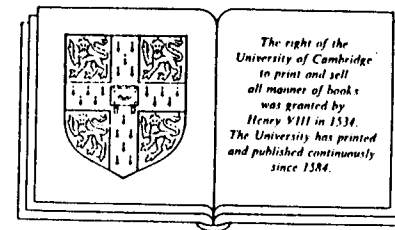


Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations

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To
Lawrence E. Gelfand and
Ellis W. Hawley, and
to the memory of
Armin Rappaport

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Preface

The history of American foreign relations, we have been told again and again, is a backwater of scholarly inquiry. According to the familiar indictment, addressed in some of the essays that follow, the study of American foreign relations has been dominated by an ethnocentric point of view, mired in detail, short on synthesis, and desperately in need of new directions. The tale of woe reminds us of the Maine farmer who was asked if a recent hurricane had damaged his barn. "Don't know," he answered. "Haven't found it yet." Not all is lost, however. In fact, historians of American foreign relations have been developing fresh topics, mining foreign archives, and applying new methods. Some scholars have sought to reconceptualize the field; others have explored new ways to think about older approaches.

The essays in this volume demonstrate the field's vitality. They are not intended to rehash old debates or to rebut specific critics. Nor are they designed as historiographical surveys of the literature. Instead, the essays present some of the new topics of inquiry and some of the innovative analytical approaches that have emerged in recent years. They point to the variety of ways scholars go about explaining the history of American foreign relations. And they are offered here in an effort to define the field, point research in fresh directions, and stimulate cross-disciplinary thinking, especially between historians and political scientists.

Numerous friends and colleagues helped us with this book and deserve special mention here. Many of the following essays first appeared in *Diplomatic History* and the *Journal of American History*. We want to thank the staffs of both journals for their assistance, especially David Thelen and Richard Blackett of the *Journal of American History* and Mary Ann Heiss and Toby D. Rosenthal of *Diplomatic History*. We are also indebted to Elizabeth Mahan and George Herring for their help with the project, and to the authors for taking the time to critique each other's work. In addition, thanks are due to Alexandra Nickerson for her work on the index, and to the Ohio State University and the University of

Mental Maps

ALAN K. HENRIKSON

The term *mental map*, which most people understand quite intuitively, requires definition.¹ In what follows, *mental map* will be taken to mean an ordered but continually adapting structure of the mind—alternatively conceivable as a process—by reference to which a person acquires, codes, stores, recalls, reorganizes, and applies, in thought or in action, information about his or her large-scale geographical environment, in part or in its entirety. Still more briefly, such a map is the cognitive frame on the basis of which historians of international relations, like diplomats and others who think and act internationally, orient themselves in the world.² The purpose of this essay is to show how close attention to these mental frameworks can illuminate international decisions and thereby offer historians and other scholars a valuable new perspective on American foreign policy and world history.

The structures of these maps can be highly complex, although they do tend to have a number of common features. Adapting terms from the work of Kevin Lynch, who applied them only on the urban scale, I list the following constituent elements of many mental maps. These maps consist of the *paths*, or channels along which a person regularly travels;

- 1 A familiar example of the popular conception of a mental map is the artist Saul Steinberg's myopic drawing, "View of the World from 9th Avenue," reproduced in Harold Rosenberg, *Saul Steinberg* (New York, 1978), 79.
- 2 For an elaboration see Alan K. Henrikson, "The Geographical 'Mental Maps' of American Foreign Policy Makers," *International Political Science Review* 1 (October 1980): 495-530. The conception of mental, or cognitive, maps explained therein is strongly influenced by Gestalt psychology, which emphasizes that perception takes place in organized conceptual wholes, not in stimulus-response fashion. The term *cognitive map* was coined by the psychologist Edward C. Tolman, "Cognitive Maps in Rats and Men," *Psychological Review* 55 (July 1948): 189-208. The expression *mental map*, though used somewhat differently by them, has been given currency by Peter Gould and Rodney White, *Mental Maps* (Harmondsworth, England, 1974). For other such studies, none of them applied to really large-scale problems such as the issues of international relations, see Roger M. Downs and David Stea, eds., *Image and Environment: Cognitive Mapping and Spatial Behavior* (Chicago, 1973); and their more popular work, *Maps in Minds: Reflections on Cognitive Mapping* (New York, 1977). In addition see Gary T. Moore and Reginald G. Golledge, *Environmental Knowing: Theories, Research, and Methods* (Stroudsburg, PA, 1976).

the *edges*, or internal and external boundaries that inhibit his movements; the geographical-cultural *districts*, or regions into which he moves or may wish to gain access; the *nodes*, or the intersections on which his activity centers; and the *landmarks*, or signs to which he refers for self-location, and perhaps also for the orientation and the direction of others.³

Many concrete, historically known, internationally salient examples can be cited in illustration. A few are given. Mental-map paths might include images of the Silk Route, the Persian Corridor, and the Alaska-Siberia Air Bridge—historical recollections that might be relevant again. Edges might include the Iron Curtain, the Berlin Wall, and the Korean Demilitarized Zone—Cold War vestiges. Districts would include the cases of Tacna-Arica, Ogaden, and Kashmir—that is, disputed territories. Nodes would include such crossroads and meeting places as Jerusalem, Singapore, and Vienna. Landmarks refer to places such as the Rock of Gibraltar, Mount Fuji, and the Brandenburg Gate. None of these reference points, lines, or planes need be thought of consciously, by their names or even by their images, in order to be parts of the cognitive maps of those who orient themselves by them. Often, however, persons do think of these geographical features explicitly, particularly when they are objects of public discussion, perhaps because they are focuses of international tension.⁴

Mental maps often are latent. They may be thought of as “triggered” into use whenever a person is required to make a spatial decision, that is, when he or she confronts a problem that necessitates a choice among alternative real or imagined movements in space. Moreover, mental maps tend to be somewhat narrowly thematic, that is, pertinent to specific kinds of spatial problems, such as military, economic, or political challenges.

The spatial problems in question may be those of a complete observer who tries to intuit and explain the movements of others who are closer to the decisional center of world affairs. To illustrate: Whether the lead-

3 Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA, 1960), 46–49; Henrikson, “Geographical ‘Mental Maps,’” 519–20.

4 A very useful synopsis of current international geographical conflicts is Alan J. Day, ed., *Border and Territorial Disputes* (London, 1982). More thematically selective and interpretive works include Michael Kidron and Dan Smith, *The War Atlas: Armed Conflict—Armed Peace* (New York, 1983); Gérard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau, *Atlas Stratégique: Géopolitique des rapports de force dans le monde* (Malesherbes, France, 1983); and John Keegan and Andrew Wheatcroft, *Zones of Conflict: An Atlas of Future War* (New York, 1986). For an especially authoritative recent treatise on the logic and legalities of formal geographical divisions see J. R. V. Prescott, *Political Frontiers and Boundaries* (London, 1987).

ership of the Soviet Union in 1979 would exploit the turmoil in and around Iran to launch a military drive southward to gain the age-old Russian objective of a warm water port on the Indian Ocean was a question that entailed active, imaginative “participation” in Soviet geostrategic thinking.⁵ To try to determine what Moscow might do about a separatist drive by any of its central Asian republics is another vicarious psychogeographical test. The answers to such questions, and the deeper political-geographical understanding that helps to provide such answers, should partially determine the response pattern of officials in Washington and other capitals.

Although geographical mental maps are relatively stable structures, they are by no means fixed. They can be altered radically by technology—the atomic bomb, the ballistic missile, or the orbital spacecraft. Technological progress has caused some writers, such as John H. Herz, to proclaim the demise of the “territorial state.” As Herz points out, now that power can destroy power, from center to center, “everything is different.”⁶ Traditional geographical concepts and complacencies nevertheless sometimes endure. The very factor that made them unrealistic—scientific and technical innovation—also can be used to rehabilitate them. President Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative, a highly territorial concept promising a shield over North America, is a leading case in point.

Mental maps also can be changed by adoption of new geostrategies, or “game plans,” as they sometimes are called today.⁷ The granddaddy of these in international relations is the “containment” concept. Originated by George Kennan, this notion has dominated American thinking throughout the Cold War era. In his influential Mr. “X” article of 1947, Kennan laid down what became a guideline for all future American national security policy. In light of Moscow’s outlook and recent behavior, he stated, “it will be clearly seen that the Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series

5 See, for example, Selig S. Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations* (New York, 1981).

6 John H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York, 1959), 108. See also some of the essays in Herz’s collection, *The Nation-State and the Crisis of World Politics* (New York, 1976). The argument that the historic notion of territoriality—as provider of security—and of the state—as protector of society—was shattered by Hiroshima and Nagasaki is the unstated premise of a work such as Gregg Herken’s ironic *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York, 1982).

7 See, for example, Brzezinski, *Game Plan: A Geostrategic Framework for the Conduct of the U.S.-Soviet Contest* (Boston, 1986).

of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy, but which cannot be charmed or talked out of existence."⁸

Although Kennan probably did not intend his concept to become the basis for a highly militarized, global geostrategy resulting in the establishment of bases and the conduct of military operations on virtually all of the sectors of the Soviet bloc's periphery, he was in truth responsible for the policy formulation that suggested such a "strategic monstrosity," as the philosopher-columnist Walter Lippmann then called it.⁹ Years later, Kennan indicated that he had agreed with most of Lippmann's critique, lamenting that he had not employed such rigorous analysis himself.¹⁰

That Kennan did misrepresent his own thinking is supported by John Lewis Gaddis in *Strategies of Containment*. In Gaddis's view, what Kennan actually favored was something like a classical balance of power among continents, to be achieved through close American cooperation with several of the other "vital power centers," particularly Great Britain, Germany, and Japan.¹¹ The conceptual-geographical map underlying such an idea is very different from that connoted by "containment," which focused Western attention on the periphery rather than on the center.¹²

As this example of Kennan's containment doctrine will serve to illustrate, the geostrategic concepts that enter into political discourse need not be only an individual's. Mental geography need not be the exclusive domain of the private person, the dream wanderings of an idiosyncratic spirit. Although there is no such thing as a geographical group mind, a transcendent group consciousness of space, geographical thinking can be common property, socially shared, as was the case with manifest destiny in the 1840s.

In foreign affairs, owing to the fact that most members of a society never have visited or at least are not closely familiar with distant foreign societies, geographical mental maps tend not to be very detailed or complicated. This is perhaps especially true for the American people, most of whom have geographical mental maps that are fairly general, both in

8 The text of the article is included, under the same title, in George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* (Chicago, 1951).

9 Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York, 1947), 18.

10 Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950* (Boston, 1967), chap. 15.

11 Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York, 1982), chap. 2.

12 This point is made in Alan K. Henrikson, "America's Changing Place in the World: From 'Periphery' to 'Centre'?" in *Centre and Periphery: Spatial Variation in Politics*, ed. Jean Gottmann (Beverly Hills, 1980), 73-100, esp. 88-89.

the sense of being commonly shared and in the sense of being abstractly formed, if not actually vague.

In fact, Americans historically have tended to think of "foreign" affairs as being transacted through relatively few paths or channels—over the Atlantic (from New York or Washington to London or Paris or maybe Bonn) and across the Pacific (from San Francisco or Los Angeles to Tokyo or Beijing or maybe Singapore). Diplomacy in the strict, official sense is a more narrow-gauged transaction. It is not conducted between countries, but between capital cities. For American officials, unlike their French counterparts, diplomacy is not, geopsychologically, a radiating, or *tous azimuts*, pattern of communication. In the post-Second World War period, of course, the paths and nodes of American diplomatic movement and contact have greatly multiplied. The fabled "globe-hopping" of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, for instance, considerably widened and sometimes snarled a vast American diplomatic network.

Diplomats' cognitive patterns for organizing space, it should be emphasized, need not be and usually are not "pictures in the head," that is, deliberate visualizations of geographical places or of the documentary maps made of them.¹³ Mental maps are dynamic cognitive systems that, somewhat like software programs used in computers, can generate images in the mind's eye, much as on a monitor. But these projections are not the basic, mentally stored data. The mental map itself is the spatial-geographical information that is possessed, not the graphic or technicolor representation of it.

Geographical information can include valuations. A statesman's purely cognitive geographical map often is closely related to his substantive "world view," or *weltanschauung*. The paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks that constitute his historically shaped mental map usually have positive or negative connotations and other qualitative judgments attached to them. Some places have been considered safe ("Fortress America") and others have been felt to be dangerous ("Spanish Cockpit"). Some lands have been seen as fertile ("Southeast Asian Rice Bowl") and others have been reported as barren ("Nullarbor Plain").

In addition, it should be noted that the inhabitants of geographic places—districts, in Lynch's lexicon—are not (in the perceptual maps of others, and perhaps even those of the subjects themselves), wholly separable from them.¹⁴ Everyone is part of someone else's environment, even

13 The somewhat misleading expression "pictures in our heads" originated with Walter Lippmann in his seminal study *Public Opinion* (New York, 1922). A similarly graphic phrase, "scratches on our minds," was the original title of Harold R. Isaacs's evocative *Images of Asia: American Views of China and India* (New York, 1958).

14 The psychologist Kurt Lewin's concept of "life space" includes even the perceiving

if not as fixedly integral to it as are the physical features of geography. Men and milieu blend. To Lawrence of Arabia, the Bedouins seemed at one with the desert itself. To Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the Eskimos made the Arctic and its vacancies feel "friendly." To American servicemen in Indochina, the Vietcong seemed able to survive on a bowl of rice per day. Part of the reason why the geographic world is valued, in short, is because it is peopled. Mental maps, like the world they reflect, are alive.

Having examined what a mental map is, let us proceed to consider how it can be applied to what is perhaps still the central problem of American diplomacy: how to co-inhabit the earth with the Soviet Union. After studying first the Americans' and then briefly the Russians' historically conditioned mental maps of their respective places in the world, we may then be in a better position to understand their continuing geopolitical deadlock. In order to do that, however, one must be able to determine, with some certainty, what the mental maps of leaders and peoples in the United States, the Soviet Union, and other countries really are. Several methods will be identified that may assist historians in this purpose of psychogeographical discovery.

An understanding of mental maps, as well as of the revolutionary changes that occurred after World War II in the technology of warfare, enables us to see that the United States and the Soviet Union continued in the postwar period to obey more or less the same national and ideological imperatives they always had obeyed, but in a radically altered real and imaginary spatio-temporal context.¹⁵ The respective "spheres of influence" of the two countries, hitherto distant from one another and relatively small, now seemed to overlap—in Europe, in Asia, and even in the Arctic, emerging as a possible air-age Mediterranean. The planet on which the two countries suddenly emerged as superpowers seemed much reduced, indeed shrunken. A Herbert Block ("Herblock") cartoon in the *Washington Post* in 1947 showed a ball-sized earth, labeled "One World," with a towering Uncle Sam on top pointing a finger downward and saying to a similarly gigantic Uncle Joe Stalin facing him, "I'm Here To Stay, Too."¹⁶ Their circumstances affected their consciousness.

As early as the 1830s, the historian recalls, both America and Russia had been marked out by Alexis de Tocqueville and other Europeans as

subject. Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology*, trans. Fritz Heider and Grace M. Heider (New York, 1936).

15 This is the argument I advance in "The Map as an 'Idea': The Role of Cartographic Imagery During the Second World War," *The American Cartographer* 2 (April 1975): 19–53.

16 For the cartoon see *ibid.*, 46.

certain one day "to sway the destinies of half the globe."¹⁷ Geostrategically as well as in their political cultures, the two countries have developed very differently. That is our interest here. The United States developed by the mid-twentieth century as a maritime power with trans-oceanic allies. The Soviet Union became by that time a truly predominant continental power with mostly contiguous satellites.

This distinction became almost axiomatic in American official strategic thinking in subsequent years. "Russia can protect its most important client states or attack all but one of its most likely enemies without going to sea," Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, a former chief of naval operations, pointed out a quarter of a century later. "By contrast, the industry and trade of the United States depend on ocean traffic in both directions and most of its important allies are on the far side of the broad oceans as well."¹⁸ On the basis of their different geographies and associated political relationships, the two sides have developed very different military strategies and force structures. This divergence in security policy has generated a sense of "asymmetry" that has greatly complicated the task of trying to arrive at mutually acceptable arms control arrangements.¹⁹ The trade-offs necessary to agreement were extremely difficult to measure. As two astute American Sovietologists, Helmut Sonnenfeldt and William G. Hyland, noted, Moscow seemed to feel itself continually in need of "compensations."²⁰

In the global mental geography of America's naval strategists especially, the United States is, in Admiral Zumwalt's words, "a 'world island' whose

17 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Phillips Bradley, 2 vols. (New York, 1960), 1: 452. The American diplomat-turned-historian Louis J. Halle, in *The Cold War as History* (New York, 1967), argues on the basis of Tocqueville's remarkable prophecy, in part a geographical insight, that "the historical circumstances, themselves, had an ineluctable quality that left the Russians little choice but to move as they did." He likens the two superpowers to a scorpion and a tarantula in a "bottle" (pp. xiii, 10–11).

18 Zumwalt, *On Watch: A Memoir* (New York, 1976), 60.

19 See, for example, U.S. Department of Defense, *Report of Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger to the Congress on the FY 1983 Budget, FY 1984 Authorization Request, and FY 1983–1987 Defense Programs* (Washington, 1982), 2:12: "We must recognize the global threat to our interests posed by the overall asymmetry in the types of nuclear warheads and the comprehensive coverage and operational characteristics of Soviet nuclear systems." Weinberger particularly noted the steady increase in the number of the Soviet Union's SS-20s, for which there was, in the early 1980s, no obvious NATO counterpart. This indicated a need for deployment in Western Europe of Pershing II and cruise missiles, both as a further deterrent and (although it vigorously was denied) also as possible bargaining counters.

20 Sonnenfeldt and Hyland, *Soviet Perspectives on Security*, Adelphi Paper No. 150 (Spring 1979).

every activity is bound up with use of the seas."²¹ This conception has strong antecedents in the American political-geographical tradition, dating back to Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*.²² As Mahan understood, during most of its history the United States had been relatively isolated. This isolation had contributed to its security but had also made it difficult to predict how Americans would react to European or other encroachment from overseas. The American people had enjoyed almost a century of "free security," in part owing to the advantage of their remote and resistant geography. They further were privileged during most decades of the nineteenth century by the de facto protection of the British navy, which was never politically or even intellectually acknowledged.²³

To be sure, there were historical periods when Americans have felt insecure. During the colonial era, as Max Savelle explains, the Anglo-Americans settled on the Atlantic coast feared that they progressively were being "encircled" by a ring of forts and rivers—nodes and routes—in the hinterland. Their tormenters were the Catholic French and their Jesuit-indoctrinated Indian allies.²⁴ British military operations during the American Revolution also demonstrated the vulnerability of the new country's position. The burning of Washington, DC, during the War of 1812 further traumatized the coast-based nation, giving rise to temporary thoughts of moving the national capital to the Ohio Valley and ultimately perhaps into the Mississippi region. And the movement of Mexican troops in 1846 across the Rio Grande into what President James K. Polk considered American territory demonstrated the country's vulnerability to aggression from the southwestern quarter.

A geopolitical subtext of these various military conflicts, most of them at the margins of the continent, was the American apprehension that a European-style "balance of power" might be established in North America. During the international intrigue on the Texas question in the early

21 Zumwalt, *On Watch*, 60.

22 See Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston, 1890), 42. On Mahan's central part in the formulation of American imperial ideas see Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, 1963), 80–101.

23 C. Vann Woodward, "The Age of Reinterpretation," *American Historical Review* 66 (October 1960): 1–19; Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston, 1943), 16–22.

24 Savelle, with the assistance of Margaret Anne Fisher, *The Origins of American Diplomacy: The International History of Angloamerica, 1492–1763* (New York, 1968), esp. 512–33. Shorter but equally comprehensive works on the contest of imperial strategies on the continent of North America are Richard W. Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (New York, 1960); and William J. Eccles, *France in America* (New York, 1972).

1840s, French Foreign Minister François Guizot declared: "In America, as in Europe, by reason of our political and commercial interests we need independence, an equilibrium of the several states [*l'équilibre des divers Etats*]. This is the essential idea which ought to determine the policy of France in America." As Frederick Merk has emphasized, this notion of an "*équilibre américain*" was anathema to Polk and most other Americans, who naturally believed that they and their ancestors had come to the New World to escape the deadly balancing of the Old.²⁵ The mental maps of Americans at that time simply had no room for such a European idea.

The Civil War once again raised the specter of a North American balance. Military or diplomatic intervention by Great Britain and France could mean not merely the permanent breakup of the Federal Union itself but also the fractionizing of the whole continent, including Canada and Mexico, into an international system. The best way to preclude European intervention, it seemed, was to prevent contact between the Confederate States of America and the continental powers by blockading the long Confederate coastline. "Never did sea power play a greater or a more decisive part," as Mahan later proudly proclaimed, "than in the contest which determined that the course of the world's history would be modified by the existence of one great nation, instead of several rival States, in the North American continent."²⁶

In the twentieth century, with the United States consolidated and stronger, there have been even fewer challenges to Americans' sense of automatic continental security. The project to construct a canal through Panama did suggest to Mahan and other imaginative strategists a future "Mediterraneanizing" of the Caribbean, but a progressive buildup of American naval strength allayed most such fears.²⁷ To be sure, President Woodrow Wilson did send U.S. naval units to the coast of Mexico in

25 Merk, with Lois Bannister Merk, *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism, 1843–1849* (New York, 1966), chap. 3. On British imperial strategy in that era and American reactions to it see Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815–1908* (London, 1967); and Kinley J. Brauer, "The United States and British Imperial Expansion, 1815–60," *Diplomatic History* 12 (Winter 1988): 19–37.

26 Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, 44.

27 *Ibid.*, 33–35. An even more imaginative geographical "analogy" (Mahan's term) is President Theodore Roosevelt's fear of "another Kiaochow," that is, a German-established fortified port, on the coast of Venezuela. See Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore, 1956), 400. Here the mental configuration being superimposed upon the complex Caribbean-Central American region is that of the Shantung Peninsula and Gulf of Pechili area in Northeast Asia, where the Germans had gained a concession, including Kiaochow, in 1897. That situation is described in detail in William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890–1902*, 2d ed. (New York, 1960), chap. 14, map on p. 455.

order to block anticipated European arms shipments, and the interception and release of the Zimmermann telegram in early 1917 did arouse American fears of imperial Germany's support of Mexican irredentist claims. The Pancho Villa raids into Texas and New Mexico, however, already had caused Wilson to authorize General John J. Pershing to carry out a punitive expedition to foreclose such a possibility.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 challenged isolationist notions about the impregnability of the Western Hemisphere. As Michigan Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg later admitted: "That day ended isolationism for any realist."²⁸ Twenty years later, the Soviet Union's military support for the Cuban regime of Fidel Castro, especially the attempted placement of intermediate-range missiles there in October 1962, once again threatened the continental complacency of most North Americans. Besides the direct security threat, it posed a political danger—that the North American environment could become a Europe-like international system. Under these circumstances, Soviet insistence that Cuba had every right to international protection from outside the Western Hemisphere was difficult for American officials to accept.²⁹

Despite these dangers, the basic U.S. mental map of North America, unlike that of Soviet Russia, has been one of a continent at peace. Most citizens of the United States believe their country can have unguarded borders with its neighbors—or at least, in the case of Mexico, a border with no more than wire fences.³⁰ The geographic conditions of American life, as noted by Frederick Jackson Turner, Ellen Church Semple, Ralph

28 Vandenberg quoted in Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935–41* (Ithaca, 1966), 273. See also *ibid.*, 121–34.

29 Secretary of State Dean Rusk proposed, revealingly, during a White House meeting on 16 October 1962 that the United States get word to Castro, perhaps through the Canadian ambassador in Havana, that "this is no longer support for Cuba, that Cuba is being victimized here, and that, uh, the Soviets are preparing Cuba for destruction or betrayal." "White House Tapes and Minutes of the Cuban Missile Crisis: ExComm Meetings, October 1962," *International Security* 10 (Summer 1985): 172. For recent discussion of the missile crisis, in which the defense-of-Cuba theme is recurrent, see James G. Hershberg, "Before 'The Missiles of October': Did Kennedy Plan a Military Strike against Cuba?" *Diplomatic History* 14 (Spring 1990): 163–98; and Bernd Greiner, "The Soviet View: An Interview with Sergo Mikoyan," with commentary by Raymond L. Garthoff, Barton J. Bernstein, Marc Trachtenberg, and Thomas G. Patterson, *ibid.*, 205–56.

30 On geopolitics across the U.S. northern frontier see Richard A. Preston, *The Defence of the Undefended Border: Planning for War in North America, 1867–1939* (Montreal, 1977); and Richard Gwyn, *The 49th Paradox: Canada in North America* (Toronto, 1985). On relations across the U.S. southern border see J. W. House, *Frontier on the Rio Grande: A Political Geography of Development and Social Deprivation* (Oxford, England, 1982); and Alan Riding, *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans* (New York, 1985).

H. Brown, and others, have been comparatively stable, despite the continuing drama of westward-moving settlement.³¹ The journalist Joel Garreau, despite his limning of new and emergent mental-geographical entities in his sensational *The Nine Nations of North America*, freely states, "I do not think that North America is flying apart, or that it should."³²

Our present ways of thinking about geopolitical relationships, such as that between the United States and the Soviet Union, are not adequate. A particularly dangerous style of argument is that involving the use of geographical analogies. The sociologist C. Wright Mills, for instance, cautioned in *The Causes of World War Three* against the consequences of basing U.S. troops, ships, and airplanes around the Soviet periphery. "It is easy to see why the Russians consider these bases as aggressive and provocative," he argued. "It is as if, from the American viewpoint, Soviet bases of similar type encircled the North American continent."³³

The general counterargument to such tendentious and possibly misleading comparisons is the anti-"mirror imaging" counsel, which warns Americans against seeing only themselves when they think they are looking at the Soviet Union.³⁴ False projections of motive and method may be the result. Americans cannot *know* the Soviet geographical mind indirectly, only by reasoning, subconsciously or consciously, from their own feelings regarding their own changing physical-political situation, assumed without thinking to be comparable to the geopolitical predicaments of the Russians. Even experts sometimes resort to slipshod reasoning, in public exposition if not in their own private thinking. Kennan, for instance, while explaining at an informal press conference in August 1950 why it would be unwise to extend military operations north of the 38th parallel in Korea, commented, "I think you can see that if you put the shoe on the other foot and think how it would be with us if Soviet

31 Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1947); Semple, *American History and Its Geographic Conditions* (Boston, 1903); Brown, *Historical Geography of the United States* (New York, 1948). Noteworthy among recent such writings are the geographically sensitive works of William H. Goetzmann, including *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803–1863* (New Haven, 1959), *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York, 1967), *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery* (New York, 1986), and, with his son William N. Goetzmann, *The West of the Imagination* (New York, 1986).

32 Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (Boston, 1981), xvi.

33 Mills, *The Causes of World War Three* (New York, 1958), 107.

34 The term "mirror image" was applied to the U.S.-USSR conflict by Urie Bronfenbrenner in "The Mirror Image in Soviet-American Relations: A Social Psychologist's Report," *Journal of Social Issues* 17:3 (1961): 45–56.

forces began to come within say seventeen miles of Southern California in fighting Mexico."³⁵ If an accurate sense of another society's behavior space cannot be built up by the comparative or projective geographical imagination alone, how can it be gained?

There are at least three basic ways to acquire such knowledge. One is through the careful, detailed analysis of the cartographic traditions of countries such as the United States and the Soviet Union. Arguably, there is no *better* evidence of their unique cognitive and perceptual worlds than the actual maps they have employed.³⁶ The progressive movement of the United States on the map—from the margins of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, to a continental position between Europe and Asia, to a central place on an Arctic-centered global chart—is easy to trace.³⁷ The Soviet cartographic self-image is not difficult to discern either. Zbigniew Brzezinski is right in *Game Plan* to stress the diplomatic-historical pertinence of the fact that former Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko habitually spent hours in his office contemplating a map of the world. This was, of course, the standard Soviet global chart, centered on Moscow with North and South America distinctly peripheralized—and to a rectilinear American eye, badly distorted besides.³⁸

One must not assume, of course, that there is a one-to-one correspondence between such physical maps and the minds of those who behold them.³⁹ A senior U.S. official once mentioned a discussion he and others had in Moscow with Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader at the time. Brezhnev had before him a map of the Soviet Union with red arrows all around it showing many American attack routes converging upon Soviet territory. Brezhnev asked how the U.S. government could expect him to be reasonable (in the current arms-control negotiations) when this was being done to him! As the American official commented, "I didn't know

35 Quoted by John Lewis Gaddis, "The Strategic Perspective: The 'Defensive Perimeter' Concept, 1947–1951," in *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947–1950*, ed. Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (New York, 1980), 109.

36 This is the premise of my prefatory essay, "Frameworks for the World," in *Scholars' Guide to Washington, D.C., for Cartography and Remote Sensing Imagery (Maps, Charts, Aerial Photographs, Satellite Images, Cartographic Literature and Geographic Information Systems)*, ed. Ralph E. Ehrenberg (Washington, 1987), ix–xiii.

37 See, for example, the use of map illustrations in Henrikson, "America's Changing Place in the World." Among many excellent cartographic collections focused on the United States in its North American setting, one may consult, for historical cartography, Seymour I. Schwartz and Ralph E. Ehrenberg, *The Mapping of America* (New York, 1980); and, for modern cartography, National Geographic Society, *Atlas of North America: Space Age Portrait of a Continent* (Washington, 1985).

38 Brzezinski, *Game Plan*, 3–8.

39 Brzezinski elides this distinction by labeling a small reproduction of the typical Soviet world map, "The Global View from Moscow." *Ibid.*, 4.

whether those were the maps they really used, or whether it was just put there for me to read upside down."⁴⁰

A second method for determining the way nations view themselves spatially—that is, "reading" their mental maps—is to study the geographical content of their language. This includes the metaphors and analogies used, as well as straightforward geographical terms. In addition to the examples of such explicit geographical comparisons as already have been mentioned, one may cite President Harry S. Truman's likening of the challenge the United States faced in Korea in 1950 to that earlier confronted during the Greek civil war.⁴¹

In discussing the Indochina conflict, to cite another example, Secretary of State Dean Rusk often compared the Communist threat to Vietnam in the 1960s to the Fascist threat to Czechoslovakia and the rest of Europe in the 1930s. He also drew geopolitical parallels with the immediate postwar period. "Try and imagine a map of the world if it were redrawn as it would have been had we and others not been interested and concerned in what happened in Iran, Turkey, and Greece, and Berlin and Korea," he asked.⁴² At the beginning of the 1980s, another geopolitical parallel became popular. Central America, because it appeared to be either the next "domino" or a possible "quagmire," was labeled "another Vietnam."⁴³ As such examples indicate, statesmen and others frequently think in geographical as well as in historical analogies, reasoning spatially as well as temporally.⁴⁴

One particular geographical metaphor especially important in interpreting the U.S.-Soviet geopolitical contest in the Cold War is Sir Halford Mackinder's "Heartland" concept. "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland / Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island / Who rules the World Island commands the World," the British geographer hypothesized.⁴⁵ Mackinder created a geopolitical image that, some

40 Stated in conversation with author. Compare with Sonnenfeldt and Hyland, *Soviet Perspectives on Security*, 20: "Her [the Soviet Union's] complaints about allied nuclear weapons systems and American forward bases have a tactical rationale in SALT polemics, but it would be surprising if these aspects are dismissed in Soviet military analysis."

41 Quoted in Ernest R. May, *Lessons of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1973).

42 Quoted in Thomas J. Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson Years* (New York, 1988), 424.

43 See Thomas G. Paterson, "Historical Memory and Illusive Victories: Vietnam and Central America," *Diplomatic History* 12 (Winter 1988): 1–18.

44 Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York, 1986).

45 Quoted in W. H. Parker, *Mackinder: Geography as an Aid to Statecraft* (Oxford, 1982), 184–85. Here the most pertinent of Mackinder's writings are *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, with additional papers, ed. Andrew J. Pearce (New York, 1962), and

have argued, conceptually inspired the American policy of containment. It is somewhat disconcerting that the Heartland idea, supposedly a master concept for explaining Soviet geopolitical behavior in the world, was scarcely known in Moscow at the start of the Cold War and did not correspond with how the Russians organized their geographical space.⁴⁶ To the extent, therefore, that the containment policy was based on the Heartland concept and to the negligible degree that the Heartland notion corresponded with actual Soviet thinking, the American encirclement posture was based on an illusion.

A third way to try to understand better the geographical mentality of countries such as the United States and the Soviet Union is to travel to and through them—physically to stand and to walk where Americans and Russians have been, as they made policy decisions and participated in historical events. This point is (literally) pedestrian, but no less sensible for that. The tradition of such travel is an honored one. From Tocqueville and Kennan to historians and politicians today, America and Russia have been thoroughly “tramped” by observers attempting vicariously to share the national experiences and to discover the national viewpoints of those countries. In the maritime realm (and perhaps in the field of historical exploration generally), Samuel Eliot Morison holds pride of place. Introducing his study of Christopher Columbus, whose routes Morison personally resailed, the historian sharply comments: “Most biographies of the Admiral might well be entitled ‘Columbus to the Water’s Edge.’”⁴⁷ The same might be said of much diplomatic history, perhaps especially American diplomatic history. Diplomacy, like hiking and sailing, should be considered an open-air and also a worldwide sport. Its field, as Secretary of State Dean Acheson liked to say, is nothing less than “the vast external realm.”⁴⁸

A visit to the West Coast of the United States, for example, will help the diplomatic historian to appreciate the possible meanings—commercial, cultural, and political—of repeated declarations by American leaders that the United States is a “Pacific” as well as an “Atlantic” power. A journey to the Soviet Union, especially for the first time, can also prompt

⁴⁶ “The Round World and the Winning of the Peace,” *Foreign Affairs* 21 (July 1943): 595–605. It is not well known that Mackinder first conceived of the Eurasian “Heartland” as merely a central drainage area, that is, having no outlet to any sea or ocean.

⁴⁷ These points are demonstrated in a paper by Ladis K. D. Kristof, “Mackinder’s Concept of Heartland and the Russians,” Symposium K5: History of Geographical Thought, 23d International Geographical Congress, Leningrad, 22–26 July 1976.

⁴⁸ Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus* (Boston, 1942), xv.

⁴⁸ Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, 1969), 728.

important revelations.⁴⁹ A fundamental aspect of this typical experience is the physical reorientation that is involved. One naturally learns the distances and directions that are pertinent to the new locale. Walking on Nevsky Prospekt in Leningrad, for instance, one gains a new, more geography-based outlook on “the West”—the occidental mirage that Peter the Great and his modernizing successors alternately admired and resented. Standing before the Kremlin on Red Square in Moscow, one can more easily imagine sharing the view—a dimension of which is the physical angle of vision—that Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders might have had in 1979 when they sent an invasion force into Afghanistan. One better “sees” from that prospect the proximity of Afghanistan to the People’s Republic of China, with a large Muslim element presumably interested in the fate of their Afghan coreligionists. By contrast, on a conventionally oriented north-south American newspaper map of that area, Afghanistan seems to neighbor mainly Iran, Pakistan, and the Soviet Union. The Chinese angle is easy to miss.

It is, of course, never enough for the historian to have “been there,” merely to have stood in the Russians’ or anyone else’s shoes. That experience, however, may be an essential condition of coming to share another nation’s geopsychological perspective. The historian must go far beyond this purely spatial awareness to learn the substantive relationships between geography and culture. Only by learning the contents—the facts and not merely the frames—of other nationals’ mental cartography can the historian truly be said imaginatively to be traveling by *their* mental maps, rather than his or her own. Only thus can the scholar pass through the “mirror.”

The mental maps of nations are not equivalent or interchangeable. Although these representations of geography may have some major characteristics in common, they usually are specific in no less important ways. If both the United States and the Soviet Union, for instance, are continental countries with monolithic attitudes, opposing fissiparous territorial tendencies and rejecting “balance of power” maneuvers within their regions, they nonetheless are fundamentally different in geopolitical outlook. The United States has long been relatively secure. Therefore, it may paradoxically be even more intolerant of encroachments and disruptions at its margins. The overthrow in 1989 of General Manuel Noriega in Panama, however richly deserved by that dictator, does suggest the pervasive influence of American intolerance of local disorder—belying the

⁴⁹ Urie Bronfenbrenner described his trip to Russia in the summer of 1960, a few months after the U-2 incident, as “a deeply disturbing experience.” See Bronfenbrenner, “Mirror Image,” 45.

impression of geopolitical complacency that Americans give. The Soviet Union, having repeatedly been invaded in the twentieth century and for the past forty years having been militarily "contained," certainly has reason to feel insecure. Nonetheless, this very reality may have "accustomed" Soviet leaders and peoples to their condition, which (unlike that of Americans) has been inescapable. They may have a kind of operational code, or a cognitively and culturally based set of practical rules, for coping with it.⁵⁰ In other words, their mental maps may allow them to live with a degree of insecurity.

The current Soviet government seems even willing to accept American participation, through continuation of a limited U.S. military presence in Europe, in securing what it could not secure by itself: a neutralized buffer of Eastern European states, formerly controlled as satellites. The Soviet emphasis now is on "common security" in all its aspects, rather than on independent or mutually exclusive security. Stated differently, it purports to favor one mental map, not several separate or even overlapping ones. "For all the contradictions of the present-day world, for all the diversity of social and political systems in it, and for all the different choices made by the nations in different times," as Mikhail Gorbachev emphasizes in *Perestroika*, "this world is nevertheless one whole. We are all passengers aboard one ship, the Earth, and we must not allow it to be wrecked. There will be no second Noah's Ark."⁵¹

In this essay, I have attempted to show how careful attention to a nation's geographical mental maps, especially those of the United States, can illuminate past, present, and even future decision making in the field of foreign policy. Historians, like statesmen, can profit from such analysis. After all, it is not merely the multiplicity of state jurisdictions that makes the study of international relations distinctive among political subjects, it is also the huge earthly expanse within which diplomacy takes place. The ways of diplomacy are, in part, geographical paths, sometimes open and sometimes blocked. These configurations, both on the land and in the mind, are complex. They must be traced in order to know how the world moves. Historians, in other words, should think through space as well as time.

50 The "operational code" concept, which has not been applied systematically to geographical thinking and conduct, is discussed in Alexander L. George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13 (June 1969): 190-222.

51 Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, new, updated ed. (New York, 1988), xiv. In its geographical aspects, Gorbachev's "new thinking" has venerable Russian antecedents. It was, for instance, a Russian, V. I. Vernadsky, who developed "biosphere" in modern scientific thought. See Lynton K. Caldwell, *In Defense of Earth: International Protection of the Biosphere* (Bloomington, 1972), 45.