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# GEOPOLITICS

A Very Short Introduction

OXFORD

# Chapter 5

## Maps and geopolitics

### Introduction

At times of war and international discord, it is perhaps not surprising that public interest in maps and the places that they represent is greatest. When national survival is apparently at stake, this is understandable and enables national governments to explain and justify the dangers and threats facing citizens. In the aftermath of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt asked all American citizens to purchase maps and globes so that they could better understand the national security challenges confronting the United States and other allies such as Britain from the threat posed by Germany, Japan, and Italy.

#### **President Roosevelt's 23 February 1942 radio address**

**We must all understand and face the hard fact that our job now is to fight at distances, which extend all the way around the globe.**

**Look at your map. Look at the vast area of China, with its millions of fighting men. Look at the vast area of Russia, with its powerful armies and proven military might. Look at the British Isles, Australia, New Zealand, the Dutch Indies, India, the Near East, and the continent of Africa, with their**

resources of raw materials, and of peoples determined to resist Axis domination. Look too at North America, Central America, and South America . . . I ask you to look at your maps again, particularly at that portion of the Pacific Ocean lying west of Hawaii. Before this war even started, the Philippine Islands were already surrounded on three sides by Japanese power. On the west, the China side, the Japanese were in possession of the coast of China and the coast of Indo-China, which had been yielded to them by the Vichy French. On the north are the islands of Japan themselves, reaching down almost to northern Luzon. On the east are the Mandated Islands – which Japan had occupied exclusively, and had fortified in absolute violation of her written word.

The islands that lie between Hawaii and the Philippines . . . these islands, hundreds of them, appear only as small dots on most maps. But they cover a large strategic area. Guam lies in the middle of them – a lone outpost which we have never fortified.

The United States public responded to this presidential urging and purchased maps with considerable gusto, much to the commercial advantage of cartographic publishers such as Rand McNally. The National Geographical Society and its famous magazine *National Geographic* also enjoyed a wider readership. By the time American troops entered into military action in Europe, Asia, and the Pacific, citizens wanted to know where places such as Guadalcanal and Normandy were located on the global map. This quest for geographical certainty became all the more poignant when relatives were informed that family members were not going to be returning alive from those scattered theatres of war.

War, maps, and geography form a powerful triumvirate with one another. Accurate geographical information is vital as military



#### 18. FDR and the ‘fireside chat’

commanders and political leaders consider lines of supply, topographic advantage, modes of advancement, and possible retreat. The new maps which emerged in the 1940s showed American citizens the scale and extent of military operations across three continents as well as emphasizing a new polar-centred projection. As a consequence, readers and viewers were reminded of something rather significant – the United States may well be surrounded by two substantial bodies of water (the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean) but it was also at its northern edges proximate to the Soviet Union and northern Europe. While the full extent of this shift towards the North Pole was not fully felt until the onset of the cold war and the rise of the Soviet Union as a geopolitical threat, it did help to cognitively reposition the United States. Arguably, these kinds of cartographic shifts contributed to a new kind of geographical consciousness, which resurrected a more internationally orientated country eager to shape the post-war global order.

This chapter explores five cartographic moments for the purpose of further elucidating the connections between geopolitics and maps. First, the maps produced by Halford Mackinder are revisited because they present one of the most startling attempts to represent and interpret a new global order at the start of the 20th century. Later maps and writings by other geographers such as Isaiah Bowman played a significant role in reshaping the international boundaries of Europe, following the end of the First World War. These maps possess a long cultural afterlife as even today they are discussed and digested by Americans, Russians, and other political commentators and journalists in Latin America, Iran, and China. The reasons for this renaissance of interest vary depending on the location of readers. For instance, Uzbek security intellectuals have taken an interest because Mackinder described Central Asia as the ‘geographical pivot of history’. American strategists and historians such as Paul Kennedy have eagerly returned to these maps in order to understand better why America is interested in Central Asia and the Middle East – resource access and territorial advantage loom large in their accounts.

Second, Isaiah Bowman’s role on the Inquiry Committee and contribution to the 1919 Peace Conference is considered. As Europe entered an inter-war period, new political and ethnic boundaries were imposed on a changing continental map. Bowman played a major part in ensuring that political and cartographic transformation, which arguably continues to have a profound impact today on Europe and proximate regions such as the Middle East. Two empires – the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman – had disintegrated and the peace-makers based at Paris confronted the prospect of further instability and even revolution in places such as Bulgaria and Romania. Territory was believed to be an instrument of peace and good boundaries were therefore essential in the promotion of order and stability. Redesigning Europe, informed by principles such as self-determination (that an identifiable population had the right to choose the state it belongs to), proved to be a great deal more complicated than

simply changing the lines on a map. The British creation of Iraq in the early 1920s was only one such cartographic creation that currently haunts American-sponsored attempts to manufacture a functional and stable democracy.

Third, Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* series is investigated, with particular attention given to *The Nazi Strike*, because it brought the maps and geographical vocabularies associated with Halford Mackinder to a wider public domain. Produced for the United States War Department and the Signal Corp, the series was immensely important in explaining to viewers the political and geographical reasons behind the decision of the country to declare war on Germany and Japan. The series was hugely popular in the United States and presented a straightforward perspective on population, resources, and geographical location, which centred on the intrinsic power of the Euro-Asian heartland. Alongside new maps being popularized in newspapers and magazines, the geographical imagination of American citizens was being radically reshaped by war. This was to be profoundly important in subsequently preparing the imaginative terrain for a new global confrontation – the cold war.

Fourth, the emergence of new polar-centred maps is reviewed not least because it emphasized the lack of geographical distance between the two superpowers during the cold war. The invention of the long-range strategic bomber coupled with the inter-continental ballistic missile development played a critical role in this regard as time and space appeared to be annihilated. People spoke of world distances in terms of hours and minutes rather than weeks and days. Both sides invested in the collection, assessment, and dissemination of maps and photographs of other places. Spy flights, submarine surveying, and satellite photography were essential elements in this endeavour. Most famously, in October 1962, photographs taken by an American U2 spy plane performed an essential role in informing the Kennedy administration's decision to confront the Soviets over their

decision to locate missile facilities in Cuba. A Third World War was averted when the Soviets agreed to remove those missiles and President Kennedy resisted pressure from his military personnel to launch nuclear strikes against the Soviets.

Finally, we contemplate one recent endeavour by the American strategist Thomas Barnett to produce a new global map in the aftermath of 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror. Published in the magazine *Esquire* in March 2003, on the eve of the US–UK invasion of Iraq, his map dividing the world into a core and gap attracted much media and academic attention. For detractors, the map became a leitmotif of the Bush administration’s simplistic political mappings of the world. For supporters, Barnett’s map alongside the commentary captured the failings of many countries and regions, which appeared to be insufficiently connected to the global economy. As a consequence of their disconnection, they were judged to be more likely to be susceptible to hosting illegal arms trafficking, terror networks, and criminal activity.

Despite the occasional claim to the contrary, maps as images of political space are never neutral or transparent representations of reality. Writing in the midst of American bombing raids (which depended on cartographic intelligence) during the Vietnam conflict, the French political geographer, Yves Lacoste asserted:

The map, perhaps the central referent of geography, is, and has been, fundamentally an instrument of power. A map is an abstraction from concrete reality, which was designed and motivated by practical (political and military) concerns; it is a way of representing space, which facilitates its domination and control. To map . . . serves the practical interests of the State machine.

They are, as many critical cartographic studies by writers such as Brian Harley and Denis Wood have demonstrated, reflections of knowledge and power even if they can also be beautiful and transfixing. Geographers and cartographers have frequently been

employed by government agencies including the military to produce maps for their political leaders, whether it is the Survey of India, the Falklands Islands Dependencies Survey, US Army Corp of Engineers, or the Soviet Military Topographic Service. Maps have also played an important role in the history of particular countries such as inter-war Germany where cartographers played a major role in raising public consciousness about a 'Greater Germany' and the territorial injustices caused by the 1919 Peace Conference.

## The geographical pivot of history: Halford Mackinder and the post-Columbian era

Halford Mackinder remains one of the foremost figures in British geography and even to this day Oxford University continues to appoint a Mackinder Chair in Geography. Appointed a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in his early twenties, Mackinder was appointed as a Reader in Geography at Oxford and later became director of the London School of Economics. He was elected a Member of Parliament and became a prominent supporter of Joseph Chamberlain and the imperial reform movement. Like many of his contemporaries in politics and academia, he was preoccupied with the growing presence of Germany and the United States in global economic and political affairs. Geography, he contended, was an essential element in the education of British citizenry because, as he noted in 1907,

our aim must be to make our whole people think Imperially – think that is to say in spaces that are world wide – and to this end our geographical teaching should be directed.

He later became a member of the Colonial Office's Visual Instruction Committee (COVIC) and played a major role in shaping future educational materials for schools and the wider reading public alike.

In January 1904, Halford Mackinder presented his paper 'The Geographical Pivot of History' to the Royal Geographical Society in London. Illustrated with several maps, it offered a sweeping analysis of global history and geography. His talk coincided with a period often characterized as an era of global time/space compression. Between 1880 and 1914, the historian Stephen Kern has noted the world was profoundly changed by the imposition of standardized time, the invention of the radio, the consolidation of the railways, the introduction of flight coupled with the culmination of a European colonial project initiated by Spain in the 15th century. In Mackinder's judgement, the world was about to enter a post-Columbian era where there would be little opportunity for imperial states such as Britain to make new territorial conquests because there were few opportunities left to pursue.

The polar regions aside, Mackinder's presentation combined history, geography, and politics in order to promote a way of seeing the world as a whole. The timing of the talk was significant and echoed an emerging pan-European geographical orthodoxy. As Mike Heffernan has noted, French policy makers and journalists were also preoccupied with the subject and the French newspaper *L'Illustration* published an essay in 1900 about the changing global geopolitical scene alongside a series of maps depicting the inevitability of large-scale continental states. On the other side of the Atlantic, the decision of Theodore Roosevelt's administration to expand America's portfolio in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines marked a new phase of imperial expansion by the United States. Public interest in maps and pictorial representations of Cuba and the Philippines expanded, as American citizens were eager to locate these possessions on newly updated maps, charts, and globes. The American Geographical Society (established in 1854) and the more popular National Geographical Society (created in 1888) played their part in stimulating the geographical imagination of members and subscribers to the *National Geographic*. So just when Mackinder

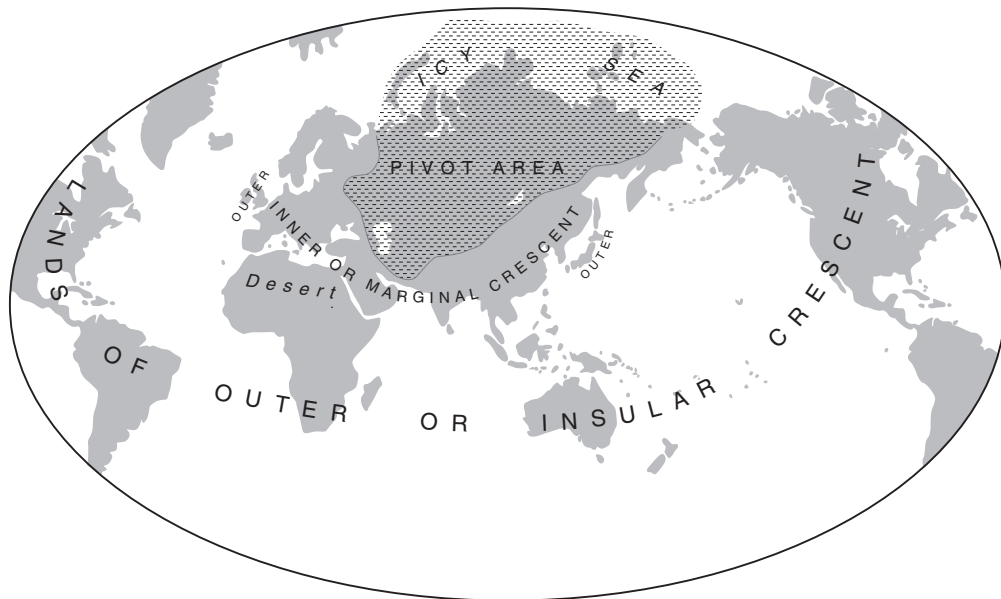
warned that his compatriots needed to appreciate the global stage more than ever, American citizens also sought to expand their geographical horizons.

In the post-Columbian era, Mackinder contended that countries such as Britain would have to achieve relative efficiency gains rather than pin their hopes on acquiring new territories. However, as the balance of power that had previously favoured sea powers such as Britain was coming to a close and increasingly shifted towards supposedly land-based powers such as Germany and Russia, the invention of the railways was held to be catalytic. Mackinder believed that an area of the world called by him the 'Heartland' held the key to the future distribution of power and resources. This equated to a vast portion of the Euro-Asian landmass and contained great resource and demographic potential. As Mackinder noted,

The oversetting of the balance of power in favour of the pivot state... would permit of the use of vast continental resources for fleet-building, and the empire would then be in sight. This might happen if Germany were to ally herself with Russia.

Whoever controlled the Heartland, Mackinder contended, had the potential to dominate the entire world. If Britain was not wary then a Russo-German consortium might enjoy such global hegemony because they would have the resources to mobilize and project land- and sea-based power.

In order to achieve domination, the 'pivot area' was considered to be the entry/exit to this Heartland. In his sweeping analysis of world history, Mackinder noted a recurring geographical pattern – successive imperial entities had fought for control of this region, which would now be equated with modern-day Siberia and Central Asia. Writing in 1904, Mackinder was only too well aware that the British had been locked into a so-called 'Great Game' with the Russians for control over this 'pivot' because it was proximate



19. The geographical pivot of history

to British India. Maps and surveys played their part in this Anglo-Russian encounter, as both sides were eager to develop geographical intelligence in order to promote their territorial and resource interests.

Accompanying his analysis of this 'geographical pivot' and future great power struggle was a map, which has been understood as one of the most important ever to be produced by a professional geographer.

Using a Mercator projection, the map enlarges Russia and Greenland and radically shrinks Africa and Latin America. The viewer's attention is immediately drawn to the centre of the map and in this case the portion of the globe labelled as the pivot area. Other swathes of the Earth are depicted as the inner or marginal crescent, the outer or insular crescent and North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula are merely described as desert. Antarctica does not feature on the map at all.

While Mackinder's cartographic and intellectual influence on British foreign policy making has been much debated, his global vision was greatly appreciated by a subsequent generation of German scholars anxious to understand the machinations of power. While he overestimated the strategic significance of the Russian 'heartland' and underestimated the emerging power of the United States, his writings and maps helped to shape a prevailing geopolitical culture of a country and empire entering into an uncertain era. One of the more disturbing aspects of much of his writings, especially from a vantage point of the early 21st century, is his frequent reference to race and 'English blood' as part of his explanation why certain racial groups were better able to govern and manage the world. He also, in his 1904 presentation to the Royal Geographical Society, identified the 'East' as perpetually threatening, unstable, and at times racially incapable of peaceful governance. Conjoining race and civilization, however, was not the sole preserve of Mackinder as American presidents

such as Theodore Roosevelt often talked about the role of Americans in civilizing less fortunate others in Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region.

## Woodrow Wilson's geographer: Isaiah Bowman and the 1919 Peace Conference

Shortly after entering the First World War, the United States President Woodrow Wilson created an Inquiry Committee. Colonel House and 150 members of the Committee produced 2,000 reports and 1,200 maps focusing on the ethnic, political, and historical boundaries of Europe. One of the key members was the geographer Isaiah Bowman, later President of Johns Hopkins University, who not only helped to create some of those maps but also contributed to a new geopolitical approach which sought to inform the American public about the First World War and the implications for Europe and the wider world. In 1915, Bowman was appointed director of the American Geographical Society (AGS) and he remained in post for the next 20 years. As a member of the Inquiry Committee, he ensured that the AGS was at the forefront of attempts to inform successive American administrations particularly about the post-First World War reconstruction of Europe.

### **Maps and Nazi Germany**

**After the 1919 Peace Conference, German geographers and cartographers began to produce new maps depicting a Germany imperilled and threatened by the new borders settled upon in Versailles. The maps, through their use of symbols, colour, and scale, drew attention to German-speaking communities outside the inter-war German state and to depict 'bleeding borders', which threatened German**

economic interests as well by dividing up existing infrastructure. The German geographer Albrecht Penck also developed the notion of the German *Volks- und Kulturboden* that described German national identity in terms of cultural landscape. Under German influence, the countryside was well ordered and managed in contrast to that of its Slavic neighbours. As a consequence, a new Germany would not only retain all of the German Empire but also Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia. These maps depicting a 'Greater Germany' were widely reproduced in newspapers, magazines, posters, postcards, and school atlases. In terms of map production, the Weimar Republic was far more influential in shaping inter-war German cartographic culture.

By the early 1940s, when Nazi conquests had exceeded those lands and territories described as part of a 'Greater Germany', those earlier maps inspired by Penck were banned from Germany.

Bowman led the work of the Inquiry Committee for one year and later was critical in ensuring the liaison between mapmakers and their superiors at the Peace Conference. Professionally, he was appointed as Chief Territorial Specialist and the Committee was supposed to produce maps and charts which would help the American delegation to persuade European counterparts over particular territorial solutions for Eastern and Central Europe. Bowman was supported by regional specialists responsible for the Franco-German border, Poland and Russia, Austria-Hungary, the Balkans, and others areas such as the Far East. Those resulting maps were considered essential in the determination of the new geopolitical boundaries of Europe following the defeat of imperial Germany and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires.



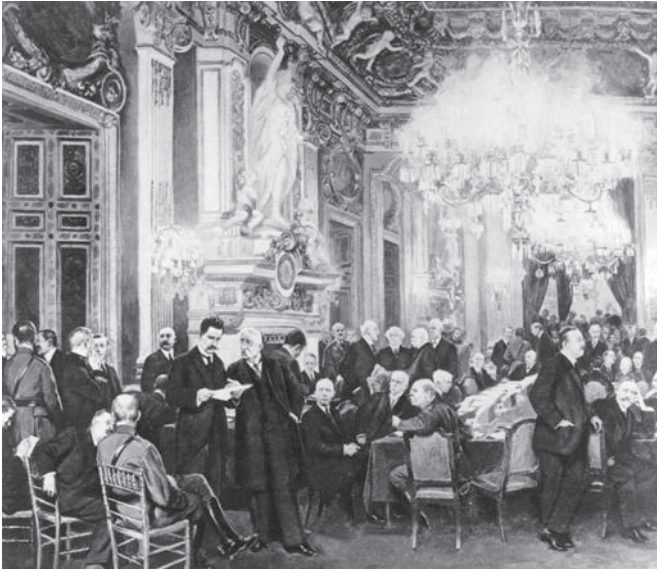
**20. Europe in 1914 and 1919**

Geographical intelligence was understood to be an important instrument of power. As Bowman explained to a colleague in England:

Where the experts of [other] nations came fully stocked with ideas, they did not have the mass of information assembled in a flexible, workable form. Only the US delegation has such a resource, and we anticipated that this would give us a negotiating advantage even over the French, in whose capital city the fate of Europe and the Near East would be decided.

Bowman and the Inquiry Committee considered the production and shipment of maps and other data from New York to Paris to be both rational and strategic in ensuring that the principle of national self-determination within Europe could be informed by geographical data. Over 20 European peoples were identified as having the right to nationhood and the work of the Inquiry was instrumental in transferring territory and shifting national boundaries in the aftermath of the First World War.

When he arrived in Paris, Bowman discovered that the European delegations were deeply divided over the fate of port cities such as Danzig and the regional geographies of South-East Europe. In a manner reminiscent of later Euro-American squabbles over the conduct of the Global War on Terror, American negotiators were disappointed that their vision of a liberal internationalism existed uneasily with a Europe fixated on territorial boundaries and the ownership of specific places. But as Neil Smith, the author of the most definitive biography of Bowman has noted, this notion of a clash of geographical visions is flawed – American negotiators wanted the political boundaries of Europe settled so that they could then commence the really important business of creating open trading markets and networks. At the same time, of course, they ensured that America's territorial empire in Latin America and the Pacific was unchallenged by European colonial powers.



## 21. The Paris Peace Conference

Bowman published his textbook *The New World* (1921) and helped to create a new association called the Council on Foreign Relations. The Council's journal, *Foreign Affairs*, was to become a major outlet for foreign policy experts to consider the affairs of the United States in the wider world. Bowman believed, contrary to the isolationists, that America should play a central role in the development and evolution of the world economy. As his later work demonstrated, his vision (and accompanying maps) for the United States as a global power necessarily involved thinking through how power could be exercised at the expense of European colonial powers. For Bowman, power, if it were going to be exercised effectively over territories, would have to be informed by a commitment to free trade and diffused through international institutions in order to avoid the charge of American imperialism. He was later to be instrumental in providing specialist advice to

the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration in the early 1940s, leading to the establishment of the United Nations. Its location in the American city of New York was testimony to how geographers such as Bowman were able to promote American national interests as simultaneously representing something more universal.

## ***Why We Fight: Frank Capra and The Nazi Strike (1942)***

The Italian-American film director Frank Capra was the driving force behind the creation of the award-winning *Why We Fight* series. Commissioned by the United States government, they were designed to show American servicemen and women why the country was engaged in war with enemies scattered around the world. Later it was shown to the American public as part of a propaganda drive to explain and legitimate involvement in the Second World War. The *Why We Fight* series contains seven one-hour films – *Prelude to War*, *The Nazi Strike*, *Divide and Rule*, *Battle of Britain*, *Battle of Russia* (Parts 1 and 2), *Battle of China*, and finally, *War Comes to America*. The latter was in some respects the most significant because it was intended to demonstrate why America could not remain isolationist with regard to global affairs.

In terms of the visual qualities of the series, *The Nazi Strike* is cartographically one of the most prominent. Hitler's plans for global domination are described and explained by direct reference to Mackinder's maps and famous geographical dictum:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland

Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island

Who rules the World Island commands the World.

Viewers are informed that Hitler's strategic plans have been informed by the science of geopolitics and that, unlike other



**22. The 'Heartland', from *The Nazi Strike* (1942)**

nations, the German regime has collected and analysed information on places and their resources – both in terms of human and physical assets. As a consequence of their geopolitical perspectives, Hitler and his associates are depicted as hell-bent on securing ever more territory so that Germany can eventually claim the entire 'World Island' of Africa, Asia, and Europe. Given the demographic and physical resources of the World Island, the film suggests that it is only a matter of time before Germany controls the rest of the world including the Americas. The final image of that section of the film depicts the globe covered by a Nazi swastika.

The Capra series is just one, albeit important, example of how the geographical imaginations of American citizens were being stretched by the global conflict involving American troops in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Ocean. Other filmmakers, journalists, and mapmakers such as John Huston, John Ford, and Charles Owens of the *Los Angeles Times* also played their part in revisiting the use of maps and their accompanying projections. Spurred on by Robert Strausz-Hupe's assertion that 'maps of every

kind and description are the indispensable medium for diffusing the findings of geopolitics', these new maps were designed to show readers why Americans were fighting in particular places such as Guam. For West Coast audiences, the fighting in the Pacific was of particular interest, not least because so many servicemen were entering and leaving cities such as Los Angeles and San Diego in order to proceed to that war theatre – due west.

During the war itself, professional geographers were recruited to the American and British war effort. In Britain, for instance, geographers contributed to map production, photographic analysis, and the production of manuals and guides for military operations. Polar geographer Brian Roberts was commissioned to write guides on Iceland and the Arctic for British Naval Intelligence. There was no shortage of material for those academic contributors as by 1942 the Central Interpretation Unit had accumulated millions of photographs of continental Europe, taken by the Royal Air Force. These aerial photographs provided the basis for the construction of terrain models, which were considered to be essential in helping military planners interpret the places later to be targeted either for bombing and/or invasion.

These maps whether screened or drawn had lasting consequences on the collective Anglo-American geographical imaginations and provided a visual reservoir for later cartographers to explain and represent the cold war confrontation facing the United States and Western Europe after 1945. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was among the vanguard of this transformation and was given a huge globe as a Christmas present in December 1942. The advent of the cold war and the geopolitical confrontation with the Soviet Union transformed the strategic significance of Alaska and the high Arctic and new maps emphasizing the geographical proximity of the Soviet Union replaced those depicting the threat posed by Japan following its attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

## Cartography, geopolitics, and the cold war

Diplomatic historian Alan Henrikson has argued that the post-1945 period ushered into existence a shift in the collective geographical imagination from a continental to a nascent global outlook. Victory in 1945 did not bring public reassurance, however. If anything, events in the Pacific theatre of war alongside those in continental Europe confirmed that the United States could no longer take comfort in the fact that they were separated by thousands of miles from European and Asian centres of population. In the aftermath of that conflict, mapmakers and geographers such as Alexander De Seversky and Richard Edes Harrison deployed new polar-centred projections in order to emphasize the country's proximity to their cold war opponent, the Soviet Union. Harrison, who provided technical advice to the State Department and the Office of Strategic Services (later to become the CIA), was highly influential in promoting a view that Americans had to adapt to a rather different geographical state of mind from the one initiated when the country had entered into the First World War and participated in the 1919 Peace Conference.

Producing polar projections was just one element of this geographical revolution. Labelled air-age global geographers, Harrison in particular wanted to alert the American public to the geographical basics: the Earth is spherical and highly interconnected. Although the term globalization had yet to be invented, the articles and books in the United States in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War could be seen as an attempt to inculcate citizens with an understanding of those basic propositions. As a consequence of dominant cartographic projections such as Mercator, this new generation of post-war cartographers believed that too many Americans believed that the earth was flat rather than spherical. American strategic thinking needed to shift northwards and consider Dutch Harbor in Alaska

rather than Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The remedy for a new generation lay, so Harrison and his supporters believed, in adopting globes rather than maps because they were better able to represent relative distance and proximity.

The adoption of an aerial perspective also led to a new way of looking at the world, which not only emphasized the holistic qualities of the Earth but also encouraged a new way of thinking about distance in terms of flying hours. The polar perspective adopted by cartographers such as Harrison further cemented this sense of time-space compression. The lofty vantage of the North Pole helped to define the cold war zeitgeist. New projections such as the equidistant were judged to be most satisfactory because they depicted the world continuously and conveyed more accurately distance from one place to another. Polar-centred projections such as the ones popularized by Harrison were later to be adopted by military authorities and, with the help of a series of concentric circles, used to depict the operating range of bomber aircraft and missiles. The end result of the shift away from the Mercator projection was to persuade American personnel and their Soviet military counterparts to view the Arctic as the geopolitical barrier between the Americas and the Euro-Asian landmass.

General Arnold, the head of the US Army's air forces, wrote in *National Geographic* in 1946 that 'A surprise attack could readily come from across the roof of the world unless we were in possession of adequate airbases outflanking such a route of approach'. The development of the Distance Early Warning (DEW) line in the high Arctic was one of the most tangible expressions of this polar perspective, as the US military invested in a series of radar stations stretching from north-west Alaska to the eastern extremes of Canada in addition to Iceland and Greenland. From the mid-1950s onwards, the radar line, in conjunction with two others (Mid-Canada and Pinetree) was designed to detect incoming Soviet bombers and missiles. The DEW was the



### 23. A polar-centred map projection

cornerstone of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD). At its height, the DEW line involved 63 stations and stretched in effect for over 6,000 miles. For the Canadians, who operated the DEW stations in their northern territories, the creation of this cold war infrastructure helped to cement their sovereignty in the Arctic by giving them the means to survey their own territory.

#### Figure of the earth and the cold war

During the cold war, cartographers and geodetic scholars highlighted the importance of developing a system for

accurately locating places and their relative distances from one another. Any successful targeting of places by inter-continental ballistic missiles would depend upon this information. The term 'figure of the earth' is used to describe this process of determining the actual geographies of the Earth. With the growing tension between the two superpowers, American military establishments became ever more eager to obtain detailed information about the Eastern Bloc. New satellite systems such as CORONA, launched in 1958, were considered an essential element in the collection of geographical intelligence. During the Vietnam conflict, satellite photography was used to generate even more detailed maps of South-East Asia, which proved influential for American bombing missions, with dire consequences for civilians.

This heightened sense of geographical proximity was arguably one of the reasons why the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective governments were so wary of one another. By the time the Cuban missile crisis had erupted in the early 1960s, American and Soviet bombers were easily capable of traversing the Arctic Ocean and missile technology had moved on to the point whereby presidents and chairmen and their strategic advisors routinely talked about having merely minutes rather than hours to respond to a direct assault. This mental and geographical shrinkage also had implications for cold war popular culture as film, television programming, advertisements, and cartoons represented global shrinkage to their public audiences. Popular writers like Alastair Maclean penned thrillers such as *Ice Station Zebra* and *Night Without End*, which centred stories of intrigue and danger on the North Pole. Later converted into a Hollywood production, *Ice Station Zebra* in particular brought to the wide screen a visceral sense of how the Arctic was at the frontline of superpower confrontation.

### American mapping of the Soviet threat

The cold war confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States stimulated numerous representations of the menace posed by either side. In the case of American maps, the Soviet Union was often depicted as a Bear threatening neighbouring Europe. *Time*, in an article published in March 1952, depicted the Soviet Union as flowing blood-like towards Western Europe and in the process threatening to ‘flood’ or ‘stain’ the territories red. Other maps reproduced in *Saturday Evening Post* and *Life* depicted the Soviet Union as a gigantic octopus capable of interfering in the affairs of many states simultaneously.

After 40 years of cold war confrontation, the American geographical imagination had been well and truly shifted northwards. Successive generations came to appreciate that the United States and the Soviet Union were separated by an Arctic Ocean which no longer acted as any kind of physical barrier to inter-continental bombers and submarines capable of traversing under the icecap. By the end of the cold war in 1989–90, the DEW line had become an environmental hazard and political liability. American tourists were now travelling on former Soviet Union icebreakers to the North Pole, which was no longer inaccessible because of icecap melting. The geographical shift implied was significant, as the Arctic is now at the frontline of a rather different kind of engagement, in this case involving industrial pollutants and contamination from rusting cold war infrastructure.

### The new Pentagon map: Thomas Barnett and post-9/11 United States

Thomas Barnett’s ‘The Pentagon’s new map’ was published in the magazine, *Esquire*, in March 2003. Composed in the aftermath of

the 11 September attacks on the United States, Barnett's short article was accompanied by a map, which overturned cold war cartographies of East and West and even post-cold war cartographies of North and South. Described as a consultant to the Pentagon and faculty member of the US Naval War College, his new cartography of power and fear is based on a simple geographical division between gap and core. The significance of his mapping endeavours lies not only in terms of timing of publication but also because Barnett and other high-profile neo-conservative commentators such as Robert Kagan and Francis Fukuyama have become dominant in post-cold war and now post-9/11 America.

As at the end of the Second World War, the overturning of cold war cartographies led to a profound sense of geographical crisis in the 1990s. The mapping of the post-cold war period was carried out with some gusto as intellectuals and ideologues argued over the significance of the collapse of communist regimes including the fragmentation of the Soviet Union. For intellectuals associated with the Project of the New American Century, the Clinton administration's embrace of globalization and a multilateral world was considered dangerously misguided. Rather than entering into a world where cooperation and deterritorialized forms of governance would predominate, they believed that the United States had to be prepared to use its military and political hegemony to dominate a world that had arguably become more dangerous.

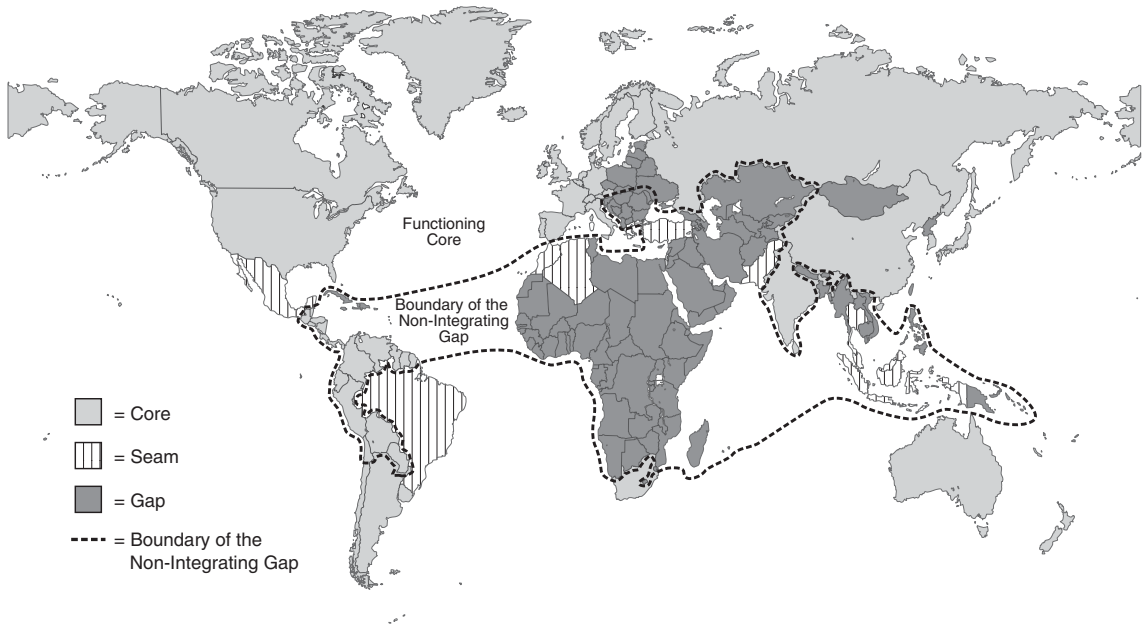
**Maps, satellite photography, and intelligence:  
Saddam Hussein and the United States**

The British journalist Robert Fisk recalled how a German arms dealer had told him of a meeting he had with officials in the Pentagon in the early 1980s:

**‘Mr Fisk . . . at the very beginning of the war, in September of 1980, I was invited to go to the Pentagon,’ he said. ‘There I was handed the very latest US satellite photographs of the Iranian front lines. You could see everything on the pictures. There were the Iranian gun emplacements in Abadan and behind Khorramshahr, the lines of trenches on the eastern side of the Karun River, the tank revetments – thousands of them – all the way up the Iranian side of the border towards Kurdistan. No army could want more than this. And I travelled with these maps from Washington by air to Frankfurt and from Frankfurt on Iraqi Airways straight to Baghdad. The Iraqis were very, very grateful!’**

In terms of Barnett’s mapping project, the world is unquestionably regarded as threatening, with terror networks and rogue states able to circumvent the geopolitical architecture of the global order. Being disconnected from the global community and its territorial mosaic of states is considered dangerous for those living in the core. In a world divided between a ‘functioning core’ and a ‘non-integrating gap’, Barnett’s new map identifies those countries which share American values and those who do not. In effect, its simple bifurcation of the world contributes to a justification for projections of American power in particular territorial spaces such as Iraq and possibly Iran in the future.

Barnett claims that his vision was informed by a simple geographical epiphany – danger should be informed by a sense of where, not who. In other words, this geographical imagination, like Mackinder and other geopolitical authors before him, is concerned to identify and represent global dangers on a global scale. In his follow-up book, Barnett uses two maps to further extend his thesis of a world divided into two portions. In the first map, which was used in his *Esquire* article, the globe is divided into two portions and a blue stain radiates along the equator



**24. Barnett's functioning core and non-integrating gap**

depicting this threatening non-integrating gap. These are parts of the world that are either occupied by failing states or ones poorly integrated into the prevailing global order. The second map depicts American interventions in the post-1990 era and includes all operations concerned with humanitarian intervention, combat, evacuation, and contingent positioning. In essence, the aim of the two maps is to illustrate how American forces frequently are involved in this non-integrating gap, with little apparent strategic advantage. The deployments in the 1990s are criticized by Barnett for being poorly thought out in terms of how they might aid America's economic and security interests.

Global political space, as Susan Roberts and other geographers have noted, is conceived as either well connected/formatted or disconnected/corrupted. The United States, in this computer-like world, is the manager and neo-liberal globalization the dominant programme. Barnett contends that the United States must pursue a strategy, which is to expand the membership of the core and to intervene decisively in the non-integrating gap. In order to execute these duties, the United States must be prepared to act unilaterally and pre-emptively to reconfigure the global order. New rules of engagement are needed therefore with the non-integrated gap, precisely because it does not conform to the order to be found in the core. Institutions such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) are perceived to be obstacles that seek to constrain American power at exactly the moment when the country needs a 'free hand' to impose order and stability in the unruly corners of the earth. Such apparent disdain for the ICC would also extend to the United Nations and international law more generally.

In the light of those circumstances, America's imperial role becomes naturalized within his maps and commentaries. Barnett's contention that the United States is engaged in a form of system management will surprise many who would critically question the role of the country in promoting democracy, open markets, and liberty in the face of its activities in the Third World during

the cold war and its aftermath. Moreover, to assert that bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda network are 'pure products of the Gap' is a curious reading of an individual and group which owes its existence in part to cold war American foreign policy in conjunction with US–Saudi relations and US–Pakistani relations forged over the last 60 years. The Pentagon's new map is a dangerous fantasy and the experiences of post-2003 Iraq reveal how dangerous it can be for the US military to encourage democracy and open markets in a place where they are viewed by many as colonial occupiers and not a benign hegemony.

## Conclusions

At the heart of geopolitics lies an interest in seeing the world and maps remain the favoured medium for depicting these so-called earthly realities. Critical geopolitical writers, along with historians of cartography, tend to be sceptical of anyone who claims that their maps are beyond political and geographical conceits and prejudices. Maps are conceived as instruments of power and states have long recognized the importance of mapping. Indeed it has been common for many countries, especially those with disputed boundaries and territories, to retain a tight control over the production and circulation of maps. In the case of Argentina and India, for instance, mapping is often carried out by their militaries. It also remains a federal offence in Argentina to produce maps which do not refer to the Falkland Islands as the *Islas Malvinas* and therefore an Argentine territory as opposed to a British one.

More generally, state-sanctioned maps can provide vital clues to a country's changing geopolitical imagination. While this chapter has concentrated on a few Anglo-American examples of changing mapping projections in the last hundred years, there is a longer and richer cartographic tradition spanning the Western, Islamic, and the Confucian worlds. In China, for example, new efforts are being made to raise the public's awareness of Africa as a social contact, as trading and economic investment between the two

parties has increased. At the same time, however, other important moments in the historical geography of the People's Republic continue to be emphasized within school education and national media, such as the impact of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in the 1920s and 1930s, the indivisibility of China and Taiwan, and the need to counter American hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.