1897, 330). She boasted that she had 'never raised hand nor caused hand to be raised against a native' (Kingsley 1897, 503).

Empathy rather than coercion was at the heart of her expeditionary practice and she at least attributed this in part to her being a woman and perhaps thus not given so easily to male arrogance (Blunt 1994, 105–7). Thus she spoke of being able to feel secure in Africa by relying upon 'the ideas in men's and women's minds; and those ideas, which I think I may say you will always find, give you safety' (Kingsley 1897, 329). She claimed that her

capacity to think in black came from my not regarding the native form of mind as 'low' or 'inferior' or 'child-like,' or anything like that, but as a form of mind of different sort to white men's – yet a very good form of mind too, in its way. (Pearce 1990, 145)

George Bernard Shaw praised Kingsley for 'her common sense and goodwill', comparing her favourably with 'the wild beast-man, with his elephant rifle, and his atmosphere of dread and murder, making his way by mad selfish assassination out of the difficulties created by his own cowardice' (Pearce 1990, 92).

Just as with Markham and Mackinder, Kingsley offers a model of expeditionary practice that is not only an epistemology, a description of the way to acquire knowledge, but is also in miniature an exemplar of international relations. For Kingsley, empathy is not only a way to survive, it is a way to learn, by reducing rather than extending one's cultural distance from the people among whom one moved and upon whom one depended. There are evident limits to this humanism, but it did allow Kingsley to make the effort to understand local belief systems as structures of feeling suited to the livelihoods and experiences of those who affirmed them. She did not think there was much value in Europeans trying to convert Africans to their own presumably superior ways of thinking, concluding that '[t]he great difficulty is of course how to get people to understand each other' (Kingsley 1901, xvi). For Kingsley, respect and understanding justified caution and restraint in foreign relations, a striking contrast to Mackinder's presumption of cultural superiority that informed his references to barbarians, such as when he wrote in one textbook of the contrast evident in passing from Europe to Africa:

[a]t Gibraltar you are in a civilized and Christian country, under the British flag, with civilized and Christian Spain close at hand. At Tangier we are in a barbaric country, the people of which are Mohammedans. (Mackinder 1912, 103)

Social Darwinism was dominant at the Royal Geographical Society and Mackinder was no exception. For Mackinder:

> [T]he most important facts of contemporary political geography are the extent of the red patches of British dominion upon the map of the world, and the position of hostile customs frontiers. They are the cartographical expression of the eternal struggle for existence as it stands at the opening of the twentieth century. (Mackinder 1902, 343)

Mackinder repeatedly claimed a biological foundation for his view that the reality of international relations, inconvenient to liberal idealists, was pitiless competition, for 'Nature is ruthless, and we must build a Power able to contend on equal terms with other Powers, or step into the rank of States which exist on sufferance' (Mackinder 1905, 143). One RGS President, Francis Galton, wrote similarly of those marginalised by the Malthusian struggle for survival as 'a population for whom there is no place at the great table of nature' (Galton 1869, 356). The formulation of another Fellow of the RGS, Thomas Huxley, was widely accepted when he tweaked liberals that '[f]rom the point of view of the moralist the animal world is on about the same level as a gladiator's show' (Huxley nd, 330). In this famous article on 'The struggle for existence in human society', Huxley warned that if society tried to mitigate the natural cull of the weak, it was 'setting limits to the struggle', ensuring that it might not be the fittest who would go on to breed the next generation (Huxley nd, 331).

But, here again, Mackinder's view had its critics. Kropótkin detested Huxley's 'atrocious article' (Kropótkin 1962, 299) while one friend from the Royal Geographical Society, the explorer of the Amazon, Henry Walter Bates, agreed, writing to Kropótkin that it was 'a shame to think of what they have made of Darwin' (Kropótkin 1962, 300). Douglas Freshfield likewise sustained Kropótkin in his attacks upon Huxley, sending information which Kropótkin promised to use in an 'article on the numberless forms which mutual aid takes in our own times even though the structure of Society appears to be entirely individualistic' (Kropótkin 1892).

Kropótkin's work on mutual aid was a root and branch attack on the style of social Darwinism evident in Mackinder's writings. Kropótkin insisted that cooperation was a constant feature of human society and that upon this rested the higher forms of civilised life. Everything noble was more than individualistic. Language, law, technology, all were equally inconceivable without interaction and interdependence between individuals. In a decentralised social order more of this interdependence would take the form of interpersonal contact in ways that would foster a sense of empowerment among people.

Kropótkin's world of autonomous communities had reached its apogee in the federations of free cities found in the most advanced European regions of the Late Middle Ages (Kropótkin 1969). Large centralised states were a threat to these communes for the state leviathan concentrated power, raising the costs of defence, diverting resources to make tools of war, and draining initiative and autonomy from face-to-face communities. War might come, but it did not arise from the clash of national interests but rather from the ways it can serve the needs of the moneyed classes. At a time of heightened international tension, Kropótkin wrote that:

> [I]f war has not burst forth, it is especially due to influential financiers who find it advantageous that States should become more and more indebted. But the day on which Money will find its interest in fomenting war, human flocks will be driven against other human flocks, and will butcher one another to settle the affairs of the world's master financiers. (Kropótkin 1897, 12)

The challenge to Mackinder is clear: competition is not the inevitable sum of social life. Cooperation and federation are adaptive strategies that aid the higher development of civilisations, and the centralisation of power in states serves a class interest and not a general interest.

Mackinder explained society in terms of environment and spatial relations, but to do so he had to ignore what in 1918 Beatrice Webb described as

> another type of momentum – the uprising of the manual workers within each modern state [...] an uncomfortable shadow falling across his admirable maps of the rise and fall of empires. (Webb 1952, 158)

It is not only that Mackinder was hostile to socialism, which he was. He referred to the Labour voters who ejected him from parliament as indoctrinated by 'Proletarian Sunday Schools' so that 'Marxian catchwords have, for them, taken the place of Biblical texts. Only experience of life will win them to saner views; no argument will penetrate their ingrained doctrines' (*Times* 23 November

1922, 15a). He wrote of Lenin as a 'poison which fermented' (Mackinder 1924, 138) and of Russia as a country that 'has for the present ceased to be part of the civilized world' (Mackinder 1924, 226).

Beyond this hostility to socialism, Mackinder also saw locality as an alternative, and less dangerous, basis of identity than class. Social hierarchies and rule by experts were alike endangered by class-based voting and Mackinder was explicit in addressing his fellow elected representatives in the House of Commons, telling them that '[f]or my part I do not worship King Demos' (*Hansard* 19 February 1921, 369). Spatial abstractions, such as region or province, were easier to imagine as balancing one another, if they were not also understood to be internally divided by class in ways that might produce cross-regional alliances. Mackinder's spatial vision attached people to localities and treated geographically defined nations as racialised communities of fate. In this respect, there can only be loyalty or treason as the national interest is asserted to be primary and singular. Spatial thinking of this sort makes it easy to imagine nation-states as homogeneous and to imagine international relations as about the adjustment of territory rather than about the redistribution of wealth and resources.

Another contemporary of Mackinder, John Hobson, also wrote about territorial competition but he related it to economic relations rather than to mere biology. He argued that an unproductive use of economic surplus occurred when it was used in ways that did not promote life and livelihoods, as with arms spending or luxuries, such as alcohol, that harmed vitality. He began with class relations, arguing that too much economic surplus was used in unproductive ways because it was 'largely taken by private owners of some factor of production who are in a position to extort from society a payment which evokes no increase of productive efficacy, but is sheer waste' (Hobson 1914, 178). The monopoly power of financiers and industrialists kept wages down, argued Hobson, and this meant that there was insufficient demand to sell all goods produced thereby driving the search for foreign markets and foreign outlets for further investment. To get access to foreign labour, foreign resources, and foreign markets, these capitalists drew their home countries into wars abroad: '[t]his intervention of Governments for the supposed advantage of their citizens has had the unfortunate effect of presenting nations in the wholly false position of rival business firms' (Hobson 1914, 273).

In this way, 'weaker nations' become viewed 'as legitimate prey of stronger ones' and it is accepted that 'the sole moral duty of a statesman is to promote the strength and well-being of his own state, disregarding utterly the interests and so-called ''rights of others''' (Hobson 1974, 255).

He criticised the spatial language that he saw as obfuscating the real relations of imperialism:

> Paramount power, effective autonomy, emissary of civilisation, rectification of frontier, and a whole sliding scale of terms from 'hinterland' and 'sphere of influence' to 'effective occupation' and 'annexation' will serve as ready illustrations of a phraseology derived for purposes of concealment and encroachment. The Imperialist who sees modern history through these masks never grasps the 'brute' facts, but always sees them at several removes, refracted, interpreted, and glozed by convenient renderings. (Hobson 1988, 21)

A spatial view of the world order risks treating nation-states as having a single and uncontestable interest in foreign wars. Hobson was angered by the presentation of the imperial contest as 'inevitable', which he saw as a way of allowing politicians to evade questions of 'human responsibility' and instead hide behind 'a view of history which sees it composed of great tidal movements of economic or racial forces making for a partition of the earth' along racial lines (Hobson 1901, 82). Hobson returns our attention to the class interests that promote certain policies as the national interest and to the global human rights that should restrain interventions abroad.

For Mackinder there were two sets of relations between geography and geopolitics. In the first place, geographical analysis of races, empires and nations suggested the viability and necessity of certain geopolitical strategies. However, we have also seen that these relations between geography and geopolitics were more than merely scientific and that geography served also to inculcate among British youth the values that would lead them to take up the geopolitical challenge that Mackinder insisted was unavoidable. If Hobson questioned the scientific basis of the relations between geography and geopolitics, it was left to the greatest geographer of the age, Élisée Reclus, to refute the proposition that geography should be a training for Empire. Like his friend Kropótkin, Reclus did not see humanity as in competition with nature but rather he wrote that

> [h]umanity's development is most intimately connected with the nature that surrounds it. A secret harmony

exists between the earth and the peoples whom it nourishes, and when reckless societies allow themselves to meddle with that which creates the beauty of their domain, they always end up regretting it. (Reclus 2004, 125–6)

Geography should nourish a love for the beauty of nature so that children would grow up respecting all forms of life and cultivating their own lives in resonance with the pulse of nature for he was sure that civilised people were 'the conscience of the earth' (Reclus 1864, 763).

In the second place, Reclus stressed human interdependence. He understood human civilisation as a shared achievement, insisting that '[t]here is no longer any possibility of progress, other than for the world as a whole' (Reclus 1905, 37) given that the idea of separate human societies was now chimerical, there being no 'longer to be found completely homogeneous races, except perhaps in the Andaman Islands and Yesso' (Reclus 1884, 19). The apparent differences in wealth and technology between various peoples, most notably between those of Europe and Asia, were attributed by Reclus to the consequences of colonialism and were in any case historically recent and probably not long for this world. Hobson insisted that wealth, properly understood, was 'the power to sustain life' (Long 1996, 18). By this test, capitalist colonialism was impoverishing and Reclus noted with disgust that famines in India were accompanied by price speculation and rice export. Reclus, as Béatrice Giblin's notes, believed that '[f]amines and shortages cannot be systematically explained as natural disasters, but result also from the development of a market economy' (Giblin 2005, 140). Food security was a matter of justice rather than charity and in an interdependent world, '[t]he conquest of bread', he suggested, 'does not consist only in eating, but in eating bread that is one's human right' (Reclus 1908, 528). The lessons of geography should advance the cause of human solidarity and in his final magnificent synthetic work, *L'Homme et la Terre*, Reclus wrote that '[i]n its essence, human progress consists in common cause being found among all peoples' (Reclus 1908, 531). This is very different from geography in the service of Empire.

Echoes of Mackinder

The issues with which Mackinder and contemporaries wrestled are still with us and geography remains entwined with geopolitics and Empire, both in practice and in theory. In closing, I want to highlight three powerful echoes of the debates from a century ago. First, I want to note that for some people geography should still serve as aid to practices of statecraft that are distinctly imperialist (that is, they compromise the sovereignty of foreign peoples; Kearns 2009a). In this new phase of imperialism the tools of GIS have been of particular value. Second, for some people geography should still serve to inculcate manliness, and this is still thought to serve patriotism in ways that Markham and Mackinder would recognise at once. Third, for some people these martial attitudes remain vital to national survival and these theorists continue to draw inspiration from Mackinder's geopolitics in their insistence upon force as the essential basis of the relations between states. The field of geography remains saturated with issues arising from the practices of imperialism and engaging with Mackinder and his critics is more than a historical exercise, it is an urgent political responsibility.

GIS and the new imperialism

Geography remains a science with complicated relations with imperialism, as revealed by some recent adventures in GIS. Geoffrey Demarest spent 23 years in the US military, mainly in Latin America, including serving as the military attaché at the US Embassy in Guatemala from 1988 to 1991, and he is now an academic at the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, whence he has published a series of papers and books about the relations between economic development, military security, property rights and the mapping of those rights. In *Geoproperty* (Demarest 1998), his argument is that only private property conduces to civilisation and that beyond clear parcels of private (and, perhaps, well-defined communal) property there is nothing more than power-making-right, a world of terror and lawlessness. However, for Demarest, there is a further benefit of a clear property regime and that is that it allows efficient surveillance of insurgents for 'geographic behaviour is often revealed by public documents, especially property documents' and '[a]ny environment where public documents reveal relationships between people and places is going to present a less survivable battlefield to the insurgent leader' (Demarest 2009, 73).

Surveillance is evident also in Batson's research at the US National Defense Intelligence College, concerned with *Registering the human terrain: a valuation of cadastre*, that is with 'tying a ''person,'' an individual, a group, or a non-natural person such as an organization, to a geographical place through property records' (Batson 2008, xiii). The geographer Jerome Dobson proposed a project for creating a geographic information system for all parts of the world that would provide information at 'a pittance compared to what the intelligence community typically pays for far less effective information' (Dobson 2006, 2). The project was adopted by the American Geographical Society, which honoured it with the title of the Bowman Expeditions, and the initial research in Mexico was sponsored by the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, which appointed Geoffrey Demarest as its liaison to the project.

Having visited Mexico to plot rural land ownership, the team has provided a GIS that may prove useful to the Mexican government in its plans to privatise communal rural land, and to the US military in its pursuit of those Mexicans it identifies as insurgents. Other geographers have protested this alliance of GIS with military intelligence and in April 2009 the Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers asked the executive committee of the AAG to look into the claims that the indigenous peoples who were being mapped had protested as soon as they learned of the involvement of the FMSO and had asked that the Bowman Expeditions' México Indígena project both desist and return all data once (Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group 2009). This controversy concerns the right of indigenous people to refuse to be the objects of military intelligence (Mychalejko and Ryan 2009) and to resist the privatisation of their communal resources, too often simply the first step towards 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2003, 45).

Geography and the crisis of masculinity

Some geographers still worry about the relations between science and manliness. Recently, the Royal Geographical Society has been divided again between academics and explorers in debating whether it should once more fund large-scale expeditions to remote places, and this time too the issue has been presented in terms of the masculinity of hardy travel, and once again the claim has been made that this is a necessary route to valid knowl-

edge (see Maddrell 2010). Simon Reid-Henry (2009) argued that the age of expeditions was really, actually, finally over and that the fellows of the Royal Geographical Society should accept the fact and accept also the modernisation of the practice of geographical science. In contrast, the journalist A.A. Gill reported with approval that a recent special meeting of the Society to debate a motion in favour of large expeditions was opened by one gentleman who surveyed the meeting room of the Society, remarking with evident pleasure that they had gathered to discuss the matter in a room bedecked with 'the names of the great explorers. Above us, the pediment glows golden with the surnames of Scott and Livingstone, of Shackleton and Burton, and a hundred other glittering supermen of extremity', and Gill himself went on to praise 'discovery' as 'tumescently inspirational' (Gill 2009). Another Fellow of the Society was quoted as regretting that 'if you see someone posing by the South Pole with a husky, it is more likely to be a television celebrity than someone advancing the sum of human understanding' (Catling 2009).

On this occasion, the 'supermen of extremity' lost the vote (Royal Geographical Society 2009) leaving one of their supporters to claim that they will be back, for 'these explorers are made of stern stuff – if you've lost fingers to frostbite and toes to Amazon stingrays, you are more than capable of fighting for what you believe in' (Thomson 2009). This appeal to straight masculinity is also evident when the journalist Charles Moore recoils at the thought

> that the society has become more a trade union for academic geographers and less a body doing its own intellectual and practical work. It has set up a Space, Sexualities and Queer Working Group to promote interest in 'geographies {that unnecessary plural is always a bad sign} on issues related to sexualities {ditto} and queer studies'. (Moore 2009; interpolations by Moore)

Geopolitics and the necessity of Empire

These practical entanglements of geography with Empire are matched by a renewed theoretical attention to geography and geopolitics. In *Great powers and geopolitical change*, Jakub Grygiel bemoans the 'premature death of geography', suggesting that the study of international relations is dominated by social-scientific perspectives on power and ignores the natural-scientific insights 'characteristic of the early studies of geopolitics', notably those by the 'most well known geopolitical

writer, Sir Halford Mackinder' (Grygiel 2006, 6). Grygiel follows Mackinder in stressing the importance of competition over resources and the domination of trade routes and suggests that in this way it might be possible to 'maintain the American preponderance of power in the world' (Grygiel 2006, xii), recalling directly Mackinder's earlier desire to preserve British global hegemony. In a study of *Darwin and international relations*, Bradley Thayer makes a related argument that social-scientific explanations of international relations are incomplete without the supplement of evolutionary biology. He argues that war is an evolutionary adaptation in that it is an effective way to gain and retain resources, and that, furthermore, ethnic identity and xenophobia are also adaptations, allowing for the effective mobilisation of bellicose instincts. Thayer likewise looks back to Mackinder as one of the few theorists who showed 'sensitivity' (Thayer 2003, 148) to the strategic importance of resource competition in global conflict. In similar fashion to Mackinder, then, Thayer offers a biological account of international relations as an anarchic mutual calculation of relative power.

There is a broadly based turn to geography in international relations but, as Simon Dalby (2009) notes, it is to an environmentalist geography that allows theorists both to ignore modern geographical scholarship with its emphasis upon social and political factors, while also using older geographical arguments to attack the social-scientific approaches of modern political science. Robert Kaplan's recent article on 'The revenge of geography' exemplifies this return to geography, and to Mackinder in particular, for Kaplan suggests that 'perhaps the most significant guide to the revenge of geography is the father of modern geopolitics himself – Sir Halford J. Mackinder' (Kaplan 2009, 99). Kaplan's argument echoes Mackinder in at least three ways. In the first place, he offers an environmentalist explanation of inter-state conflict. Kaplan sees identities as essentially tribal and determined by geography. Unlike ethnic groups and tribes, states are not natural. expressing an 'inflexible, artificial reality' (Kaplan 2000, 39) which, in many parts of the world, is fast disappearing under the pressure of resource conflicts that result from humanity 'challenging nature far beyond its limits' so that 'nature is now taking its revenge' (Kaplan 2000, 18). Malthusian resource conflicts are, suggests Kaplan, producing the breakdown of states, the resurgence of primordial tribal identities, the merging of crime and war and a desperately dangerous world that scorns liberal idealism.

The second element in Kaplan's geopolitics, then, is an emphasis upon force. As with Mackinder, this is offered as a dose of realism against the delusions of idealists. For Kaplan, realism 'means focusing upon what divides humanity rather than on what unites it', upon 'the bleaker tides of passion that lie just beneath the veneer of civilization' (Kaplan 2009, 98). Population growth will exacerbate resource conflict, reducing much of the world to mere anarchy and, suggests Kaplan,

> [a]s long as there is no Leviathan to hold sway over the countries of the world, power struggles will continue to define international politics and a global civil society will remain out of reach. (Kaplan 2002, 107)

Kaplan can see only one solution to global anarchy and that is American hegemony, and this national exceptionalism is the third feature that Kaplan shares with Mackinder. Kaplan notes that with its 'enormous technological advantages', the United States will be '*the* military superpower for decades hence' and that as such '[t]he world in the foreseeable future will depend more on the preferences of Americans than on any other single factor' (Kaplan 1998, xv). His analysis of the causes of imperialism stresses the paradoxical pursuit of domestic peace through foreign intervention: 'the demand for absolute, undefiled security at home leads one to conquer the world' (Kaplan 2005, 5). The United States cannot avoid trying to project its power across the whole world, both because '[t]here is no credible force on the horizon with both our power and our values' (Kaplan 2002, 147) and because 'whether a global system reflects the values of the Western democracies or does not, makes all the difference in the world' (Kaplan 2002, 145).

Given this advocacy of imperialism, it is not surprising that Kaplan should turn to Mackinder for an analysis of geopolitics (Kearns 2009b). Stressing the environmental control on history makes the use of force not so much a policy choice as a necessity, and presents the imperialism of a democratic power as the best of possible worlds for almost everyone. As we engage with these new geographical arguments for imperialism, these 'architects of empire' (Morrissey in press), we can draw upon the critique of environmentalism that geographers subsequent to Mackinder have developed (Blaut 2000; Harvey 1996), but we might also return to the arguments of

those of Mackinder's contemporaries who despite sharing with him the apogee of the British Empire were yet able to see how force both required and reinforced a lack of empathy with distant strangers, how the claims of democratic exceptionalism were all too easily deployed in pursuit of sectional economic interests that undercut the autonomy and living standards of weaker folks abroad, how arguments from biological necessity took a very one-sided view of the social forces that promoted well-being and comfort, and how the development gap was produced and widened under specific historical circumstances that would neither last nor testify to any inherent cultural superiority. In questioning the place of force in geographical practice and theory, these alternatives to Mackinder offer a legacy that remains worthy of attention. The world is not only to be apprehended through force.

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