

European Journal of International Relations

<http://ejt.sagepub.com/>

Realism and the spirit of 1919: Halford Mackinder, geopolitics and the reality of the League of Nations

Lucian M. Ashworth

European Journal of International Relations 2011 17: 279 originally published online 16 June 2010

DOI: 10.1177/1354066110363501

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://ejt.sagepub.com/content/17/2/279>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[Standing Group on International Relations of the ECPR](#)

Additional services and information for *European Journal of International Relations* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://ejt.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://ejt.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations: <http://ejt.sagepub.com/content/17/2/279.refs.html>

Realism and the spirit of 1919: Halford Mackinder, geopolitics and the reality of the League of Nations

European Journal of
International Relations
17(2) 279–301

© The Author(s) 2010
Reprints and permissions: [sagepub.
co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav](http://sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav)
DOI: 10.1177/1354066110363501
ejt.sagepub.com



Lucian M. Ashworth

University of Limerick, Ireland

Abstract

Recent analyses of interwar International Relations (IR) have argued that there was no realist–idealist debate, and that there is no evidence of a distinct idealist paradigm. Less work has been done on realism in the interwar period. This article analyses the thought of one particular early 20th-century realist: Halford J. Mackinder. A product of the development of political geography, and a major influence on American strategic studies, Mackinder is best known for his Heartland thesis, which has been interpreted as environmental determinism. Yet, Mackinder’s realism is a complex mix of geopolitical analysis and the influence of ideas on human action. His concepts of organizer and idealist foreign policy ideal types pre-date Carr’s realist–utopian distinction by two decades, while his interpretation of the realities of international politics is at odds with Morgenthau’s realism. A closer analysis of Mackinder’s realism (1) underscores the links between geopolitics and realist strategic studies; (2) demonstrates the diversity of realist approaches in interwar IR; and (3) shows that it was possible to be a realist and also support the League of Nations. There are limits to Mackinder’s usefulness to 21st-century IR, but an understanding of his brand of realism is necessary for a fuller understanding of the development of realism as a 20th-century school of thought.

Keywords

classical realism, international history, international order, International Relations, security

Man is a product of the earth’s surface. This means not merely that he is a child of the earth, dust of her dust; but that the earth has mothered him, fed him, set him tasks, directed his thoughts, confronted him with difficulties that have strengthened his body and sharpened his

Corresponding author:

Lucian M. Ashworth, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland.

Email: Luke.ashworth@ul.ie

wits, given him his problems of navigation and irrigation, and at the same time whispered hints for their solution. She has entered into his bone and tissue, into his mind and soul... History tends to repeat itself largely owing to this steady, unchanging geographic element. (Semple, 1911: 1–2)

Introduction

The history of realism in International Relations (IR) is peppered with strange gaps in its narrative. Every introductory IR textbook contains some form, however short, of a now familiar family tree starting with Thucydides. But then there are those gaps. Many of the problems with the realist genealogy is that it is a post hoc invention of a realist paradigm that took firm root in IR during the 1950s. While this can account for the long realist silence between, say, Thucydides and Machiavelli (a space of almost two millennia), it is less helpful when we wish to explain gaps that are closer to hand. Although realism in IR did not reach the status of a distinct paradigm until after World War II, it is still possible to talk about a realist tradition of thought throughout the 20th century. This idea of a pre-paradigmatic realist tradition of thought is central to Sean Molloy's argument about the diversity of realist approaches (2006).

It is the silence in the first three and a half decades of the 20th century that is the oddest of the gaps. It is odd in two ways: first, the gap covers most of the interwar period when, according to the received realist history, realism was locked in a debate with idealism. Second, the period includes a number of self-styled realists, one of whom was, and continues to be, a major influence on realist strategic studies in the United States. When realist writers of the interwar period are referred to, the usual suspects are mentioned. Reference is made to E.H. Carr, Georg Swartzenberger, Nicholas Spykman, Reinhold Neibuhr or Hans Morgenthau. The problem here is that all of these people wrote in the 1930s and 1940s. The 1920s, by default, is left devoid of realists.

Part of the problem is that it is really only recently that IR has properly turned its attention to the history of the discipline during the interwar period. The myth of the realist–idealist debate has been attacked (Ashworth, 2002; Thies, 2002; Wilson, 1998), while the concept of an idealist paradigm has been questioned (Ashworth, 2006; Sylvest, 2004). The danger here, however, is that we may throw the baby out with the bathwater. Just because there was no realist–idealist debate, and just because there was never an idealist paradigm, does not mean that there were no realists either. If we take realism to mean not a paradigm, but a tradition of thought that has linked human action to power struggles that have their roots in a natural world prior to ethics and human laws, then we can identify a number of realist IR writers in the interwar period. We can also single out a few from before the mid-1930s, including the Conservative politician F.E. Smith and the political geographer Halford J. Mackinder.

This article will concentrate on Mackinder. The reasons for this are: (1) that Mackinder's writing clearly fits into the definition of realism as a mode of thought, used by Molloy; (2) Mackinder's work was a direct influence on the development of a realist strategic studies after the 1940s, and has been regularly used and quoted in strategic studies circles throughout the last six decades; (3) Mackinder's concept of organizers and idealists is an earlier version of Carr's later realist–utopian dichotomy; and (4) while Mackinder's

realist credentials are clear, so was the way that he used his understanding of geopolitics to support the League of Nations as a means of transcending the awful realities of a world based on *realpolitik*. In this sense he shares with Carr and Morgenthau a desire to find an alternative to the grim logic of power. The object of this article is to demonstrate that, while Mackinder had a lasting influence on the direction of realist thought, his work shows glaring differences with the realist international theory of Morgenthau. It is the rejection of Mackinder by Morgenthau and others that led to Mackinder being largely ignored by much of realist international theory outside of strategic studies circles. This rejection of Mackinder is part of a wider attack on geopolitics. Geopolitics fell out of favour with many theorists because of its supposed links to fascism even while it continued to be seen as useful amongst strategists. Among the differences with Morgenthau and later realist international theory, Mackinder's international theory is more overtly interested in reworking the international system. Two points emerge from this: first, that in the 1920s (and contrary to the realist-idealist debate myth) the League of Nations was regarded as a realistic alternative to the pre-war international anarchy. Realists, as much as socialists and liberals, were caught up in the spirit of 1919 — the sense that international politics can, and must, change. The League idea in 1919, as a product of high-level diplomatic intercourse, found readier support among conservatives like Mackinder or F.E. Smith than it did amongst the vast array of socialists and liberals that were deeply critical of the League Covenant that was made public in 1919. Second, that Mackinder demonstrates more starkly the extent to which the realist study of the realities of power in IR is balanced by an equally realist desire to find a pragmatic alternative world order that will save civilization from destruction. This is an aspect of realism that is frequently ignored in constructions of the realist paradigm after the 1950s, yet it is often important to the political philosophies of many key realist thinkers. In Mackinder, influenced by the end of the Great War, it plays a key part in his revised worldview in 1919.

This article is divided into three sections. The first examines the development of political geography and geopolitics at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. The purpose here is to explore the emergence of a geopolitical interpretation of IR from the writings of Ratzel and Mahan, and how this geopolitics was used by later inter-war writers such as Mackinder in Britain, Haushofer in Germany and Spykman in the United States. The second concentrates on Mackinder, laying out first his realist conception of power and space, and then examining how he used this as the basis for his normative theory that lent support to the League and to other experiments in democratic and peaceful IR. The third compares the form of the realist strategic studies that developed out of Mackinder's geopolitics with the realist international theory that was inspired by Morgenthau. The argument here is that these are two thoroughly different forms of realism, and that they represent a theoretical split within realism that has never been properly explored. While both rest on a common realist assumption that human power relations rest on a set of laws rooted in nature, they look to two different natural phenomena. Morgenthau looked to laws of history rooted in human nature, while Mackinder (and later Nicholas Spykman) looked to laws of history rooted in the interaction between human societies and their natural environment. The different natural sources of these two strands of realism also account for the different views of the possibility of transcendence. My goal in exploring Mackinder's thought, therefore, is to demonstrate the rich variety

of realist thinking, especially in its interwar context, and to reclaim Mackinder's realism as a *bona fide* alternative to Morgenthau's interpretation. This does not mean that I support Mackinder's alternative realism. Rather, my intent is to demonstrate that, just as there is no single interwar idealism, there is equally no single interwar realism. The realist–idealist debate is a myth not only because there was no debate, but also because there never was an idealist paradigm, and there was no single realism that felt naturally antagonistic to the experiments in IR being carried out in Geneva by the League and its supporters.

Ratzel, Mahan, Mackinder and the birth of geopolitics¹

In the late 19th century the physical geographer and zoologist Friedrich Ratzel, better known for his work on snow lines, lost his microscope. There is no firm evidence that it was the loss of this key piece of equipment that led Ratzel to switch his interests from the physical to the human world, but his choice to explore an area that did not require this equipment had major ramifications for both the study of geography and for international politics. Ratzel's study of the way that human society is shaped by the natural environment not only led to the sub-field of political geography, but also fed into the study of strategic studies, both in its Anglo-American and in its Nazi manifestations. Ratzel's approach revolutionized the study of human society by interpreting human social evolution as a response to the physical environment. Basically, how societies approached their use of the land was an indicator of how successful different societies were. Different forms of society were likely to flourish not only under different physical conditions, but also as technological developments changed the way that people were able to relate to the land. The most successful society in a given region was referred to as the *herrenvolk*: that is the people who were best adapted to a particular physical environment at a certain level of technological development. Peoples also had a tendency to spread, and Ratzel was particularly interested in the settlement of peoples over North America and the way that Chinese settlement spread without an overarching state to foster it. This process of expanding living space — *lebensraum* — was a natural tendency of a successful society, but did not necessarily imply conquest. It was a settlement of people, rather than an expansion of states.²

Alongside Ratzel the scientist there was Ratzel the imperial activist. A great admirer of the British Empire — he famously refused to condemn Britain's war against the Boers — he saw Germany's future in copying Britain by developing a blue-water navy and a world empire, even if this antagonized and threatened Britain (Ratzel, 1898). Naively, he failed to appreciate that this would lead Britain to throw in its lot with Germany's enemy France, and Ratzel's sudden death in 1904 coincidentally occurred in the same year as the Anglo-French *entente cordiale* ended hopes of an Anglo-German diplomatic understanding. Crucially, though, Ratzel's approach to politics applied many of his geographical concepts to the development and future of the state. Using an organic analogy for the state, and thereby collapsing the distinction between state and society, Ratzel saw the future of a state as linked to its relations with its environment, in much the same way as the success of other organisms depended on their ability to adapt to natural conditions. Although he conceived of states as organic entities in their own right, even in possession

of their own collective will, there were limits, in Ratzel's view, to the extent that a state could be regarded as an organic entity subject to biological determinism. In his first chapter of *Politische Geographie* ('*Der Staat als bodenständiger Organismus*') he is also careful to point out the limits of this interpretation ('*Die Grenze des Organismus im Staat*'), based on the observation that states were incomplete organisms (1897: 11–12). Neither nations nor states are organisms as such, but only 'aggregate organisms' held together by 'moral and spiritual forces' (Ratzel, 1899: 2). Their existence as a bundle of individuals, institutions and interests linked together by a spirit made the direct analogy to an organic life-form, such as a plant, impossible. Further to this, Ratzel's earlier studies of race made him reject racial determinism, and when added to his studies of migration this led to a view of the state that was not synonymous with a notion of the people or nation as a natural unit. States were made up of many people, and as the United States and the British Empire showed, the populations and racial make-up of states were subject to change through migration and conquest. The one constant was the effect of the external environment.³

While Ratzel's concern with state power, and the growth of states, fed into the work of Mackinder, his writing on sea power brought his work closer to that of A.T. Mahan. Ratzel equated sea power with the global reach of a state, and therefore with the ability of a state to develop into a world power (1896b: 489–495; 1898). Mahan's argument confirmed Ratzel's position, that when it came to conflict between a world sea power and a land power it was the sea power that held the advantage. Ratzel took from Mahan the idea that sea power, unlike land power, ultimately paid for itself through increased maritime trade, thus making sea power a more efficient tool of state growth.⁴ This view of the importance of sea power was the central argument of two of Mahan's books, where domination of the ocean was seen as a means of projecting power across the globe (1890, 1893). The ocean became, in the words of one commentator on Mahan, 'a Grotian whole, one with more strategic substance than the land itself' (Connery, 2001: 184). Mahan's great illustration of this, quoted by Connery, is his criticism of Napoleon's claim that he could conquer Pondicherry in India on the banks of the Vistula. Sea power, through its use of the ocean as a great highway, could choke out the land power through blockade (Mahan, 1893: 184–195).⁵ Among the founders of political geography, Ratzel and Mahan come out as the great advocates of sea power. Both wrote in societies that had relatively weak navies in the 19th century, and both wrote as advocates of greater naval spending if their respective states — Wilhelmine Germany and the United States — were to enter the rank of first-class powers. Yet, this advocacy of sea power as the royal road to great power status was being challenged in 1904 by a citizen of a state that possessed the largest navy in the world. Halford Mackinder was to side with Napoleon against Mahan. Indeed, it was possible to conquer Pondicherry on the banks of the Vistula, and Germany was now poised to do just that.

While Mackinder's case for the strength of land power put him at odds with Ratzel and Mahan, it would be wrong not to also highlight his similarities and debts to the two earlier writers. Both Mackinder and Ratzel believed that the current trend in history was to larger territorial states, and it was this that helped inform Mackinder's worries about the strength of land power. Similarly, both Mackinder and Mahan wrote with the policies of the peripheral sea powers in mind, and while they disagreed on the extent to which sea

power could dominate the globe, they were united by their concern for understanding how the anglophone world could maintain its freedom and dominance. Indeed, in an earlier work Mackinder quoted Mahan's work as the basis for understanding the role of the navy, and agreed with Mahan's view that the advantage of sea power lay in its ability to choose where to attack an enemy's coast (Mackinder, 1907: 310, 314).

Mackinder's work also represents one of two paths in the development of geopolitics. The other, the geopolitics of Rudolf Kjellén and Karl Haushofer, was eventually to act as one of the academic arms of the Nazi state, and it was this version of geopolitics that was to discredit geopolitics as a whole after World War II: 'geopolitics' wrote Franz Neumann in 1942, 'is nothing but the ideology of imperialist expansion' (1942: 147). It was Kjellén, a Swedish student of Ratzel's, who, as well as coining the phrase *Geopolitik*, developed the idea that the state could be seen as directly equivalent to organic life. In this sense the organs of the state were fully analogous to the organs of the body. While Kjellén still thought in terms of analogy, and could still see a role for the individual, he nonetheless saw the analogy as complete (see Kjellén, 1917). While Kjellén was no Nazi, his privileging of the power struggle between states, over law and morality, and his organic view of the state were readily developed by Karl Haushofer. Influenced by Ratzel, through Kjellén, and by Mackinder's warnings about German power (neatly reversed to present it as Germany's opportunity), Haushofer presented a full racially based organic state in perpetual conflict with other societies. Mackinder's geopolitics was, on the face of it, little different in its view of spatially driven conflicts between states overriding moral and legal concerns. Where Mackinder was different was in his attempt to chart how and why it was necessary to transcend this geographical reality. In this regard he followed a path that had been suggested by Ratzel. Since the state was only an aggregate organism held together by spiritual forces, it followed that a change in those spiritual forces would alter the effect of the geographical reality. In 1919 Mackinder set out to show how and why this change would occur. In doing so he constructed an argument that opposed the geopolitics associated with Kjellén and Haushofer.⁶

Mackinder's international theory: From geographical pivot to the League

Most readings of Mackinder's geopolitics outside of political geography, whether from supporters or critics, are content to treat it as solely a discussion of conflicts over power between global land and sea powers.⁷ Both ignore — or miss — his discussion of the nature of democracy and the need to transcend geostrategic realities. Thus, Mackinder becomes a hero to the more conservative strategic studies experts for his willingness to tell it how it is (e.g. Gray, 2004), and a villain to radicals, anti-militarists and recent historians for his failure to reach beyond the world of competing power, conquest and military violence (see, for example, Howard, 1989: 412). Both are in error. Mackinder's rejection of what he calls, in 1919, the organizers is a clear attack on those who cannot see past the logic of their own narrow fields, and in the case of experts in strategy it is the failure to understand that there are political options outside of the logic of mere environmental and spatial relations that leads these experts to ruin. Similarly, criticisms of Mackinder from the left fail to take account of his support for democratic ideals and for

alternatives to the logic of *realpolitik*.⁸ Indeed, one realist writer who had noticed Mackinder's 'Wilsonian' turn presented it as a corrosive undermining of Mackinder's realism (Dugan, 1962: 257). I will develop these points in more detail when I come to a discussion of Mackinder's two policymaker ideal types and his interpretation of the League of Nations.

Halford J. Mackinder remains a key figure in the development of geography as an academic discipline in Britain. Like most top academics of the time, he was also a public and political figure. A strong supporter of the idea of Britain's imperial mission in the world, of increased educational opportunities and of social reform, he began his political career as a Liberal imperialist. Moving to the British Conservative Party, he was a Conservative MP from 1910 to 1922. In 1919 he served as British High Commissioner for South Russia, where he tried in vain to unite the Whites and to increase British support for the anti-Bolshevik forces. As reader in geography at Oxford University, he was the highest ranking British geographer before the Great War (there being no professorship in geography at this time). Oxford's failure to promote him led Mackinder to move to the LSE, where he was appointed professor in 1923. Mackinder's link with the LSE had pre-dated his leaving Oxford, however. He had held a directorship of the LSE from 1903 concurrently with his readership at Oxford. A strong advocate of the advancement of the teaching of geography, he helped found the *Geographical Association* to promote the teaching of geography in schools in 1893, and remained its president from 1916.

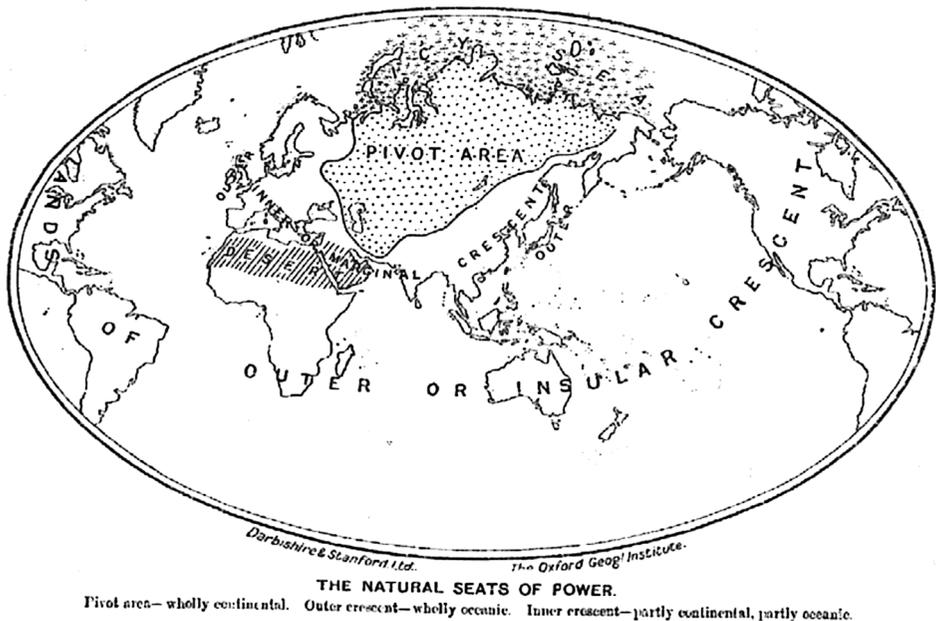
Mackinder's writings range across three areas that he was passionate about: the teaching of geography, Britain and the British Empire, and the geopolitics of international affairs. Often these passions were combined in his writings. His passion for teaching geography in schools, for example, was linked to his belief in the importance of spatial understanding to current affairs. His earliest books were designed as geography textbooks. These included *Britain and the British Seas*, first published in 1902, and his comprehensive survey of the Rhine (Mackinder, 1907, 1908). Another book, *Distant Lands*, provided a companion to his earlier study of Britain (Mackinder, 1910). The links between geography, security and international politics were frequently alluded to in these works, but it was his 1887 article 'On the scope and methods of geography' that laid out this link clearly and comprehensively.⁹ In 1914 Mackinder wrote a textbook intended for the teaching of civics that combined geography and politics, the 1922 edition of which added notes that revised his view of IR (1922). Mackinder's most important works on geopolitics were his 1904 article 'Geographical pivot of history', his 1905 article and address 'Man-power as a measure of national and imperial strength' (incidentally the first time the phrase and concept of manpower was employed), and his 1919 book *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1904, 1905, 1919). The arguments made between 1904 and 1919 were updated and restated in *Foreign Affairs* in 1943 (Mackinder, 1943).

While there is continuity in Mackinder's geopolitical thought in terms of his views on the nature of the influence of geographical factors — in this sense there is a strong link between his 1904 article and 1919 book — there is also a fundamental change from 1919 in how Mackinder views IR. In order to understand Mackinder's contribution to IR it is first necessary to understand his view of the effect of the geographic environment on human history, and then to explore how he believed that the Western democracies could

transcend these realities. This transcendence was made possible because for Mackinder the state was an aggregate organism. The next two subsections will explore these two areas. The first will explore how he constructed his geopolitical worldview both before and after the Great War; the second will concentrate on how and why Mackinder saw this geopolitical reality as partial and open to transcendence.

The geographical pivot of history

Mackinder is best known for his idea of the geographical pivot of history, which was the subject of his 1904 article and Royal Geographical Society presentation.¹⁰ Basically the geographical pivot of history, or pivot area (later renamed the Heartland in 1919), was Mackinder's name for the area of the Eurasian landmass (the 'World Island') inaccessible to sea power (see Map 1). Mackinder's summary of the spatial history of Eurasia followed Ratzel's (and Semple's) argument that technological developments had had the effect of making larger political units both possible and more dominant. The historical trend was from smaller peripheral to larger continental states. Technological developments from the age of discovery had benefited both sea and land powers. Maritime technology had allowed the states of Western Europe to circumnavigate the physical barriers that had penned them in, and turned the ocean from an obstacle to a highway. At the same time those at the eastern margins — Russia — had succeeded in conquering the pivot area of central Asia (Mackinder, 1904: 432–433).



Map 1. The pivot area according to Mackinder (1904: 435). Reprinted with permission from the *Geographical Journal*.

While the maritime peoples of Western Europe have covered the ocean with their fleets, settled the outer continents, and in varying degree made tributary the oceanic margins of Asia, Russia has organized the Cossacks, and, emerging from her northern forests, has policed the steppe by setting her own nomads to meet the tartar nomads. (Mackinder, 1904: 433)

Recent technological developments now seemed set to tip the balance in favour of the land power controlling the pivot area. Mackinder singled out the railways, which had opened up the possibility of developing the interior of Eurasia without the need of ocean-going traffic (1904: 434), and air power that threatened coastal sea power (1919: 84, 143). The implication was that the short period of the supremacy of sea power since the age of discovery was an aberration (1919: 66–69), and that for many reasons it was usually land power that was the dominant of the two.

According to Mackinder sea power was always weaker than land power because land power had two strategies for overcoming its seaborne foes. A land power could either conquer all the bases of a sea power, thus creating an internal sea under its control (e.g. Macedonia, Rome); or it could conquer a greater resource base than possessed by the sea power, and then use this base to build a fleet to confront the sea power (Dorian Greeks, Sparta). Or, as Mackinder put it in 1905: ‘half a continent may ultimately outbuild and outman an island’ (1905: 139). Britain’s dominant role as a sea power was based on the happy accident that the ‘Latin peninsula’ (Iberia, France and Italy) had historically remained divided, and consequently there was never a land power strong enough to build a fleet to threaten Britain (1919: Ch. III; see Map 2). This had all changed with the technological



Map 2. The Latin peninsula, showing how Germany, like Macedonia and the Greek peninsula, was in an ideal position to dominate (1919: 61). (Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders of Maps 2, 3 and 4. The original publishers Constable & Robinson believe these to be no longer in copyright.)

developments, such as the railway, that now made the pivot area of the World Island conquerable. It was now possible for a land power to dominate a vast area of natural resources that were beyond the reach of sea power, and to use these resources to overcome the relatively resource-weak sea powers of the outer crescent. In Mackinder's words the voyagers of the age of discovery four centuries ago had changed our outlook of the sea by making of it one big ocean. 'A similar revolution is in progress in the present generation in the rapid realisation of the unity of the Continent owing to modern methods of communication by land and air' (1919: 93). The great power that was in the best position to create a resource-rich land empire on the World Island was Germany — although Russia and a possible Russo-German alliance is singled out in the original 1904 article — and the Islanders of the Rimland had been slow to realize this.

The revolutions that unified first the seas and then the land had created two different worldviews, which Mackinder called the seaman's and the landsman's views. The seaman saw the World Island of Eurasia as a series of coasts, while the landsman saw it as an island backing onto the pack ice of the Arctic (1919: Chs III–IV). In 1919 Mackinder reiterated much of his 1904 pivot area argument, adding details that seemed to tip the balance even more in favour of land power. The Heartland was expanded to include Eastern Europe from the Black Sea to the Baltic. This was a product of wartime experience, which had shown that a land power in control of the Dardanelles and the Danish straits would make a significant area inaccessible to sea power (1919: 140–141; see Maps 3 and 4). This expansion of the Heartland meant that it now took up the area of three great powers: Brandenburg-Prussia, Austria-Hungary and Russia. What is more, Eastern Europe was now an effective and secure base for a land power to launch an invasion of the Heartland. Since the World Island or Eurasia could be controlled from the Heartland, and in turn the World Island contained the overwhelming majority of the Earth's population and resources, it followed that a land power controlling Central and Eastern Europe would be in a position to dominate the World Island, which in turn could be used as a resource-rich base from which to build a fleet to deliver the final blow to the Rimland sea powers, in the same way that Dorian Greeks and the Spartans had managed to defeat the thalassocracies of Crete and Athens. This led Mackinder to whisper his advice to the delegates at the Paris peace conference: 'Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; Who rules the World Island commands the World' (1919: 194). Germany had shown this during World War I, where its ability to marshal resources in Central and Eastern Europe allowed it to build a fleet that threatened the seaman of Britain, France, Japan and the United States. The defeat of Russia and the near defeat of Britain during unrestricted submarine warfare seemed to confirm this position, despite the optimism of Mahan and the advocates of sea power.

Thus the environmental realities of world geography had dictated a modern international politics dominated by two competing trends. The first was the attempt by Germany to dominate the Heartland, and hence to command enough of the Eurasian landmass to overcome the sea powers of Britain, France, Japan and the United States. The second was the attempt by the sea powers to thwart this by maintaining a balance of power on the continent. Ultimately, this was an unstable situation for the sea powers of the Rimland, and particularly Britain, since Germany need win only once to establish an empire capable of defeating the Rimland.



Map 3. The effect of the closing of the Dardanelles on the extent of the Heartland (1919: 137)

Mackinder's geopolitics left the sea powers in a precarious position. As it stood in 1904 it was an argument that accepted the natural environment as the main influence on the competition between national sovereign states. *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1942), however, advocated a novel way to transcend the realities of geopolitics, and Mackinder saw this as the only hope for the sea powers of the Rimland. To do this Mackinder set up a tension between the dictates of the natural world and the freedom of the human spirit.

Transcending environmental determinism

On the face of it, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* did not necessarily contradict the conclusions of 'The geographical pivot of history', and this led to partial interpretations of the work that conveniently missed Mackinder's major change of heart. The pivot area, now renamed 'the Heartland', was extended to include much of Eastern Europe, thus increasing the area that was inaccessible to sea power. He was also critical of the democratic tendency, exemplified by President Wilson, to put principle ahead of concrete plans. 'No mere scraps of paper, even though they be the written constitution of a League of Nations, are under the conditions of to-day a sufficient guarantee that the Heartland will not again become the centre of a World War' (Mackinder, 1919: 143). This quote has often been used to suggest that Mackinder was anti-League and naturally opposed to this politics of principle. Actually, they were words of caution to the advocates of democratic



Map 4. The Heartland, extended to include Central and Eastern Europe because of the closing of the Black Sea and Baltic (1919: 135)

principles, not a criticism of principle per se, as we shall see below. First, though, we have to explore the other side of Mackinder's 1919 argument.

Crucial to Mackinder's line of reasoning was the antimony between two modes of thought in political life: what he dubbed the organizers and the idealists. The organizers are those who are professional experts in a single field, but lack the vision to see outside of their expertise. In state policy terms these are the strategists who marshal facts and people in order to develop plans for the growth and power of their state. 'The great organizer is the great realist ... his imagination turns to "ways and means" and not to elusive ends.... The organizer inevitably comes to look upon men as tools' (1919: 18). The organizer's advantage and weakness is his understanding of geopolitical realities. This, for Mackinder, was shown particularly starkly in the organizing mentality of the German policy elite. Obsessed with geography and map-making, they were only interested in how they could use this knowledge to accomplish the goals of German foreign policy. This was shown in the way that German education was linked to a 'ways and means' understanding of the world, that included great stress on geography. By comparison, British education stressed the moral side of human development (Mackinder, 1919:

26–28). The strength of the organizer is his professional single-mindedness that leads to a full understanding of a particular field of study. His weakness is his failure to think outside of these narrow constraints, and to be able to remake the political world through the development of principles and new structures of human governance.¹¹

The weakness of the organizer was the strength of the idealist, and vice versa. The great mark of idealism is its attempt to transcend the dictates of the natural world. In past eras of economic shortage this meant escaping the natural through self-denial. In the modern world of plenty, idealism has instead become associated with human self-realization. Through dreaming of different worlds the idealist prevents civilization from stagnating and makes progress possible. ‘Idealists are the salt of the earth; without them to move us, society would soon stagnate and civilisation fade’ (Mackinder, 1919: 9). In the current stage of human civilization the main manifestation of the idealist is in the democracies of the Rimland. Run and influenced by idealists, the great democracies think in terms of principles, rather than strategy (Mackinder, 1919: 31). This means that, while the democracies are at a disadvantage at the strategic level, they are far better at inventiveness and understanding wider implications of things.

Even before the war Mackinder thought that ‘war is now recognized as a catastrophe’, and that other methods of dispute settlement such as arbitration were emerging to take its place (1922: 175).¹² The act of war was, therefore, a deliberate choice. There is no doubt that in *Democratic Ideals and Reality* Mackinder blames the organizers, especially the German organizers, for the disaster that was the Great War. His answer to the problems of humanity in general, and of democracy specifically, is to combine the professional understanding of realities found among organizers with the politics of principle advocated by idealists.¹³ At present the physical realities known to the organizers disadvantage the Rimland democracies. The trick, from Mackinder’s point of view, is to transcend these realities by first understanding them. Once the geopolitical realities are known it will be possible to develop principles and social organization to nullify them. The institutional basis of this reconstruction is the League of Nations:

the grouping of lands and seas, and of fertile and natural pathways, is such as to lend itself to the growth of empires, and in the end of a single World Empire. If we are to realise our ideal of a League of Nations which shall prevent war in the future, we must recognise these geographical realities and take steps to counter their influence. (1919: 2–3)

Here Mackinder is firmly rejecting the geographical determinism associated with Kjellén and Semple — indeed Semple had presented the rise of larger political units as an unstoppable force of nature (Semple, 1911: 12–13). We used to, Mackinder argues, assume that the organizations that survived best were those that were best adapted to their environment. ‘Today we realise ... that human victory consists in our rising superior to such fatalism’ (1919: 3). The influence of geographical conditions on human activity depends ‘not merely on the realities as we now know them to be and to have been, but in even greater degree on what men imagine in regard to them’ (1919: 38). Thus, the realities uncovered by geopolitics are altered and interpreted by the principles underlying human society:

principles that were developed by idealists. Why this is particularly important in 1919 is that the war's destruction and the Allied victory had opened up the possibility of reforming the world based upon principles favourable to the democracies. This concentration on the adoption of new principles to subvert the geopolitical realities explains Mackinder's subtitle to *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*. Here he advocates the development of principles compatible with the idealism of democracy set within a larger grand strategy that will take on some of the tinge of the organizer. This is all possible because in 1919 the world is temporarily pliable and fluid:

In the War we have gradually risen to the conception of the single strategical command, and of the single economic control. Have you the courage for measures of like scope in regard to Peace, though more subtle and less executive, because they will deal with growth and not with destruction? (1919: 262)

It is important to stress, however, that Mackinder was not, like many liberal and left-wing advocates of the League, looking to subvert or abolish the sovereign nation-state. It is clear from his work that he still believes in the desirability of the state, while he regards the growth of interdependence between states as both undesirable and reversible. His interest is, rather, the internal organization of the state (a well-balanced democracy), and the state's relations with others (the League of Nations). This said, he is fully committed to developing a new system of international politics around the League (as a league of states), seeing the League principle as the basis of a new politics of the 20th century, which is as profound a change as the ideal of liberty in the 18th and the ideal of nationality in the 19th (1919: 7). This League principle amounts to a pooled security that can end wars of conquest by conciliation, arbitration and collective action by states. Indeed, in 1922 Mackinder felt able to write that:

The League of Nations ... represents a much more hopeful effort for the peaceful settlement of international disputes than anything that has been attempted before the Great War. The Court of International Law at The Hague is now a fact. If success does not attend these or similar endeavours the outlook for mankind a generation hence will be very black. (1922: 276, n.20)

The alternative to the creation of these international structures was to fall back on a geographical determinism that would benefit the organizers of land power. A discussion of this tension between determinism and possibilism in Mackinder can be found in Parker (1985: Ch. 3).¹⁴

It was by this route that Mackinder, the Conservative MP and advocate of Britain's imperial expansion, became a strong supporter of the new League of Nations. To sum up his position in 1919: the logic of the current realities of state competition, technology and geographical location strongly favoured the final development of a German-run world land empire that would be antagonistic to the democratic and idealist ethos of the anglo-phone-dominated Rimland. The only alternative to this was to change the rules of international politics by introducing a system of international institutions that would supersede the competition of states. The best hope for this was a League of Nations that would water down state sovereignty and make great conquests no longer possible. Mackinder

never went as far as the liberal socialists, who advocated a League that went beyond just being a League of Cabinets (see, for example, Brailsford, 1917). Like many Conservative supporters of the League, he was happy to stop at an organization made up of states that pooled security with other states. On the other hand, he is an example of the position taken by many on the right towards the League, and he shows that it was possible to hold a very realist conception of power and the role of states, while advocating an alternative world order. What is more, it was possible to construct a view of the world around geographical factors without necessarily surrendering, as Semple does, to geographical determinism and a wholly organic view of the state.

Mackinder, realism and International Relations

Mackinder's relationship with post-1950s' realism is problematic. At one level his influence on realist strategic studies during the Cold War was strong. Certainly Nicholas Spykman used Mackinder's idea of the division of regions as part of his own schema, and through his own discussion of the realities of power came to the conclusion, like Mackinder, that some form of international organization was needed (a good summary of Spykman's ideas can be found in Furniss, 1952). Later the publication of the 1942 American edition of *Democratic Ideals and Reality* introduced Mackinder's ideas to the post-war generation of strategic studies and diplomatic experts in the United States, who have used Mackinder's Heartland thesis in one form or another ever since. Recent examples include Colin S. Gray (1988: 4; 2004) and Henry Kissinger (1994: 184). In addition to this Mackinder certainly influenced a generation of American post-war architects of US foreign policy, and his frequent appearance in articles by practitioners in the mid-1940s onwards attest to this (for example, Flanders, 1945). The position of Mackinder in American realist strategic studies was reaffirmed when the National Defense University in 1996 reprinted the 1942 edition of *Democratic Ideals and Reality* in its entirety. This version is now available online for free download.

Yet, not all American school realists welcomed Mackinder so warmly. Those not associated directly with strategic studies were inclined to roundly reject him. The strongest language comes from Morgenthau:

Geopolitics is a pseudoscience erecting the factor of geography into an absolute that is supposed to determine the power, and hence the fate, of nations. Its basic concept is space.... According to geopolitics it is a law of history that peoples must expand by 'conquering space', or perish.... Geopolitics only tells us what space is destined, because of its location relative to other spaces, to harbour the master of the world.... Geopolitics as presented in the writings of Mackinder and [James] Fairgreve, had given a valid picture of one aspect of the reality of national power, a picture seen from the exclusive, and therefore distorting, angle of geography. (1985: 178–179)

Others, such as John Herz, just wrote off all geopolitics in a single footnote (1942: 1043, n.2). Although Morgenthau's criticism of Mackinder suggests that he did not read *Democratic Ideals and Reality* very carefully, since Mackinder would be inclined to agree with Morgenthau's position here, the aggressiveness of the attack on geopolitics and Mackinder

underscores Morgenthau's unhappiness with any approach that sees the natural environment as the prime influence on human statecraft. Given geopolitics' association with fascism in the 1940s (e.g. Whittlesey, 1942), it is perhaps not surprising that German émigrés, such as Morgenthau and Herz, would not wish their realism to be associated with it.

The different reactions to Mackinder reveal a split within realism that is rarely explored in the IR literature. Basically it revolves around two approaches to a major underlying assumption of realism: that human behaviour is the result of laws of history that are rooted in the natural world. For Morgenthau and Herz that natural source was unchanging human nature. For Mackinder and realist strategic studies it was the natural environment. While this led to similar conclusions during the Cold War and Détente, the two approaches are not always compatible. While Morgenthau depended on an ahistorical and aspatial *homo politicus*, Mackinder and realist strategic studies depended on the influence of the natural environment that can be changed by human land use and technology — an idea of balance between natural structure and human agency that was most fully developed by the geographer Derwent Whittlesey through his concept of sequent occupance (Whittlesey, 1935, 1949: Ch. V). Both conceptions are realist in the sense that they see human action as a response to laws of history rooted in a natural reality, but they differ over what that reality should be. If human nature is the taproot for the laws of history then it follows that those laws are not subject to change, and the search for peace will have to centre on institutions or arrangements that work within those laws. If the taproot is the physical environment then human technology and land use can radically alter historical laws, as Mackinder argued in his discussion of the age of discovery. In the words of James Fairgrieve: 'geography would still control the course of history, but it would control it in a different way' (1927: 345).

There is one final distinction between the realisms of Morgenthau and Mackinder that can affect the way that they interpret IR. For Morgenthau the *homo politicus* provides a clear explanation for why states pursue power that roots the pursuit of power in a natural pugnacity. Mackinder's analysis is far more problematic. First, his analysis of the environmental determination of conflict assumes that the distribution of land and resources naturally leads to conflict between what Kearns refers to as 'biologically distinct subsets of the human species' (2006: 93). Yet, Mackinder's criticism of the way that organizers follow this logic, and his endorsement of (a suitably altered) idealism in 1919, leaves us with no clear reason why this pursuit of relative state power should necessarily continue. Does this mean that, as Kearns has claimed, Mackinder continues to hold a biological and racially determined view of the causes of state competition, even after his 1919 praise for democratic idealism (Kearns, 2004)? If Mackinder's support for idealism's politics of principle is taken at face value, however, then we are left with no specific causes for the pursuit of power between states, save the misperception of the deluded organizers. In which case why does the world need the balance between forces that Mackinder mentioned in his *Foreign Affairs* article (Mackinder, 1943)? The answer to this apparent paradox may lie in Mackinder's analysis of the organizers, and their particular hold over German strategic thinking. Unlike Morgenthau, Mackinder does seem to assume that idealist democratic societies are little threat to global order. This would explain his benign view of the United States. It could be, therefore, that he sees societies dominated by organizers as the primary threat to world peace through their natural pursuit of power.

The bottom line here is that a realism based on human nature has a subtly different form to a realism based on the natural environment. Mackinder provides us with a clear example of this second form of realism.¹⁵ The fickleness of the effects of the interaction between humanity and the natural environment makes Mackinder's realism both less pessimistic (change to the natural foundation as possible) than Morgenthau's, but also more aware of the dangers posed by sudden changes to the laws of history. Mackinder's reality, like Fairgrieve's, is a capriciously shifting one, but it is also a reality that is sensitive to human agency through the idealist politics of principle. Morgenthau saw principle as a competitor to a politics based on interest and power (Morgenthau, 1952). For Mackinder, principle is a necessary corrective to amoral interests rooted in changeable environmental realities, even if that principle ignores reality at its peril.

The examination of Mackinder's realism reveals the extent to which realists themselves were not immune to the spirit of 1919. This challenges the common myth that a key aspect of realism was its opposition to the League. Rather, as Mackinder's analysis shows, the concept of the League in its role as a league of cabinets was compatible with realist norms. Indeed, in a non-realist moment, E.H. Carr in 1942 criticized the League for this very lack of internationalism (1942: 244), a lack that actually made it appealing to the less internationalist realism found in Mackinder, Charles Manning (1936) and F.E. Smith (1960: 207–216). The split in the 1920s over the utility of the League also helps to demolish the idea of a realist–idealist antimony over League collective security. Mackinder and Smith are joined in their support for the League by so-called idealists such as Philip Noel-Baker, Konni Zilliacus and Alfred Zimmern. Writers like G. Lowes Dickinson, famous for inventing the term the international anarchy, could take a very structuralist realist view of pre-1914 IR, and see the League as the answer to this problem of anarchy (Lowes Dickinson, 1916, 1926). Similarly, initial opposition to the League Covenant of 1919 included pacifists like Helena Swanwick, and liberal socialists such as H.N. Brailsford, Leonard Woolf and Norman Angell. Support for, and opposition to, the League and its Covenant had nothing to do with either realism or idealism. In fact, it should not surprise us that the League, as a hybrid institution that took on elements of a concert of powers as well as internationalist notions of global government, was naturally seen as a half-measure by many radicals, and as an extension of great power politics by professional diplomats and foreign policy elites.

Here also we see an important aspect of realist thought that is often overlooked. While a central feature of realism is its belief in powerful natural constraints on human action, this is also frequently matched by a belief that there is a way to ameliorate these constraints to such an extent that we can escape the dictates of nature. This explains Morgenthau's endorsement of David Mitrany's functional approach in 1966, where he sees the idea of functional international government as a system that took account of the realities of the laws of history rooted in human nature, and then bypassed the more dangerous aspects of it to create a different historical reality (Morgenthau, 1966: 7–11). This need for transcendence is even more glaring in Mackinder, leading Dugan to accuse him of a corrosive Wilsonianism (1962: 257). Rather than an anti-realist corrosion, this 'Wilsonianism' supplements and completes Mackinder's realism.

Having said all this, however, there are serious flaws in Mackinder's international theory that need to be noted if we are to develop a rounded picture of his thought. First,

his idea of the Heartland overestimated the way that technology could open up the Heartland as both a resource and a centre for a land-based empire on the World Island, and underestimated the development of North America in particular and the West in general. In raw economic terms the balance between the Rimland and the World Island has never been glaringly in favour of the World Island. In fact, as some US strategists have pointed out, the Western Hemisphere appears to have been an ideal 'heartland' for the rise of US power, while the actual impregnability of the Eurasian Heartland that led Mackinder to see it as a threat to sea power has also rendered it difficult to break out of. 'Mackinder seemed to ignore the fact that to the extent these geographical formations protected the Heartland power, they also prevented it from projecting outward' (Fettweis, 2000: 58–71).

Second, Mackinder assumed that the trend in military security would be to easier and more efficient militaries capable of swift and efficient conquest, and certainly the period that he lived in seemed to support this view. The raw military power of the German state in World War II, for example, was capable of quite startling conquests over very short periods of time. The defeat of the Netherlands in four days and the broad sweep of the 1941–2 German offensives into the Soviet Union seemed to suggest that efficient militaries were capable of crossing vast swathes of the Earth's surface with little to stop them other than the force of their foes or the efficiency of their own logistical systems. World War II even temporarily produced Mackinder's preferred political outcome of a Commonwealth 'League of Democracies' made up of formally equal dominions (Blouet, 2004). What this hid was a counter-trend, something we might link to Mackinder's concept of the force of idealist principles. This counter-trend could be seen most glaringly during World War II in Yugoslavia, China and South-East Asia, where modern militaries became bogged down in guerrilla wars fuelled by the failure of peoples to know when they have been conquered. These 'people's wars' were to become a major trend of the 1950s and 1960s, and their spread after World War II called into question the ability of an all-conquering great power to hold on to its conquests. The trend to larger units, noticed by Ratzel and Mackinder, has been replaced by the trend of larger units to break up into smaller ones. In other words, what was likely to stop the development of a World Island empire was the refusal of peoples to submit to it. This itself could be seen as part of the democratic revolution that Mackinder so wholeheartedly endorsed. Idealism, it seems, is not without hidden reserves of its own.¹⁶

Third, unlike contemporaries such as Norman Angell, Mackinder did not appreciate the importance of non-military aspects of power. The globalization of finance and trade, a trend that formed the basis of Angell's re-evaluation of security and international politics, hardly enters into Mackinder's analysis, despite his ready acceptance of the idea that the globe had now become one social unit as a result of the end of the Columbian age of discovery. Rather, Mackinder seemed to think that late 19th-century economic specialization was reversible (1919: Chs VI–VII). Related to this, as Ó Tuathail points out using Leo Amery's response to Mackinder's 1904 paper, Mackinder concentrates on geographical factors and resources at the expense of the more socially determined question of industrial power and technical knowledge (Ó Tuathail, 1992: 107). If anything, the global politics of the 20th century has favoured states with advanced industrial economies and stable social relations. Again, these globalizing trends worked in the favour of the Rimland sea powers, and against the landbased, or even landlocked, societies on the World Island. In this sense, the prophecies of the likes of Norman Angell, Leonard Woolf

and David Mitraný on the changes wrought by the internationalization of economic forces were far more on the mark.¹⁷ Despite his willingness to accept idealist transcendence of environmental determinism, Mackinder the political conservative reacted against the fundamental changes in the political economy that were occurring around him, rather than embracing and exploring the implications of these changes.

Conclusion

Mackinder's approach to IR suffers from structural weaknesses that limit its value as a guide to the international politics of the 21st century. It is, in this sense, a product of its time rather than for all time. Having said this, however, his work was a key stage in the development of realism in IR. The development of his two foreign policy ideal types of organizers and idealists, which pre-dated Carr's realists and utopians by two decades, allowed him to develop an international theory that combined an understanding of natural constraints to human action with a road map for transcending the limits of power politics. Mackinder's idealist–organizer antimony, with its tension between democratic politics and professional expertise, is a valuable alternative take on the idealist–realist dichotomy popular in recent textbooks. Equally, his use of environmental constraints as the source of the laws of history stands in sharp contrast to Morgenthau's view that based laws of history on human nature. Mackinder's approach, which draws on earlier geopolitical studies, represents an alternative form of realism that stresses a different natural basis for understanding human action. Taking Mackinder's ideas seriously fills in one of the many gaps in the history of realism in IR, while also re-engaging realist IR with early 20th-century geopolitics. Whatever the merits of Mackinder's work he deserves to be recognized as an important branch on the realist family tree.

Notes

1. My thanks to G.J. Ashworth for familiarizing me with the texts discussed in this section. Part of the following argument was used in a paper we presented at a conference on the work of Ratzel in 2004, hosted by the Leibniz Centre in Leipzig.
2. On Ratzel's concept of *Lebensraum* — Ratzel also used the terms *Landerräume*, *Erdräum* and *Die Politischer Räume* — see Ratzel (1897). Much of Ratzel's work has never been translated into English, and the interpretation of his writings in Britain and America is still dominated by the brilliant but deeply flawed work of his American student Ellen Churchill Semple (1911). Semple's geographical determinism is responsible for the widely held view that Ratzel was a determinist too.
3. Ratzel's anthropological work on races appears in his *Völkerkunde*, published in 1885. The English translation appeared in 1896 in three volumes (Ratzel, 1896a).
4. This link between trade and sea power was criticized by Norman Angell (1910: Ch. V).
5. This concept of the advantage of sea power to strike anywhere was central to the war plans of an organization that was strongly influenced by Mahan: the British Admiralty. Jacky Fischer, First Sea Lord both before and during the Great War and the man behind the development of the *Dreadnought* and the modern destroyer, summarized his view of British policy in terms familiar to Mahan. The navy was the shield, and the army was a spear to be used by the navy at any point of its choosing along the coast of the enemy.

6. Gearóid Ó Tuathail rightly stresses the organic view of society in Mackinder and others. However, he interprets the conservatives as viewing society as a literal body (Ó Tuathail, 1992: 111). The organic view of society, as the discussion above shows, was more complex. Even Kjellén did not fully endorse a literal interpretation.
7. Mackinder has fared better among political geographers, where the complexities of his thought have been widely recognized. See Ó Tuathail (1992, 1996), Smith (2003: 9–17), Blouet (2004), Venier (2004) and Kearns (1993, 2004).
8. For a discussion of the limits of Mackinder's support for democracy see Ó Tuathail (1992: 115).
9. This article was reprinted in the 1942 edition of *Democratic Ideals and Reality*.
10. In 2004 the importance of Mackinder's 1904 article to the development of geography was recognized by a special issue of the *Geographical Journal* dedicated to Mackinder's work.
11. I have deliberately kept Mackinder's masculine pronouns both because Mackinder uses them, and because his argument is, fundamentally, a masculinist one relying on what Kimberly Hutchings calls cognitive short cuts (Hutchings, 2008).
12. This part of the text originated from 1914, and probably echoes Norman Angell's earlier argument in *The Great Illusion* (1910) about the futility of war.
13. Ó Tuathail suggests that Mackinder hopes that the organizer will develop elements of the idealist (1992: 110). I argue that Mackinder saw a more equal sharing between his two ideal types, and actually in much of *Democratic Ideals and Reality* he comes down more firmly on the side of the democratic idealists, and is viciously scathing of the (especially German) organizer (Mackinder, 1919: Ch. 2).
14. Not all current commentators on Mackinder are convinced by his conversion to the politics of principle. Gerry Kearns, for example, argues that Mackinder's balance between initiative and environment is skewed to environment because initiative is a product of environment (2004: 343). Kearns backs up his argument by reference to Mackinder's continued use of racial arguments and eugenics well into the 1930s. Kearns went further in 2006, arguing that Mackinder saw geopolitics as inevitable biological conflict, with military strength as the only option (2006: 93). The argument of *Democratic Ideals and Reality* certainly contradicts the latter claim, and gives no reason to assume the former (although the 1904 'Pivot' article is guilty of the former).
15. There is a third modern form of realism, most closely identified with Kenneth Waltz, which roots the laws of history in the nature of the anarchical system of states (Waltz, 1979).
16. Mackinder's failure to appreciate this breaking of nations can be explained by Ó Tuathail's point that Mackinder, as an imperialist and a conservative, was writing in reaction to what he saw as the instability caused by ideological movements such as industrial socialism (1992) and struggles for 'cultural and territorial independence' (1996: 28). It was not that Mackinder was totally blind to these trends; it was that he strongly opposed them.
17. For a discussion and comparison of these writers and their ideas on the post-1919 world see Ashworth (2007). An excellent analysis of Woolf can be found in Wilson (2003).

References

- Angell N (1910) *The Great Illusion*. London: William Heinemann.
- Ashworth LM (2002) Did the realist–idealist great debate really happen? A revisionist history of international relations. *International Relations* 16(1): 33–51.
- Ashworth LM (2006) Where are the idealists in interwar international relations? *Review of International Studies* 32: 291–308.

- Ashworth LM (2007) *International Relations and the Labour Party. Intellectuals and Policy Making 1918–1945*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Blouet BW (2004) The imperial vision of Halford Mackinder. *Geographical Journal* 170(4): 322–329.
- Brailsford HN (1917) *A League of Nations*. London: Hedley.
- Carr EH (1942) *Conditions of Peace*. London: Macmillan.
- Connery CL (2001) Ideologies of land and sea: Alfred Thayer Mahan, Carl Schmitt and the shaping of global myth elements. *Boundary 2* 28(2): 173–201.
- Dugan AB (1962) Mackinder and his critics reconsidered. *Journal of Politics* 24(2): 241–257.
- Fairgrieve J (1927) *Geography and World Power*, 2nd edn. London: University of London Press.
- Fettweis CJ (2000) Sir Halford Mackinder, geopolitics and policymaking in the twenty-first century. *Parameters* 30(2): 58–71.
- Flanders DP (1945) Geopolitics and American post-war policy. *Political Science Quarterly* 60(4): 578–585.
- Furniss ES (1952) The contribution of Nicholas John Spykman to the study of international politics. *World Politics* 4(3): 382–401.
- Gray CS (1988) *The Geopolitics of Super Power*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.
- Gray CS (2004) In defence of the heartland: Sir Halford Mackinder and his critics a hundred years on. *Comparative Strategy* 23(1): 9–25.
- Herz JH (1942) Power politics and world organization. *American Political Science Review* 36(6): 1039–1052.
- Howard M (1989) 1989: A farewell to arms? *International Affairs* 65(3): 407–413.
- Hutchings K (2008) Cognitive short cuts. In: Parpart JL, Zalewski M (eds) *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations*. London: Zed, 23–46.
- Kearns G (1993) Fin-de-siècle geopolitics: Mackinder, Hobson and theories of global closure. In: Taylor P (ed.) *Political Geography of the Twentieth Century*. London: Belhaven, 9–30.
- Kearns G (2004) The political pivot of geography. *Geographical Journal* 170(4): 337–346.
- Kearns G (2006) Naturalising empire: Echoes of Mackinder for the next American century? *Geopolitics* 11: 74–98.
- Kissinger H (1994) *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Kjellén R (1917) *Der Staat als Lebensform*. Leipzig: Hirzel.
- Lowes Dickinson G (1916) *The European Anarchy*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Lowes Dickinson G (1926) *The International Anarchy 1904–1914*. London: Century.
- Mackinder HJ (1904) Geographical pivot of history. *Geographical Journal* 22: 421–437.
- Mackinder HJ (1905) Man-power as a measure of national and imperial strength. *National and English Review* 45: 136–143.
- Mackinder HJ (1907) *Britain and the British Seas*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mackinder HJ (1908) *The Rhine: Its Valley and its History*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Mackinder HJ (1910) *Distant Lands*. London: Philip.
- Mackinder HJ (1919) *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*. London: Constable.
- Mackinder HJ (1922) *The Modern British State: An Introduction to the Study of Civics*, 2nd edn. London: George Philip.
- Mackinder HJ (1942) *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Mackinder HJ (1943) The round world and the winning of the peace. *Foreign Affairs* 21: 595–605.

- Mahan AT (1890) *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660–1783*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Mahan AT (1893) *The Influence of Sea Power upon The French Revolution and Empire 1793–1812*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Manning CAW (1936) The future of the collective system. In: Geneva Institute of International Relations (ed.) *Anarchy or World Order*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Molloy S (2006) *The Hidden History of Realism*. New York: Palgrave.
- Morgenthau HJ (1952) Another ‘great debate’: The national interest of the United States. *American Political Science Review* 46(4): 961–988.
- Morgenthau HJ (1966) Introduction. In: David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System*. Chicago, IL: Quadrangle, 7–11.
- Morgenthau HJ (1985) *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th edn. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Neumann F (1942) *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ó Tuathail G (1992) Putting Mackinder in his place: Material transformations and myth. *Political Geography* 11(1): 100–118.
- Ó Tuathail G (1996) *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Parker G (1985) *Western Geopolitical Thought in the Twentieth Century*. London: Croom Helm.
- Ratzel F (1896a) *The History of Mankind*. London: Macmillan.
- Ratzel F (1896b) Die Seemacht: Eine Politischer-Geographische Studie. *Wissenschaftliche Beilage zur Leipziger Zeitung* 123(4): 489–495.
- Ratzel F (1897) Die Lebensraum. In: *Politische Geographie*. Munich/Berlin: Oldenburg.
- Ratzel F (1898) Flottenfrage und Weltlage. *Münchener Neuste Nachrichtung* 51(4): 1–2.
- Ratzel F (1899) *Anthropogeographie*. Stuttgart: J. Engelhorn.
- Semple EC (1911) *Influences of Geographic Environment on the Basis of Ratzel’s System of Anthro-Geography*. London: Constable.
- Smith FE (1960) Idealism in international politics. In: William Camp (ed.) *The Glittering Prizes: A Biographical Study of F.E. Smith First Earl of Birkenhead*. London: MacGibbon and Kee, 207–216.
- Smith N (2003) *American Empire. Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Sylvest C (2004) Interwar internationalism, the British Labour Party, and the historiography of international relations. *International Studies Quarterly* 48(2): 409–432.
- Thies C (2002) Progress, history and identity in international relations theory: The case of the idealist–realist debate. *European Journal of International Relations* 8: 147–185.
- Venier P (2004) The geographical pivot of history and early twentieth century geopolitical culture. *Geographical Journal* 170(4): 330–336.
- Waltz K (1979) *A Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Whittlesey D (1935) The impress of effective central authority upon the landscape. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 25(2): 85–97.
- Whittlesey D (1942) *German Strategy of World Conquest*. London: Robinson.
- Whittlesey D (1949) *Environmental Foundations of European History*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

- Wilson P (1998) The myth of the first great debate. *Review of International Studies* 24(5): 1–15.
- Wilson P (2003) *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf: A Study in Twentieth-Century Idealism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Biographical note

Lucian M. Ashworth is senior lecturer in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Limerick in Ireland. His main area of research interest is the history of International Relations theory, with a particular focus on the interwar period. His publications on this subject include three books, of which the most recent, *International Relations Theory and the Labour Party: Intellectuals and Policy Making 1918–1945*, was published by I.B. Tauris in 2007. He has also published articles on idealism in inter-war IR, the realist–idealist debate and 18th-century international thought.