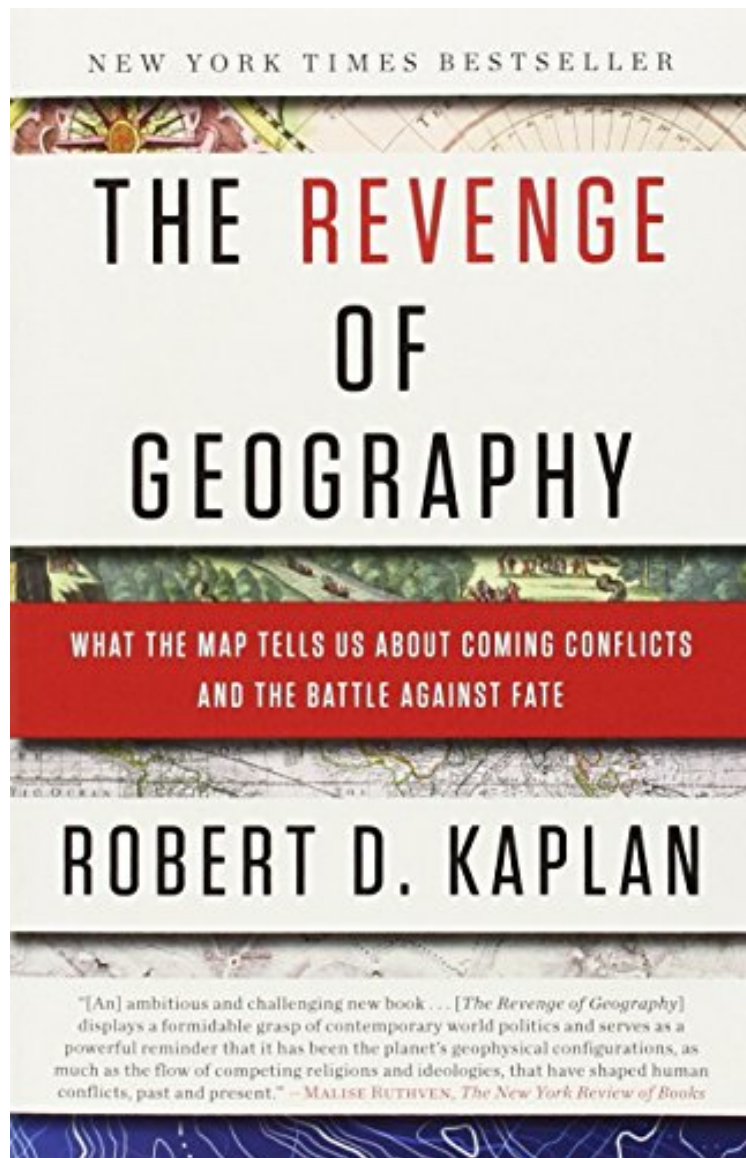


(Free) The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate

The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate

Robert D. Kaplan

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Robert D. Kaplan : The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate:

480 of 506 people found the following review helpful. Much more than geography

By Alan F. Sewell

I read this book from two perspectives. First, decades ago, I was given a copy of the Air Force War College's textbook on geography as a basis for global military strategy and therefore became familiar at an early age with some of the concepts this book explores. Secondly, my family is bi-national American/Colombian, with family and businesses in both countries, and therefore is attuned with author Robert Kaplan's future vision of the USA evolving to become the center of an Anglo-Hispanic "supra-state." Although this book is supposedly focused in on the influence of geography in making and breaking nations, it is actually what we used to call "Social Studies" --- a combined analysis of all the factors of geography, demographics, history, economics, and politics that go into constituting a nation state.

PART III. AMERICA'S DESTINY is the 25% of the book that most interested me. The other 75% is just OK, because it is an agglomeration of themes that students of world history and current events will probably already be familiar with. I didn't care for the lack of focus among so many topics. The chapter on Mexico starts with a rambling history of the Roman Empire followed up by a digression into our wars in Iran and Afghanistan, the history of China, India, Venice and the 18th Century mutiny of Indian troops against British Colonialists. However, those who aren't already familiar with these topics of World History 101 and are looking for the widest possible introduction to the geography, demographics, history, economics, politics, and current events in all parts of the world may enjoy Kaplan's "stream of consciousness" approach. Kaplan can also be a bit pedantic ("history and geography tell us") and prone to over-comparing motivations of current nation states to what their forebears did thousands of years ago ("Ancient history, too, offers up examples that cast doubt on whether Afghanistan and Iraq, in and of themselves, have doomed us"). He also says that he is "aware that I am on dangerous ground in raising geography on a pedestal" but actually covers so much material of a political, demographic, and economic nature that geography seems to be secondary. He might just as well have titled the book THE REVENGE OF (GEOGRAPHY, ECONOMICS, DEMOGRAPHICS, POLITICS, ETC. ETC.). My interest perked up in PART III AMERICA'S DESTINY. This is the part that Kaplan put his heart into, as he explains:=====As a visiting professor at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis some years back, I taught a course about future challenges in national security.=====In fact the book becomes especially interesting because Kaplan expands on the topic of "future challenges in national security" to include the future composition of our country in the combination of ALL factors that make us the nation we are, including geography, demographics, politics, and economics. Kaplan starts out by pointing out how fantastically blessed by geography we Americans are. We have 6% of the world's land area, but perhaps 25% to 30% of its arable farmland. Our entire country, except for the Desert Southwest, is drained by the Mississippi/Ohio/Missouri, and the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence. Our East Coast ports were perfectly positioned at the head of navigable waters to facilitate settlement, commerce, and the extension of political sovereignty for hundreds of miles inland. We ARE the center of the world's trading routes, with our East Coast facing Europe, our West Coast facing Asia, and our Gulf Coast facing Latin America. Kaplan perhaps overplays the idea that the United States is a superpower PRIMARILY because of our geography (the ambitions of our people also had a lot to do with making us what we are) but he makes it clear that no country has been favored by geography as we are. He then makes the point that in regard to the vision of what the United States wants to become as a nation, we are coming back to our starting point. Our country is named "The United States of AMERICA" (not NORTH AMERICA) because it wasn't until around 1900 that the word "America" stopped being used as a synonym for "Western Hemisphere" and the words NORTH AMERICA and SOUTH AMERICA began to be used to distinguish the continents. As late as the 1870s some prominent Americans continued to believe that the United States was destined to become coextensive with the entire hemisphere. Something of the reverse has actually happened. Instead of Anglo Americans going forth to colonize Latin America and incorporating it into the United States, tens of millions of Latin Americans have been attracted by our free political system and vibrant economy to come live among us. Kaplan makes a point that I (an Anglo American) and my Latin American family talk about almost every day, that the elderly Anglo population is passing, and America is being repopulated by a younger, more Latin American generation. Kaplan thinks, as I do, that we're on our way to becoming an even more powerful Anglo/Hispanic Superpower whose economic perimeter includes not only Canada but also Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and much or even all of South America. He thinks our population will be browner, but we'll still be Americans living under the same Constitution, and a rising prosperity in Latin America will boost our own prosperity (I see this happening in the microcosm of my own family). My takeaway from this book is that Mexico and Latin America REALLY are vital to our own well being. Before reading this book I leaned toward the view that America's free trade partnership shouldn't extend beyond Canada. Now I am wondering whether free trade with Mexico and most of the rest of Latin America may not after all be necessary for our security. These free trade agreements have put millions of Americans out of work, but they are accomplishing their purpose of helping to stabilize fragile countries like Colombia and Mexico. Eventually the trade agreements may serve their full purpose by boosting American exports, and therefore restoring employment, to the newly prosperous countries of Latin America. You'll find this book a worthwhile read if: 1. You're looking for an education in Global Social Studies 101 (i.e. a basic literacy in global geography, demographics, politics, military strategic theory past and present, and current events). None of these subjects is covered deeply, but the reader will become away conversant in just about every

factor that influences the world today.² You're interested in the part of the book I was, which is to glimpse ahead into the USA's future.³ You want to acquire a more open-minded view of the cost/benefit analysis of U.S. free trade with Mexico and Latin America. It led me to wonder if perhaps the USA should include Mexico in its continental integration perimeter to the same degree as Canada (an objective that Mexico's former President asked for).⁰ of 0 people found the following review helpful. a great book, with great flaws ...By c langridgeRobert D. Kaplan's "The Revenge of Geography", like all his books, is a pleasure and an education to read. His is an interesting perspective, formed by a lifetime of traveling and watching, while reading and thinking. I suspect most Americans will find his final chapter the most compelling, as it is about us. The "U.S.". And here I think he is wrong, dead wrong, and damned wrong, and I am here to say why: in thinking and researching physical geography, he has forgotten and utterly failed to consider the GEOGRAPHY WITHIN: the collective, wholly unspoken burden of historical thought, the "genius" of a people. He writes comprehensively and compellingly about the proximity of Mexico to southern America and the floods of humanity flowing north now for a couple of decades, and then draws his conclusions . . . incredibly . . . without any mention of the mentalities of these very, very, very disparate peoples - "Americans" with their Anglo-Protestant/pilgrim/pioneer heritage, and Mexicans with their native "Indian" pagan heritage, thinly veneered with Catholicism. Maybe his conclusions satisfy him, an Easterner and an academic, but they won't do - they most emphatically will not do - for those of us who live out here.⁰ of 0 people found the following review helpful. I particularly liked the 2nd half of the bookBy CharliRead with an atlas at hand! A fascinating look at the world with much information from the author's personal travels. I particularly liked the 2nd half of the book, when he really explains some of the nitty-gritty geography and how it affects global politics.

In this provocative, startling book, Robert D. Kaplan, the bestselling author of *Monsoon and Balkan Ghosts*, offers a revelatory new prism through which to view global upheavals and to understand what lies ahead for continents and countries around the world. In *The Revenge of Geography*, Kaplan builds on the insights, discoveries, and theories of great geographers and geopolitical thinkers of the near and distant past to look back at critical pivots in history and then to look forward at the evolving global scene. Kaplan traces the history of the world's hot spots by examining their climates, topographies, and proximities to other embattled lands. The Russian steppes' pitiless climate and limited vegetation bred hard and cruel men bent on destruction, for example, while Nazi geopoliticians distorted geopolitics entirely, calculating that space on the globe used by the British Empire and the Soviet Union could be swallowed by a greater German homeland. Kaplan then applies the lessons learned to the present crises in Europe, Russia, China, the Indian subcontinent, Turkey, Iran, and the Arab Middle East. The result is a holistic interpretation of the next cycle of conflict throughout Eurasia. Remarkably, the future can be understood in the context of temperature, land allotment, and other physical certainties: China, able to feed only 23 percent of its people from land that is only 7 percent arable, has sought energy, minerals, and metals from such brutal regimes as Burma, Iran, and Zimbabwe, putting it in moral conflict with the United States. Afghanistan's porous borders will keep it the principal invasion route into India, and a vital rear base for Pakistan, India's main enemy. Iran will exploit the advantage of being the only country that straddles both energy-producing areas of the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. Finally, Kaplan posits that the United States might rue engaging in far-flung conflicts with Iraq and Afghanistan rather than tending to its direct neighbor Mexico, which is on the verge of becoming a semifailed state due to drug cartel carnage. A brilliant rebuttal to thinkers who suggest that globalism will trump geography, this indispensable work shows how timeless truths and natural facts can help prevent this century's looming cataclysms. Praise for *The Revenge of Geography* [An] ambitious and challenging new book . . . [The *Revenge of Geography*] displays a formidable grasp of contemporary world politics and serves as a powerful reminder that it has been the planet's geophysical configurations, as much as the flow of competing religions and ideologies, that have shaped human conflicts, past and present. Malise Ruthven, *The New York Review of Books* Robert D. Kaplan, the world-traveling reporter and intellectual whose fourteen books constitute a bedrock of penetrating exposition and analysis on the post-Cold War world . . . strips away much of the cant that suffuses public discourse these days on global developments and gets to a fundamental reality: that geography remains today, as it has been throughout history, one of the most powerful drivers of world events. *The National Interest* Kaplan plunges into a planetary review that is often thrilling in its sheer scale . . . encyclopedic. *The New Yorker* [The *Revenge of Geography*] serves the facts straight up. . . . Kaplan's realism and willingness to face hard facts make *The Revenge of Geography* a valuable antidote to the feel-good manifestoes that often masquerade as strategic thought. *The Daily Beast* From the Hardcover edition.

[An] ambitious and challenging new book . . . [The *Revenge of Geography*] displays a formidable grasp of contemporary world politics and serves as a powerful reminder that it has been the planet's geophysical configurations, as much as the flow of competing religions and ideologies, that have shaped human conflicts, past and present. Malise Ruthven, *The New York Review of Books* Robert D. Kaplan, the world-traveling reporter and intellectual whose fourteen books constitute a bedrock of penetrating exposition and analysis on the post-Cold War world . . . strips away much of the cant that suffuses public discourse these days on global developments and gets to a fundamental reality: that

geography remains today, as it has been throughout history, one of the most powerful drivers of world events. The National Interest Kaplan plunges into a planetary review that is often thrilling in its sheer scale . . . encyclopedic. The New Yorker [The Revenge of Geography] serves the facts straight up. . . . Kaplans realism and willingness to face hard facts make The Revenge of Geography a valuable antidote to the feel-good manifestoes that often masquerade as strategic thought. The Daily Beast [A] remarkable new book . . . With such books as Balkan Ghosts and Monsoon, Kaplan, an observer of world events who sees what others often do not, has already established himself as one of the most discerning geopolitical writers of our time. The Revenge of Geography cements his status. National From the Hardcover edition. About the Author Robert D. Kaplan is the bestselling author of sixteen books on foreign affairs and travel translated into many languages, including *Asias Cauldron*, *The Revenge of Geography*, *Monsoon*, *The Coming Anarchy*, and *Balkan Ghosts*. He is a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security and a contributing editor at *The Atlantic*, where his work has appeared for three decades. He was chief geopolitical analyst at Stratfor, a visiting professor at the United States Naval Academy, and a member of the Pentagons Defense Policy Board. *Foreign Policy* magazine has twice named him one of the worlds Top 100 Global Thinkers. From the Hardcover edition. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. 9781400069835|excerpt Kaplan / REVENGE GEOGRAPHY Chapter I FROM BOSNIA TO BAGHDAD To recover our sense of geography, we first must fix the moment in recent history when we most profoundly lost it, explain why we lost it, and elucidate how that affected our assumptions about the world. Of course, such a loss is gradual. But the moment I have isolated, when that loss seemed most acute, was immediately after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Though an artificial border whose crumbling should have enhanced our respect for geography and the relief map and what that map might have foreshadowed in the adjacent Balkans and the Middle East the Berlin Walls erasure made us blind to the real geographical impediments that still divided us, and still awaited us. For suddenly we were in a world in which the dismantling of a man-made boundary in Germany had led to the assumption that all human divisions were surmountable; that democracy would conquer Africa and the Middle East as easily as it had Eastern Europe; that globalization soon to become a buzzword was nothing less than a moral direction of history and a system of international security, rather than what it actually was, merely an economic and cultural stage of development. Consider: a totalitarian ideology had just been vanquished, even as domestic security in the United States and Western Europe was being taken for granted. The semblance of peace reigned generally. Presciently capturing the zeitgeist, a former deputy director of the U.S. State Departments Policy Planning Staff, Francis Fukuyama, published an article a few months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, *The End of History*, proclaiming that while wars and rebellions would continue, history in a Hegelian sense was over now, since the success of capitalist liberal democracies had ended the argument over which system of government was best for humankind.¹ Thus, it was just a matter of shaping the world more in our own image, sometimes through the deployment of American troops; deployments that in the 1990s would exact relatively little penalty. This, the first intellectual cycle of the Post Cold War, was an era of illusions. It was a time when the words realist and pragmatist were considered pejoratives, signifying an aversion to humanitarian intervention in places where the national interest, as conventionally and narrowly defined, seemed elusive. Better in those days to be a neoconservative or liberal internationalist, who were thought of as good, smart people who simply wanted to stop genocide in the Balkans. Such a burst of idealism in the United States was not unprecedented. Victory in World War I had unfurled the banner of Wilsonianism, a notion associated with President Woodrow Wilson that, as it would turn out, took little account of the real goals of Americas European allies and even less account of the realities of the Balkans and the Near East, where, as events in the 1920s would show, democracy and freedom from the imperial overlordship of the Ottoman Turks meant mainly heightened ethnic awareness of a narrow sort in the individual parts of the old sultanate. It was a similar phenomenon that followed the Wests victory in the Cold War, which many believed would simply bring freedom and prosperity under the banners of democracy and free markets. Many suggested that even Africa, the poorest and least stable continent, further burdened with the worlds most artificial and illogical borders, might also be on the brink of a democratic revolution; as if the collapse of the Soviet Empire in the heart of Europe held supreme meaning for the worlds least developed nations, separated by sea and desert thousands of miles away, but connected by television.² Yet, just as after World War I and World War II, our victory in the Cold War would usher in less democracy and global peace than the next struggle for survival, in which evil would wear new masks. Democracy and better government would, in fact, begin to emerge in Africa of all places. But it would be a long and difficult struggle, with anarchy (in the cases of several West African countries), insurrection, and outright wickedness (in the case of Rwanda) rearing their heads for considerable periods in between. Africa would go a long way toward defining the long decade between November 9, 1989, and September 11, 2001 between the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the al Qaeda attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center: a twelve-year period that saw mass murder and belated humanitarian interventions frustrate idealist intellectuals, even as the ultimate success of those interventions raised idealist triumphalism to heights that were to prove catastrophic in the decade that began after 9/11. In that new decade following 9/11, geography, a factor certainly in the Balkans and Africa in the 1990s, would go on to wreak unmitigated havoc on Americas good intentions in the Near East. The journey from Bosnia to Baghdad, from a limited air and land campaign in the western, most developed part of the former Turkish Empire in the Balkans

to a mass infantry invasion in the eastern, least developed part in Mesopotamia, would expose the limits of liberal universalism, and in the process concede new respect to the relief map. The Post Cold War actually began in the 1980s, before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, with the revival of the term Central Europe, later defined by the journalist and Oxford scholar Timothy Garton Ash as a political-cultural distinction against the Soviet East.³ Central Europe, Mitteleuropa, was more of an idea than a fact of geography. It constituted a declaration of memory: that of an intense, deliciously cluttered, and romantic European civilization, suggestive of cobblestone streets and gabled roofs, of rich wine, Viennese cafs, and classical music, of a gentle, humanist tradition infused with edgy and disturbing modernist art and thought. It conjured up the Austro-Hungarian Empire and such names as Gustav Mahler, Gustav Klimt, and Sigmund Freud, leavened with a deep appreciation of the likes of Immanuel Kant and the Dutch-Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Indeed, Central Europe, among so many other things, meant the endangered intellectual world of Jewry before the ravages of Nazism and communism; it meant economic development, with a sturdy recall of Bohemia, prior to World War II, as having enjoyed a higher level of industrialization than Belgium. It meant, with all of its decadence and moral imperfections, a zone of relative multiethnic tolerance under the umbrella of a benign if increasingly dysfunctional Habsburg Empire. In the last phase of the Cold War, Central Europe was succinctly captured by Princeton professor Carl E. Schorske in his troubling, icy-eyed classic *Fin-de-Sicle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, and by the Italian writer Claudio Magris in his sumptuous travelogue *Danube*. For Magris, Mitteleuropa is a sensibility that means the defence of the particular against any totalitarian programme. For the Hungarian writer Gyrgy Konrd and the Czech writer Milan Kundera, Mitteleuropa is something noble, a master-key for liberalizing political aspirations.⁴ To speak of Central Europe in the 1980s and 1990s was to say that a culture in and of itself comprised a geography every bit as much as a mountain range did, or every bit as much as Soviet tanks did. For the idea of Central Europe was a rebuke to the geography of the Cold War, which had thrown up the term Eastern Europe to denote the half of Europe that was communist and controlled from Moscow. East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary had all been part of Central Europe, it was rightly argued, and therefore should not have been consigned to the prison of nations that was communism and the Warsaw Pact. A few years later, ironically, when ethnic war broke out in Yugoslavia, Central Europe, rather than a term of unification, would also become one of division; with the Balkans dismembered in peoples minds from Central Europe, and becoming, in effect, part of the new/old Near East. The Balkans were synonymous with the old Turkish and Byzantine empires, with unruly mountain ranges that had hindered development, and with a generally lower standard of living going back decades and centuries compared to the lands of the former Habsburg and Prussian empires in the heart of Europe. During the monochrome decades of communist domination, Balkan countries such as Romania and Bulgaria did, in fact, suffer a degree of poverty and repression unknown to the northern, Central European half of the Soviet Empire. The situation was complicated, of course. East Germany was the most truly occupied of the satellite states, and consequently its communist system was among the most rigid, even as Yugoslavianot formally a member of the Warsaw Pact allowed a degree of freedom, particularly in its cities, that was unknown in Czechoslovakia, for example. And yet, overall, the nations of former Turkish and Byzantine southeastern Europe suffered in their communist regimes nothing less than a version of oriental despotism, as though a second Mongol invasion, whereas those nations of former Catholic Habsburg Europe mainly suffered something less malignant: a dreary mix in varying degrees of radical socialist populism. In this regard traveling from relatively liberal, albeit communist, Hungary under Jnos Kdr to Romania under the totalitarianism of Nicolae Ceausescu was typical in this regard. I made the trip often in the 1980s: as my train passed into Romania from Hungary, the quality of the building materials suddenly worsened; officials ravaged my luggage and made me pay a bribe for my typewriter; the toilet paper in the lavatory disappeared and lights went dim. True, the Balkans were deeply influenced by Central Europe, but they were just as influenced by the equally proximate Middle East. The dusty steppe with its bleak public spaces imports both from Anatolia were a feature of life in Kosovo and Macedonia, where the cultured conviviality of Prague and Budapest was harder to find. Thus, it was not altogether an accident, or completely the work of evil individuals, that violence broke out in the ethnic mlang of Yugoslavia rather than, say, in the uniethnic Central European states of Hungary and Poland. History and geography also had something to do with it. Yet by holding up Central Europe as a moral and political cynosure, rather than as a geographical one, liberal intellectuals like Garton Ash one of the most eloquent voices of the decade propounded a vision not only of Europe, but of the world that was inclusive rather than discriminatory. In this view, not only should the Balkans not be consigned to underdevelopment and barbarism, but neither should any place: Africa, for example. The fall of the Berlin Wall should affect not only Germany, but, rather, should unleash the dream of Central Europe writ large across the globe. This humanist approach was the essence of a cosmopolitanism that liberal internationalists and neoconservatives both subscribed to in the 1990s. Recall that before he became known for his support of the Iraq War, Paul Wolfowitz was a proponent of military intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, in effect, joining hands with liberals like Garton Ash at the left-leaning New York of Books. The road to Baghdad had roots in the Balkan interventions of the 1990s, which were opposed by realists and pragmatists, even as these military deployments in the former Yugoslavia were to prove undeniably successful. The yearning to save the Muslims of Bosnia and Kosovo cannot be divorced from the yearning for the restoration of Central Europe, both as a real and poignantly imagined place, that would demonstrate how,

ultimately, it is morality and humanism that sanctify beauty. (Though Garton Ash himself was skeptical of the effort to idealize Central Europe, he did see the positive moral use to which such an idealization might be applied.) The humanist writings of Isaiah Berlin captured the intellectual spirit of the 1990s. *Ich bin ein Berliner*, I used to say, meaning an Isaiah Berliner, Garton Ash wrote in a haunting memoir of his time in East Germany.⁵ Now that communism had been routed and Marxist utopias exposed as false, Isaiah Berlin was the perfect antidote to the trendy monistic theories that had ravished academic life for the previous four decades. Berlin, who taught at Oxford and whose life was coeval with the twentieth century, had always defended bourgeois pragmatism and temporizing compromises over political experimentation.⁶ He loathed geographical, cultural, and all other forms of determinism, refusing to consign anyone and anybody to their fate. His views, articulated in articles and lectures over a lifetime, often as a lone academic voice in the wilderness, comprised the perfect synthesis of a measured idealism that was employed both against communism and the notion that freedom and security were only for some peoples and not for others. His philosophy and the ideal of Central Europe were perfect fits. But though Central Europe writ large, as expounded by these wise and eloquent intellectuals, was indeed a noble cause, one which should perennially play a role in the foreign policies of all Western nations as I will demonstrate, it does face a hurdle with which I am also forced to deal. For there remains a problem with this exalted vision, an ugly fact that throughout history has often turned the concept of Central Europe into something tragic. Central Europe simply has no reality on the relief map. (Garton Ash intuited this with the title of his own article, *Does Central Europe Exist?*)⁷ Enter the geographical determinists, so harsh and lowering compared to the gentle voice of Isaiah Berlin: particularly the Edwardian era voice of Sir Halford J. Mackinder and his disciple James Fairgrieve, for whom the idea of Central Europe has a fatal geographical flaw. Central Europe, Mackinder and Fairgrieve tell us, belongs to the crush zone that lays athwart Maritime Europe, with its oceanic interests, and the Eurasian Heartland with its continental outlook. In short, strategically speaking, there is no space for Central Europe in the view of Mackinder and Fairgrieve.⁸ The celebration of Central Europe, the justifiable indulgence of it by the liberal intellectuals, the writings of Mackinder and Fairgrieve suggest, indicates a respite from geopolitics or at least the desire for one. Yet the fall of the Berlin Wall did not end geopolitics, but merely brought it into a new phase. You cannot simply wish away the struggle of states and empires across the map. I will explore Mackinder's work, particularly his Heartland thesis, later at great length. Suffice it to say now that, expounded well over a hundred years ago, it proved remarkably relevant to the dynamics of World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. Stripped down to their most austere logic, the two world wars were about whether or not Germany would dominate the Heartland of Eurasia that lay to its east, while the Cold War centered on the Soviet Union's domination of Eastern Europe, the western edge of Mackinder's Heartland. This Soviet Eastern Europe, by the way, included in its domain East Germany, historic Prussia that is, which had traditionally been territorially motivated with an eastward, Heartland orientation; while inside NATO's oceanic alliance was West Germany, historically Catholic, and industrially and commercially minded, oriented toward the North Sea and the Atlantic. A renowned American geographer of the Cold War period, Saul B. Cohen, argues that the boundary zone that divides the East from West Germany . . . is one of the oldest in history, the one which separated Frankish and Slavonic tribes in the Middle Ages. In other words, there was little artificial about the frontier between West and East Germany. West Germany, according to Cohen, was a remarkable reflection of Maritime Europe, whereas East Germany belonged to the Continental Landpower Realm. Cohen supported a divided Germany as geopolitically sound and strategically necessary, because it stabilized the perennial battle between Maritime and Heartland Europe.⁹ Mackinder, too, wrote presciently in 1919 that the line through Germany . . . is the very line which we have on other grounds taken as demarking the Heartland in a strategical sense from the Coastland.¹⁰ So while the division of Berlin itself was artificial, the division of Germany was less so. Cohen called Central Europe a mere geographical expression that lacks geopolitical substance.¹¹ The reunification of Germany, according to this logic, rather than lead to the rebirth of Central Europe, would simply lead to a renewed battle for Europe and, by inference, for the Heartland of Eurasia: Which way, in other words, would Germany swing, to the east and toward Russia, with great consequences for Poland, Hungary, and the other former satellite countries; or to the west and toward the United Kingdom and the United States, providing a victory for the Maritime realm? We still do not know the answer to this because the Post Cold War is still in its early stages. Cohen and others could not have foreseen accurately the debellated nature of today's united Germany, with its aversion to military solutions existing at a deep cultural level, something which in the future may help stabilize or destabilize the continent, depending upon the circumstances.¹² Precisely because they have occupied the center of Europe as a land power, Germans have always demonstrated a keen awareness of geography and strategy as a survival mechanism. This is something which Germans may yet recover, allowing them to move beyond the quasi-pacifism of the moment. Indeed, might a reunited and liberal Germany become a balancing power in its own right between the Atlantic Ocean and the Eurasian Heartland, permitting a new and daring interpretation of Central European culture to take root, and thus providing the concept of Central Europe with geopolitical ballast? That would give those like Garton Ash credence over Mackinder and Cohen. In sum, will Central Europe, as an ideal of tolerance and high civilization, survive the onslaught of new great power struggles? For such struggles in the heart of Europe there will be. The vibrant culture of late-nineteenth-century Central Europe that looked so inviting from the vantage

point of the late twentieth century was itself the upshot of an unsentimental and specific imperial and geopolitical reality, namely Habsburg Austria. Liberalism ultimately rests on power: a benign power, perhaps, but power nevertheless. But humanitarian interventionists in the 1990s were not blind to power struggles; nor in their eyes did Central Europe constitute a utopian vision. Rather, the restoration of Central Europe through the stoppage of mass killing in the Balkans was a quiet and erudite rallying cry for the proper employment of Western military force, in order to safeguard the meaning of victory in the Cold War. After all, what was the Cold War ultimately about, except to make the world safe for individual freedom? For liberal internationalists Bosnia has become the Spanish Civil War of our era, wrote Michael Ignatieff, the intellectual historian and biographer of Isaiah Berlin, referring to the passion with which intellectuals like himself approached the Balkans.¹³ The call for human agency and the defeat of determinism was urgent in their minds. One recalls the passage from Joyce's *Ulysses*, when Leopold Bloom laments the generic conditions imposed by natural law: the decimating epidemics, the catastrophic cataclysms, and seismic upheavals. To which Stephen Dedalus responds by simply, poignantly affirming his significance as a conscious rational animal.¹⁴ Yes, atrocities happen, it is the way of the world. But it doesn't have to be accepted thus. Because man is rational, he ultimately has the ability to struggle against suffering and injustice. And so, with Central Europe as the lodestar, the road led southeastward, first to Bosnia, then to Kosovo, and onward to Baghdad. Of course, many of the intellectuals who supported intervention in Bosnia would oppose it in Iraq or at least be skeptical of it; but neoconservatives and others would not be deterred. For as we shall see, the Balkans showed us a vision of interventionism, delayed though it was, that cost little in soldiers' lives, leaving many with the illusion that painless victory was now the future of war. The 1990s, with their belated interventions were, as Garton Ash wrote searingly, reminiscent of W. H. Auden's low, dishonest decade of the 1930s.¹⁵ True, but in another sense they were much too easy.