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## Empire as a Geopolitical Figure

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## Empire as a Geopolitical Figure

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*This article analyses the ingredients of empire as a pattern of order with geopolitical effects. Noting the imperial form's proclivity for expansion from a critical reading of historical sociology, the article argues that the principal manifestation of earlier geopolitics lay not in the nation but in empire. That in turn has been driven by a view of the world as disorderly and open to the ordering will of empires (emanating, at the time of geopolitics' inception, from Europe). One implication is that empires are likely to figure in the geopolitical ordering of the globe at all times, in particular after all that has happened in the late twentieth century to undermine nationalism and the national state. Empire is indeed a probable, even for some an attractive form of regime for extending order over the disorder produced by globalisation. Geopolitics articulated in imperial expansion is likely to be found in the present and in the future – the EU, and still more obviously the USA exhibiting the form in contemporary guise. This does not mean that empires figure in geopolitics simply by extending their own order, however; they are at least as much purveyors of other dynamics and orders, which possess their own discrete effects. The article ends with stipulations regarding the variety of forms that empires may take: neither fully bounded nor centred; neither straightforwardly self-serving nor easily made legitimate.*

### INTRODUCTION: PERPETUALLY RETURNING EMPIRES

The background of this article is that understanding of, or even sympathy with empire is again à la mode. In the wider world and in recent published work – often prompted by a suspicion of contemporary 'imperial'

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power – empire is, I wish to argue, re-emerging as the historic epitome of an ordering power stretching out over territory. A number of historically grounded accounts have appeared in recent years showing how empire of one sort or another recurs across history, up to and including in the contemporary world.<sup>1</sup> We are not, these commentaries suggest, done with empire in some form or other.

The existence of an historical sociology of empires, together with the appearance of a broader debate about the scope for empires in the contemporary world, suggests indeed that the concept of empire is integral to any geopolitics. Geopolitics can be simply understood as the study of the political, societal, and/or historical shaping of the space of the globe. Shaping usually entails patterns; and so it is for geopolitics. National-state ambition to dominate the world has been the traditional figure for the shaping of space in geopolitics. But if empires set their mark on the order of the globe, they too present a ‘figure’ in the patterning of geopolitics. This article sets out the elements of recent historical sociology of empires and then extrapolates a repeated geopolitical figure: expanding order from one or another centre of power. This conception, it further argues, may be the best device to understand the geopolitical organisation of the so-called globalising world of the present and future. To reach that point, I seek to formulate a flexible account of what empires can be, in what forms they may occur, and what dynamics they may follow in the geopolitical order.

#### EMPIRE ACCORDING TO HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY: EXTENDING POWER WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Recent historical sociology addresses precisely those issue of empires’ patterns of organisation. Whereas earlier historical sociology was attached to the national state,<sup>2</sup> there now exists an historical sociology for a type of political order that is not national in any accepted sense, but rather expansive and universalist in its self-identity. So, with the puzzling resurgence of empire alongside the ostensible decline of the national state under globalising pressures, it can repay us to have an understanding of how empire *rather* than national state, may be a basic form shaping order in the world. Once that is traced in historical sociology, however, we can see that the formative scope of empires is underplayed when encased in a prior modernist international system.

The heart of historical sociology’s models of empires and their dynamics is the empires’ relationship to the outside which they pursue domination over. Various cognate terms for domination over external space – hegemony, suzerainty, dependency, dominium, condominium, etc. – are often explored alongside empires, whilst for the most part remaining variations on the empire model of extending domination. So ‘empire’ remains the best

generic term to approach the group as a whole.<sup>3</sup> That empire turns upon an intrusive *relationship* is crucial for the geopolitics potential of these newer theorisations: 'empire' emerges as that type of power, frequently in evidence over the length of historical time, which naturally *extends* its order. By a given empire's 'order', I refer to its particular arrangements for socio-political life to be understandable, reliable, and hence inclined to generate predictable outcomes. While no empire's order can be *identical* with order *as such*, each has those qualities of a certain comprehensibility and reliability upon which an ordering of the space of the globe can be based.<sup>4</sup>

According to historical sociology, empires' extension of domination has not been grounded solely in the *internal* nature of the given empire, but in empires' relationship to the wider environment: the ecological, social or political environment; the international system or the global setting. This focus on relationships embeds empires firmly into the political ordering of the world as a whole. In due course, I will argue that, if we are to see the scope for empires in the geopolitical ordering of the globe, the relationship to an outside should be further refined. For it opens up the possibility of a skein of orders stretching over the globe, such that numerous political units (on the 'periphery'<sup>5</sup>) have a place in a wider order *via* their relationship to some metropole (empire) or other.

An authoritative starting point for recent historical sociology of empire was Michael Doyle's 1986 book, *Empires*. True to the relational vocation, Doyle defines an empire as: 'a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society' or, again, as 'the political control exercised by one polity (the metropole) over the domestic and foreign policy of another polity (the periphery), resulting in control over who rules and what rulers can do'.<sup>6</sup> Doyle's aim is to escape 'metrocentric' analysis: that confined to the power deployed outward *from* the metropolitan centre – the default implication of histories of Empire X or Empire Y. The domestic-international distinction is taken as given: identifiable 'domestic' orders, metropolises and the periphery have external relationships to each other.<sup>7</sup> Doyle's formative originality lay in showing imperialism in the *interactions* of empires with their peripheries, where they extend, maintain and/or lose power.<sup>8</sup>

Doyle frames a synchronic 'statics' of empire that sets out, for the purposes of comparison, the elements which vary within metropole-periphery relations. He proposes variations in three 'sources' of penetration by the metropole into the periphery<sup>9</sup>: the capacities of the metropole itself; the strength of economic, social or cultural *transnational* processes which convey that penetration; and the character of the periphery to be penetrated. Each of these sources locates a 'level of analysis' (in the jargon of international politics) from which to track metropolitan penetration: first, the capacity for penetration of the expansive centre; then, the technological,

social, economic and cultural resources for penetration available in the larger environment; and, finally, the *penetrability* of the periphery itself. The second level, however, is not very clearly located. Are these resources *within* the metropole or in the larger space that it occupies with others – perhaps shared with the periphery? Are they plucked by the metropole according to need, or do they also *shape* the metropole's activities?

This raises doubts regarding Doyle's idea of the structure of the 'international system'. Should it perhaps be consolidated into resources in the larger environment? For Doyle, the international system provides a framework *under* which empires' expansion into the periphery is pursued. This conception itself is characteristic of the 'modern' international politics between sovereign states. Accordingly, the effect of the 'international system' can be most clearly seen in nineteenth-century European imperialism, which provides the bulk of Doyle's historical cases. In that period, a measure of agreement over the territorial lines between their empires was established amongst rivals. A competitive international system seems to have both *stimulated* and *limited* the activities of the different imperial centres.

It is not so clear, however, that we could specify effects of a higher-order 'international system' under other historical conditions, such as separation or unipolarity. In the first case, empires exist with little or no mutual relations to constitute an international 'system' (e.g., between China and the Holy Roman Empire). Under those conditions, anything resembling an 'international system' could only be discovered in the social, economic and cultural resources for penetration available in the global environment. This is indeed the picture that emerges in analytical histories of empires, which attribute empires' success to the adaptation to the context of societal, military or technological development in and around them.<sup>10</sup> Under unipolarity, on the other hand, the one pole may be sufficiently dominant to formulate the ostensible rules of the 'international system' upon which it is supposed to depend. This clearly became a possibility when the USA's status as unipole prompted it to lay down the rules for the international system as such. Again, the international system does not belong to a discrete higher order, over and above Doyle's second level, resources for penetration in the larger environment.

My broader point is that there is no licence to assume that the modern 'system' of states is a structure dominant *over* empires. Doyle's conception of the environment of imperial expansion is not open to this: empires, for example, where centres themselves possess a *formative* capacity for any 'international system'. Conversely, neither can we assume that 'social, economic and cultural resources' straightforwardly *belong* to the given empire. They may belong to a wider environment which transcends the modern model of states in an international system. An instance of this is provided by Denmark: not itself a member of the nineteenth-century club of

imperial states, yet in possession of the capacities to be a significant party in commercial and technical *penetration* of the peripheries of other nineteenth-century European empires.

Doyle's analysis provides not only a synchronic 'comparative statics' of empire, but also a diachronic model of imperial extension and decline over time. This figures in the analysis in two ways: both explicitly and in an *implicit* modernism. Explicitly, there are 'dynamics of imperial change' embedded in empires' relationship to their peripheries.<sup>11</sup> In particular, empires' long survival depends upon their crossing Doyle's so-called 'Augustinian threshold': a transition to bureaucratic integration of and for the empire as a whole, which fosters legitimacy, thus reducing the need for the centre to exercise coercion. Whilst survival after the Augustan transition is still limited by tensions inherent in imperial control over peripheral nations, this institutional creativity offers extended life to an empire.

Implicitly, another, diachronic model derived from an *unstated* world history can also be traced in Doyle's analysis. It is visible in the crucial distinction between the intrusion of empires into highly integrated, 'tribal' societies (ch. 8) and into partially differentiated 'patrimonial' societies (ch. 9). The mechanisms necessary for control, and the terms for success or survival, vary substantially between in the two types.<sup>12</sup> Tribal peripheries are subjected to the imperial order by colonists, missionaries and/or colonial administrators. Conversely, the social differentiation characteristic of patrimonial societies implies a role in imperial expansion for local rulers and elites, who may actively collude in the subjugation of their society – typically by doing a deal with the metropole. Their cooperation obviates the need for the extensive direct intrusion practised on tribal societies. Hence, patrimonial peripheries are more often absorbed via informal empire, hegemonic influence or 'empires by consent'.

At the other end of an empire's life cycle, when the very social crises furthered by imperial domination over the periphery themselves provoke the decline of the empire's power (ch.14), the two types of society again exhibit distinct patterns of challenge vis-à-vis the metropole, as well as distinct post-independence conditions. In the tribal type, everything depends upon whether it is native populations or colonists that feel most able to claim independence from the metropole. In the patrimonial type, on the other hand, the peripheral elites' privileged position, maintained through conflict with the metropole (typically around their indebtedness<sup>13</sup>), is formative for the post-independence state.

This second, unstated diachronic standpoint has an implicit temporal norm, the modernist history embedded in sociology: from an integrated to a differentiated society and so forth. The difference between the patrimonial society and the tribal is that the former, being further along the road towards modernity, offers a distinctive mode of penetration by the empire. It therefore establishes a different relationship with the modernity conveyed

from the metropolis, and then pursued after the period of imperial domination.<sup>14</sup> We can thus infer that in Doyle empires are the medium in a model of global modernisation, in which peripheral societies are joined differentially to global modernisation according to their relationship with a metropole. This observation prompts thought not only about empires and modernisation, but also about modernisation as such. Why, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, should it be the sole model of historical development in a historical sociology? We can log for later that the relation of empires to *two* overarching modernist structures – that of the international system and that of modernisation – is unexplored in the historical sociology of empires.

An embedded notion of modernity also looms large in the imposing model of empires developed by Herfried Münkler.<sup>15</sup> He shares Doyle's focus on the *relationship* between the empire and its periphery, and likewise Doyle's concept of the 'Augustinian threshold'. By differentiating empires according to the terrain on their periphery (e.g., steppe v. maritime empires), his account has a more geopolitical air from the start. Modernisation makes its appearance with the distinction between 'civilized and barbarian frontiers'.<sup>16</sup> The issue for Münkler's analysis is the cost-benefit of empire, which is largely decided by the level of modernisation in the dominated periphery. A barbarian periphery is not used to order, offers limited benefits and requires repeated, costly coercion to keep it in check. A civilised periphery, by contrast, will yield financial and cultural benefits to the metropole, and may be content in its subordination provided the empire is effective in protecting its trade and economic growth.

Modernisation functions here as both the *reason* for the civilised periphery's comfortable integration into the empire and the *source* of the rewards that the empire receives in return. Following post-colonial developmental states' failure to progress along the path of modernisation in the late twentieth century, the progressive assumptions normal in modernist thinking appear less certain for Münkler. He writes of socio-political modernisation now being ousted by irresolvable conflicts over cultural identity which colour the prospects for the foreseeable future.<sup>17</sup> But, though Münkler may have lost faith in the modern project, it remains the backbone of his narrative.

To sum up, the work of the historical sociologists of empire suggests *prima facie* that empire is indeed a major *geopolitical* figure. For empires emerge as political and social relationships by which territories and societies are incorporated into the extending global order of the given empire and/or into the global order of modernisation. On the one hand, empires themselves engender geopolitical order, or orders; on the other hand, they may be conduits of *another* geopolitical order, such as the historic spread of modernisation. These insights strongly suggest the possibility that empires might have been, or might still be the 'Great Game' in global geopolitics.

But historical sociology does not present a satisfactory picture of the relationships between three levels of this game: the expansive efforts of one or more empires; the evolution of the peripheries; and overarching historical developments. To grasp empire adequately as a geopolitical figure, we need to clarify empires' place in the geopolitical ordering of the space of the globe. Yes, when an empire extends its power over a greater space, it also extends its own order. But that is unlikely to be the end of the story. For alongside the given empire's order, others related to it can develop: an overarching pattern of domination on the map of the globe; patterns of social relations found in, or in response to those in the metropole; commonalities (and identifiable divergences) of practices, rules or values. I propose to clarify these dimensions first from below, as it were, and then from above; first by asking: What is involved in an imperial order that enables it to effect geopolitical change over space and time? And then by asking: What *other* mechanisms and forces for geopolitical ordering might be at work *in, through*, or even *in spite of* the rise and fall of particular empires?

#### WHAT IS INVOLVED IN AN IMPERIAL ORDER?: I—NATIONS, EMPIRES AND GEOPOLITICS

I pursue the first of those questions initially by examining the place in geopolitical order that has been accorded to nations as against empires. This is a matter of conceptual refurbishment to show what should and what should not be retained in the conceptual equipment of geopolitics. The need for such refurbishments is not new. At one time, geopolitics was simply rejected on the grounds of its association with the fascist nationalism of the World War II aggressors.<sup>18</sup> But when the end of the Cold War again shook our assumptions about the nature and form of 'international' order, researchers brushed up the concepts of geopolitics. Many challenged in particular the centrality of the traditional national state.<sup>19</sup> Others, more directly concerned with what underpinned the political geography of the contemporary world, gave empires a prominent place in their answers.<sup>20</sup>

If we look back from this vantage point at geopolitics as developed in, and practiced by the nineteenth/twentieth-century national states, we cannot but be struck by the way it emerged most clearly at world level not in Europe, in the actions of *national-sovereign* states attached to distinctive national characters and territories, but in their *imperialism* in Asia and Africa. It is there that they most obviously succeeded in shaping the space of the globe. But that imperialism cannot be accounted for, as post-World War II critics were inclined to do, from nationalism alone.<sup>21</sup> Nationalism as a popular ideology did not appear until the nineteenth century; whereas European empires began much earlier. Though *imperialism* and *nationalism* may make common cause, then, it makes better sense to trace nineteenth- and



twentieth-century geopolitics to states' imperialism *as distinct* from their nationalism. Geopolitical thinking and practices occur in tension with the principles of *national* states. It likewise follows that imperialism may remain as a basis for geopolitics *even when* the national frame of national states is weakened in the late twentieth century.

One can drive home this thought in reconsidering the so-called 'Scramble for Africa' of 1880–1900, when the European powers rushed to extend territorial claims ahead of their rivals. The movement indicates how, where the conditions prompting imperial expansion arose, 'national' principles – fixed boundaries, sovereign independence and non-intrusion into territory not one's own – are easily abandoned by these so-called 'national' states. The constitution of the nation in its domestic space was, one might say, a shallower basis for geopolitics than the drive for imperial expansion.

For there is a fundamental world picture, quite independent of sovereign nationhood, common to nineteenth-century nation-state imperialism, twentieth-century geopolitical aggression and seventeenth- to twentieth-century European empire-building, which has fed imperialism *and* geopolitics over the centuries. It was trenchantly expressed in a memorandum by Leopold, who, as King of the Belgians, afterwards presided over his country's brutal colonisation of the Congo. Whilst considering enviously the gains already enjoyed by others through imperialism and making the case for Belgium to follow suit, he remarked: 'At [*sic*] Java there exists a type of forced labour which is the only way of civilizing and imposing moral standards on these lazy and corrupt peoples of the Far East.'<sup>22</sup> Long after the transparently political ambitions of a Leopold, mid-twentieth-century economic historians could reach an analogous picture on the basis of what Mommsen refers to as simply 'objectivist' theory<sup>23</sup>: an analytical account of how development and the lack of it drives some societies to impose upon others, who in turn are bound to accept it: an 'outburst of surplus energy was the true motive force against which the antiquated, crumbling or petrified political and social systems of the non-European world were shattered or fell to pieces.'<sup>24</sup>

Behind geopolitics' *nation*-centred practices, that is to say, we can see an image of the world motivating empires' shaping of space. The world (its history and its geography) is perceived as a *disorderly* space: that is, space without any regularity that can be understood, relied upon, or factored in to ensure the outcome of action. If order is to arise, it seems to follow, that can happen through the will of *orderly* governmental entities to spread their dominance over the *disorderly* parts of the globe. In the thinking at a centre of power, the world beyond becomes a 'power vacuum' – the passive object of the power of other actors (in the nineteenth century, nations and national states) over disorder. With this construction of the world in play, geopolitical orders emerge as an effect of one or other political entities' extending their power to create 'order' – principally through control over

territory. Nineteenth-century European nations construed this juxtaposition in terms of their nations' being 'civilised' agents of 'civilising' order over its absence. (Though a number nourished in parallel the view that actually they were *more* civilised and civilising than the other European nations!) For their activities on the global plane, the dichotomy between order and disorder, expressed in the juxtaposition civilised-uncivilised, was more fundamental than that between nation and nation.

Whilst there remains a clear tension between national-statehood and imposing global order, it is easy to make extending empire *inseparable* from order. The former brings the latter; the latter is the rationale and legitimation of the former: empires bring order; order legitimises imperial dominance. In short, nation-centrism can be removed from geopolitics without weakening the geopolitical paradigm above, founded on the extension of an ordering power. As Agnew points out, 1960s development theory, for example, reflected an analogous sense of the progress of order worldwide, though with no explicit reference to imperial expansion as the mechanism.<sup>25</sup> Yet the extension of (their) order is, we have learnt from historical sociology, the central dynamic of empires. Given their proclivity for extending control, empires are ready-made for the task implicit in the sense of a disorderly world beyond. That is what, to refer to my first question above, 'enables [empires] to effect geopolitical change over space and time'. Because their fundamental aspiration is to extend *an* order, where there is disorder they are the natural, self-selected agents to bring geopolitical order.

It is no wonder, then, that over the length of historical time empires have been the most visible mechanism in the ordering of global space: empire and geopolitics pursue the same ambitions. And it is likewise perfectly natural that, in a globalising environment, the imperial ordering of the globe should be embraced as a goal by political entities that are *not* nineteenth-century European colonising national states at all. A number of powerful advocates of an American-led geopolitics *for the sake of worldwide order* have accordingly appeared since 1990, setting out an agenda for the proper ordering of the world.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, a smaller number of advocates of an 'imperial' order centred upon the post-national-state European Union have recently begun to appear.<sup>27</sup>

## WHAT IS INVOLVED IN AN IMPERIAL ORDER?: II—EMPIRES AS A FORCE IN GEOPOLITICS

My second question from earlier can now be taken up: What *other* mechanisms and forces for geopolitical ordering might be at work in, through, or in spite of the rise and fall of empires? We have seen how well empire fits as a *possible* force in the accounts of the geopolitical ordering of the world.

But is it the *only*, or the *most likely* one? In the light of the argument of the previous section, the issue can be further re-formulated: If geopolitics entails an ordering of space, are there other ordering processes or actors working in parallel, but over and above that implicit in any given empire? It seems beyond belief that no such processes or actors could be postulated. So, we can approach the issue by asking how other potential geopolitical orders stand in relation to empires. Hence my earlier formulation of this second question: '*in, through, or even in spite of the activity of empires*'. We have to leave open the possibility that: a) empires' extending power *bears within it* something not identical with that power as such; b) empires' power is the *passive conduit* of some overarching process independent of it; and/or c) there are effects of empires' extending power that are *at odds with* the purposes implied in that power.

The very first attacks on imperialism alleged that *something else* in domestic politics was indeed at work within the pursuit of the empire. Arguing against the direction of British government in the late eighteenth century, Burke, for example, claimed precisely that the empire served the power of the court over the established nobility, benefited a *nouveau riche*, and undermined the public morals of the nation with fortunes rapidly made by irresponsible power- and wealth-seekers.<sup>28</sup> This line of criticism has been repeated over the centuries. Hobson's case, from which the modern use of the term 'imperialism' stems, was principally that manufacturing and military elites with narrow interests to serve were steering the country away from liberal principles of free trade beneficial to all. Parallels can likewise be found in contemporary American critics of the USA's imperial strategy in recent decades<sup>29</sup>: the empire serves the interests of anti-republican power elites well established in Washington, and/or distorts the nation's understanding of the world.

Of course, *any* public policy must be expected to alter society, and in the nature of things most will favour some fractions of society over others. But we can identify two effects that are specific to empire-building: the *prima facie* need to concentrate greater power in order to rule over a more extended empire; and 'bread and circuses' logic – a tactic to calm discontented fractions of the population by buying them off with the resources under the empire's control<sup>30</sup>: cheap food and nationalist posturing. It follows that we can expect the imperial extension of power to promote power concentration at the centre, and to be driven by interests of this kind in the metropole.<sup>31</sup>

Both these effects borne along in empire-building may spill over to other societies in the empire: via the terms of trade between the metropole and the periphery; in the practices of the colonial regime; and in the consequences of colonists' presence. Furthermore, these effects include *non-material*, psychic consequences typical of empires: the discovery of the world beyond the limits of one's own society in terms which project

weaknesses onto others and reserve virtues to ourselves. The literature of post-colonialism bulges with examples of colonising culture's self-flattering view of those subject to the empire.<sup>32</sup> Finally, this effect can be traced in compensatory *responses* among societies at the periphery to the imaginary emanating from the metropole.<sup>33</sup>

A consequence follows for the degree of *agency* attributable to empires in the geopolitical ordering of space. Empires shape global space in ways that are often *indirect* and *unwitting*, while they concurrently generate deceptive understandings of global order in both metropole and periphery. The ranking of populations which is integral to empire is not an *object* of the political drive for power over others; but it may be a *precondition* for attempting to build an empire, and is certainly an almost unavoidable *outcome* of it – especially in the colonised spaces where administrators and colonists function to impose imperial rule. Likewise, the socio-economic structures favouring particular interests are not *identical* with the project of developing or sustaining an empire, but they can shape the global space for human relations long after the empire collapses – just as patterns in today's 'globalised' world reproduce that of the world created by European empires of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.<sup>34</sup>

This takes me to the second level of my question about mechanisms for geopolitics over and above empire. I have so far concluded that, within a given empire, there are forces and processes that are not subject to it. Can these forces and processes originate in something broader than any particular empire? The entire body of twentieth-century theory of imperialism from Hobson to Schumpeter can indeed be said to promote one or other version of that claim.<sup>35</sup> Particular empires are not, it has consistently been claimed, their own masters; they are the creatures of trans-national capitalism's pursuit of space to operate. Capitalists, capitalist development, profitability, and/or the class conflicts of capitalism have extended control over space: in pursuit of raw materials, monopoly, investment opportunities, markets, and/or exploitation to buy off disgruntled classes at home.

To be sure, it has now become hard to determine which elements of capitalism drove it towards imperialism.<sup>36</sup> And it is likewise unrealistic to ignore capitalism's inherent dynamism by shackling imperialism to the victory of capitalism from any particular centre. In explaining British imperial expansion, John Darwin evinces factors ranging from chance events to modernisation as such: e.g., the seizure of Bengal, in which opportunist action on the ground opened the Asian market just as Europe on the verge of industrialised mass production was in need of outlets.<sup>37</sup> Rather than invalidating the derivation of empire from capitalism, however, this can simply show that capitalist economies themselves evolve, and their reasons for needing wider arenas change accordingly.<sup>38</sup> In short, there seems a high probability that one or more version of capitalism will prompt empire-building and likewise be sustained by it.

What of trans-national processes other than the development of capitalist economies? We have already met one: when we saw how historical sociology of empire leaned on modernisation. A masterly theoretical structure to embrace *both* empire *and* modernisation was created in 1970s World System Theory (WST). Via the economists' distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, WST tracked from the demands of growing capitalism in the West, to the intrusion of market economic relations into the wider world, and then to the *type of government* required for any given zone in the global market.<sup>39</sup> On this account, developing modern capitalism's economic relationships and political order possess an inertia and a life of their own. Empires are *produced by*, and in turn *reproduce* a geopolitical structure: the 'modern world economy'. Economic, social and political functions in the modern world have been arranged appropriately for that overarching geopolitical pattern.<sup>40</sup> The theory has even proved flexible to altered circumstances after the end of the Cold War.<sup>41</sup>

With so comprehensive a theorisation, we reach the third level of my question of global mechanisms: Can there be effects of empires' extending power that are *at odds with* the implicit purposes of that power. For this bigger setting is not a creature of empire, and its size and complexity imply the possibility of cross-currents within. There is opportunity for *sub-movements* and *counter-movements* which destabilise the balance between the different component parts. It is no accident that a characteristic move by Wallerstein himself has been to postulate that there are 'counter-systemic' movements at work that undermine politically the smooth running of the world economic system.

How should we understand dynamics like this in the geopolitics of which empires are a part? Responses at odds with implicit purposes are sometimes called 'perverse effects', that is, consequences of an action or a policy that paradoxically confound the intended or expected outcomes. But that term may understate what we are dealing with: it is possible that the 'perverse' effects in *one* system are a conduit for the outcomes, or the appearance of some *other* system. The world economy in WST runs through different empires (Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Britain and so on), 'using' them, as it were, to install a geopolitics with the kinds of regime necessary for the world economy as such.<sup>42</sup>

It may also be that a further, distinct level of order develops in the very extension of any given empire or world economy. Just as the world economy trumps the power of particular empires, so might something distinct within the world economy trump it in structuring the globe. This is the possibility referred to by 'counter-systemic movements', which arise *in* the modern world economy, but produce *destabilizing* outcomes for the system itself. A wide-ranging attempt to demonstrate that, over the long term, contrary dynamics have operated in and through the European colonial empires was put forward by Nederveen Pieterse in the late 1980s. Pieterse

used Wertheim's concept of the 'counterpoints': two-way interactions arising from the inherently ambivalent nature of culture, which generate *dissident* expressions and interpretations in response to any content imposed from above.<sup>43</sup> Counterpoints license Pieterse's expositions of the striking fact that what survives or emerges in empires has often run counter to European imperialisms.

The thread running through Pieterse's narratives is that the ambivalence inherent in cultural interchange motivates unsuppressible opposition to the very strategy of empire:

. . . acceptance of domination is never total. The sequence of values-social institutions is . . . amplified with ambivalence-counterpoints, contestation, conflict, making for the instability of any social construction.<sup>44</sup>

Hence, that from earlier and that which is contrary survive to challenge an empire at every turn, and then to outlive it. In an historical flow that preserves all cultural content even as it transforms it, European states' imperial expansion *preserved* or *adapted* elements of domestic and colonised societies that it was its ostensible purpose simply to suppress; found itself *opposed by* a 'defensive nationalism' spawned by imperial intrusion itself; and *imported* opposition into its domestic orders.<sup>45</sup> This account describes 'effects of empires' extending power that are '*at odds with*' their purposes insofar as *all* structure meets the defiant *ambivalence* of culture, which preserves and alters that which is imposed upon it.

Pieterse's overall picture is anarchic. As for geopolitics, the only pattern is that *no* overall pattern can be stable and determinate. All top-down patterns from an imperial centre are confounded through culture. Yet an alternative, which incorporates *development* (in the form of the World System) rather than stopping short at the idea that impositions are always confounded, is presented by Peter J. Taylor's 1999 book *Modernities: A Geohistorical Interpretation*. Taylor's is one of those rare books whose main point can be seen in the very title: modernity is written in plural; and geopolitics is made historical – 'geohistorical'. The book gives an account of three 'hegemonic modernities' that have been conveyed over the world from three different centres of empire: the Dutch, the British and the American. Modernisation is not a fixed, once-for-all transition. Each version of modernity has added new features.<sup>46</sup> So, *more than one* modernity has been extended over the globe; and there is *a history* running between them. One imperial centre after another is the site of institutional innovations that enable it to realise an imperialising impulse over the wider world. Concurrently the given centre spreads 'its' modernity as a model to be imposed, to be emulated, and, in due course, to be superseded by a competitor modernity. The 'modern' world system of earlier WSP itself undergoes re-centring and re-modelling in the process of spreading.

An understated thread in Taylor's story is that the three centres themselves were originally subordinate to an empire from which each diverged. This observation allows us finally to winkle out a complementarity between Wertheim's 'counterpoints', which are sources of *resistance*, and Taylor's 'emulation', which prompts first *replication of*, but later *competition with* the given form of modernity and/or the particular imperial centre. Whilst observing 'counterpoint' dissent from each model, that is to say, we may set out the sequence of the different imperial centres, each with *its* different moment of modernity. The mix of imposition from outside, emulation within and dissent from below gives rise to a 'competitive emulation'<sup>47</sup>: asserting superior fulfilment of the spirit of the model imported from outside. Later versions of 'modernity' are generated in competitive emulation of the earlier, and then spread further from the *new* imperial centre, by imposition, emulation and so forth. An historicised combination of the geopolitics of empires *and* of modernity then emerges, mapping 'ripples of modernity' over time: one forceful modernity after another rolling out from its imperial centre and then rippling on and/or back, in modified form, from a new centre.<sup>48</sup>

Under this dispensation, empires are impermanent, so that geopolitical centres fade and shift. And 'modernity' has no fixed meaning: it is first and foremost the designation of a recently developed form of order deemed most successful in terms of the power, wealth and/or civilisation it engenders. This dispensation opens up the possibility of analogous accounts of empires' geopolitical roles for either the ancient or the 'post'-modern world: one or more 'empire' in each period spreading its model of social organisation – that is, in the parlance of the modern era, its 'modernity'. The overall conception envisages empires that reshape the space of the world, bearing geohistorical models of development not necessarily identical with themselves, which they also extend. At the same time, each model itself evolves, through the combined processes of resistance and emulation, while the dominant centre from which it emanated declines and is ousted by others.

## THE SCOPE FOR EMPIRE IN THE GEOPOLITICS OF A GLOBALISING WORLD

We can now consider how empire can, indeed surely will, figure in the geopolitics of the present, 'globalising' world. By this expression, I refer to the contemporary acceleration of phenomena (in themselves anything but new) which traverse, modify and/or undermine barriers to the movement of people, resources, values and ideas, with the corollary of mixing and modifying formerly separate societies, cultures and orders. After 1990, there flourished a large body of literature concerning the many new

economic and financial forms, technological means, cultural interactions and political challenges or intrusions which promote globalisation in that sense. Under these circumstances, I will argue, empire in the form that I have just teased out is bound to return as a figure for the geopolitical ordering of space.

Having considered, and cast doubt on the twentieth century's many versions of the earlier claim that imperialism arises from the needs of worldwide capitalism, Charles Maier is nonetheless left with an association between empire and *control*.<sup>49</sup> Because market relations function between discrete agents, he argues, they entail a need to ensure predictability on the part of another party who may not be subject to the same values, rules, laws and/or habits. This, he continues, is the problematic that 'principal-agent' theory addresses: how one party, the agent, can be relied upon to act in fulfilment of the intentions of the other, the principal.<sup>50</sup> By analogy with that problematic, he contends, an empire can be interpreted as the attempt by a political order to establish control over unwillingness on the part of those at a distance to observe the rules inherent to the economic relations that they are engaged in. Maier's observation is couched in deliberately wide terms, which avoid reliance upon any particular account of capitalism and its needs. It refers to capitalism only in the form of economic relations between private parties acting outside the power of political authority. The corollary of such relations' arising across space, runs the case, is a need for an *order* to ensure the predictability of the agent for the principal. It is with 'order' that my 'geopolitical figure' of empire resurfaces. For Maier's remarks suggest a basis for imperialism as in my figure which fits the age of globalisation.

Globalisation in the widely accepted sense referred to above entails a renewed problem of '*disorder*': the contrary of order as defined in my section on historical sociology. That is to say, relations increasingly straddle the limits of the space where agents can factor in the regularity of response which they know closer to home. With globalisation, the occurrence of disorder becomes, one might say, more acute from above and from below. To extend relations across pre-existing barriers *both* raises the problem of how to ensure that the various 'agents' act as expected by 'principals', *and* chips away at whatever local order previously held sway amongst those who have now become 'agents' to other 'principals'. Much of the regional and local opposition to globalisation is precisely prompted by the sense that it is undermining established local *order*.

One central element emerged in my earlier exposition of the basic form of empire: that empires are *orders* extending over space. If globalisation amplifies problems of disorder, then, functionally speaking it *invites* empire-building. It magnifies the 'problem of disorder', which empires have always addressed. Empires have an unrivalled historical record of success over what is seen as disorder – even if that success is ethically dubious or of



limited duration. So an obvious solution for those at the ‘principal’ end of globalised relationships is to encourage or accept the role of one or other empire that will extend an order within which the principal’s long-distance relations can be managed. And a persuasive argument on the side of ‘imperial’ institutions or actors – that is, those with the means and will to extend their power in the form of an empire – is that their power will ensure ‘order’.

The version of empire extrapolated from principal-agent theory also captures the most plausible candidate for the status of empire at the present time, the disputed American empire (which is Maier’s interest). For it identifies an empire by the spatial extension of its *mode of order*, rather than by sovereign power over territory – which is precisely what the American empire does not have.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the US-sponsored world-level organisation of trading standards and norms for government becomes part of an empire in this sense with the USA at its centre. The same might be argued on the basis of the spread of American culture – though it is far harder to determine the content and import of this phenomenon.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, one could identify much of what goes under the title of ‘globalisation’ itself as USA-led ‘imperial’ ordering of the world along lines amenable to the US paradigm of economic relations.<sup>53</sup>

This logic running from disorder to empire also informs recent arguments to the effect that empires will continue, or return in one form or another in Eastern Europe. Using the tools of historical sociology, Alexander Motyl has shown that we should expect a renewed imperial order in Central Europe. For, where globalisation processes are weakening states, an overarching imperial power can impose a degree of governmental uniformity.<sup>54</sup> More specifically, external pressures upon Russia and the residual components of the USSR may make a Russian ‘empire’ seem the best bet for states in the area.<sup>55</sup> Likewise Jan Zielonka argues that, as the power of the EU extends over an unstable Central and Eastern Europe, it has become a ‘neo-medieval’, pluralistic type of empire.<sup>56</sup>

## THE FORMS OF ‘EMPIRE’ IN GEOPOLITICS

The dominant position of this article has been that if the idea of empire is shorn of misleading and/or extraneous elements, we can understand how empire works as a major, over historical time *the* major, figure in the geopolitical ordering of the globe. Where a lack of ‘order’ is experienced, the article has argued, the imperial extension of power acquires a logic and an appeal. In this section, I would like to run through what is left: to isolate what, given the above account of things, ‘empire’ *has* to include to fulfil its geopolitical role of extending order.

## Boundaries, Centres and Spaces

Herfried Münkler rightly stresses an empire's characteristic relation to its own boundaries: namely, to see the space across the boundary as subordinate and potentially subject to the empire. The epitome of that relationship to space is the notion of a 'universal' empire, as articulated by the ancient Chinese and Roman empires,<sup>57</sup> which constructed a whole world matching that over which the empire in principle held sway. A boundary *à la* empire, however, is categorically different from the 'border' of the sovereign national state: for it is not legitimised by the recognition of those on the other side. Nor is it a line to be defended against incursion, so much as a jumping-off point for outward incursion, into the space beyond.<sup>58</sup> It is an inherently mobile zone between that which is subject to the empire and that which is not – as yet.

This 'zone' is likely to be governed in a distinct fashion: a concentration of power to conquer and manage the disorder of the not-yet-subjugated world is more likely than minimal border administration supervising movements between uncontroversial, recognised territorial entities. Instead of a flat governmental regime, formally equivalent across all the national space, one accordingly finds military power concentrated in the boundary zone (the 'limes' of the Roman Empire), complemented by a more grandiose symbolic power at the centre. In this context, it is the boundaries of nineteenth-century European empires, which *were* externally recognised by agreement between the European imperial powers (if only in name at times), that have to be seen as the exception.

Where the boundary provides a rather loose determination of an empire's space, the classic substitute has been to locate an empire in relation to its imperial centre or capital city. Even if the *edges* of its territorial identity are not fixed, at least the centre, the owner of the power that spreads out over territory, can be identified. Given what has been said regarding order, however, it seems that this too gives too restricted an image of imperial order over territory. Empires' association with territory as they extended their power has always been diverse: contrast the domination over the sea (not necessarily accompanied by occupation) integral to early modern European empires with the intensive reorganisation through land colonisation under, for example, the Carolingian empire. This diversity can only become more marked with the increasing deterritorialisation of human economic, social and cultural activity, which has made control of *territory* a less effective way to impose order.<sup>59, 60</sup> Contemporary US strategic thinking reflects this in its focus upon extending American power over the globe regardless of location, into *virtual* spaces.<sup>61</sup>

To grasp the variety in the past, present and future of empires, then, we are obliged to stand back from identifying any given empire with its

*territory*, in the sense of space marked upon the surface of the Earth. Territory is only one type of space which an empire seeks domination over. *A fortiori*, it is unwise to take for granted the picture of empire where a given *centre*, capital city or whatever, extends its power out over discreet space. This explains how a number of historical empires (Rome, China, the Iranian and other Muslim empires over the seventh to fifteenth centuries, the Portuguese) at one time or another could move their centres of power – or divide them between locations, either functionally or by competition. Again, there are grounds for associating the order of global capital from *any* centre<sup>62</sup> – which can even be taken so far as to dissociate empire from *all* spatial concentration of power.<sup>63</sup>

### Imperial Will v. Historical Necessities

The agency of empire has repeatedly been an issue in this discussion. The classic image of the nineteenth century – and perhaps also that of emperors and their governments! – is that the *will* at the centre imposes order on the peripheries. But there are outcomes of empire that cannot be said to be willed, or to emanate from the centre. On the one hand, as repeatedly noted, empires bear within them effects over and above their deliberate, ostensible purposes. On the other hand, they produce consequences – most obviously their own decline – which cannot have been intended.

Understanding how that was possible was a major strand in the section on empires as a geopolitical force, which discussed how empires might produce effects ‘in, through, or even in spite of their own activities’. If we are to see the limits of the will manifested in an empire – or anywhere else – we must leave open the possibility of movements and forces that run through any given empire, and even those that contradict the empire’s aims. But it would be overhasty to suppose that what happens outside of the ostensible aims of empire is attributable to some determinate, unbending historical force, such as modernisation or capitalism. The European empires’ self-concept of their role in the one-off improvement of the world by modernisation provides an object lesson of how one ought not to blinker one’s geohistorical understanding. The self-serving notion of advancement ethnocentrically modelled on European experience excluded all likelihood of other centres, with other *models* of social organisation capable of superseding that of Europe<sup>64</sup> – or, for that matter, that of the West.<sup>65</sup> Not that determinate historical forces *cannot* come about or be conveyed in the expansion of empires.<sup>66</sup> But Wertheim’s concept of ‘counterpoint’ is a reminder of the prospect that the extension of any order may also provoke contraries to it. I have tried to capture that as the *competitive* emulation, dissent or downright opposition that promotes an alternative order.

## Order and Legitimacy

An irony of arguing for the prominence of empire in geopolitics is that it is so often a form of geopolitics which dares not speak its name. Until recently, few have been willing to embrace the name 'empire' for the political order that they themselves stand at the centre of. In particular opinion in the USA has historically been hostile to empires<sup>67</sup>: seen as a bad form of power which the USA originally rebelled against and continues to oppose wherever it may appear. The argument here, associating globalisation with empires, neither defends nor condemns any particular empire; it merely asserts that 'empire' is the appropriate concept. But for suspicion of the word 'empire', it could perfectly well be accepted by supporters of the worldwide use of US power such as Brzezinski, Thomas Barnett or Bradley Thayer.<sup>68</sup>

Conversely, with a form of power that has been the target of critique and deadly struggle over centuries, it would be strange to insist upon the value-neutrality of the concept of empire, and leave the matter at that. If, as the argument implies, we must live with empire as a geopolitical figure likely to make its way in the world, we can, and must nonetheless ask: How can we minimise the drawbacks for which empires are rightly notorious? The core difficulty, it appears, is that uncritically to grant empires the role that they have in ordering the world is likely to privilege the controlling power(s) and the order(s) emanating from its/their centres.

The ethical issues of geopolitics that this suggests are apparently compounded by the fact that, in order to formulate the relationship between empire and (geopolitical) order I began by removing the *ethical* priority of any given order over others. As Georg Sørensen and Hans-Henrik Holm have highlighted,<sup>69</sup> world order is not, however, a good in itself; it is good in *someone's* eyes but usually not in others'. My *analytical* claim thus does not address the question of whether there are alternatives to empire that would be capable of fulfilling the need for order in preferable ways. Nor does it entail the *legitimacy* of any *particular* imperial order – whether we can characterise it as effective, benign, just, pluralistic, autocratic, oppressive, etc. There must therefore be no uncritical defence of an imposed order on the grounds that it is better than what (at least in the view of that order) passes for 'disorder'.

In the spirit of what has been written above, however, we can say that an antidote to empire's notorious evils may be sought in shifting legitimacy away from the centre and towards social, economic and cultural relations *across* all parties at both centres and peripheries. Whilst not itself setting out an ethical standard for imperial power, this claim at least suggests the *conditions* for posing ethical standards.<sup>70</sup> To obviate the prejudice in favour of centres and order as *they* define it, we must, that is to say: a) qualify statist and territorialist assumptions about determinate centres and peripheries, the

better to see where they may be formative *for each other*; and b) attend to *two-way* dynamics in the relation between centre and periphery, including the potential impact of the *latter* on the *former*.<sup>71</sup> This diminishes the prominence and privilege of the centre in confronting peripheral divergences. Given the frequent unintended corollaries of imperial power, moreover, to divert legitimacy from the centre and its powers, appears a proper *political* strategy. The empire that is nearest to legitimate would then be that with the most understanding of, and benefit for its peripheral subordinate parts.<sup>72</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This article has analysed the ingredients of empire as a form of order with major effects that pattern geopolitics. It examined the historical sociology of empire, noting that the central element of the imperial form was its proclivity for expansion, whilst putting a critical question mark against unthinking use of the modern domestic-international distinction and reliance on the narrative of modernity. The article then considered early geopolitics as critically re-assessed by recent geopolitics. It argued that, appearances notwithstanding, the kernel of geopolitics had not been the idea of the nation but that of a disorderly world open to an ordering will, emanating at the time of geopolitics' birth, from European empires.

The implication of this finding was that empires are likely to figure in the geopolitical ordering of the globe at other times, paradoxically including when the late twentieth century has *undermined* nationalism and the national state. An argument was then derived from the nature of globalisation to show that empire was a likely, even an attractive form of regime for extending order in response to the '*disorder*' experienced as an effect of globalisation itself. It followed that, for all its differences from nineteenth- and twentieth-century examples, the geopolitics of empires is likely to be found in the present and in the future – the EU, and still more obviously the USA being instances of the form in contemporary guise. Finally, it set out some further specifications of empires as a 'figure', ending with the ethical dimension which that posed.

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## NOTES

1. John Agnew, *Hegemony: The New Shape of Global Power* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2005); John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire* (London: Allen Lane 2007) pp. 496–506; Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (London: John Murray 2000); Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2006) ch. 4ff; Alexander J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires* (New York: Columbia University Press 2001); Alexander J. Motyl, *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities* (New York: Columbia University Press 1999) ch. 9; Herfried Münkler, *Empires: The Logic of World Domination from Ancient Rome to the United States*, trans. by Patrick Camiller (Cambridge: Polity 2007) ch. 6.

2. Dennis Smith, *The Rise of Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity 1991).

3. There are, of course, exceptions, depending upon the setting of the given analysis. In Mearsheimer's formulation of multipolarity between national states, for example, hegemony is an *aim* of each of the roughly equal players in this *type* of international system. The (improbable) success of any actor in *obtaining* long-term dominance would end the multipolar system as such. 'Hegemony' therefore functions as a boundary of the multipolar system: that is to say, a goal which, were it to be attained, would transform the system into something else – something which could indeed be dubbed an 'empire'. Münkler reflecting on the hegemony-empire distinction finds differences of *degree* between them, but absorbs hegemony into the common categorical field with empire (Münkler (note 1) ch. 2). Spruyt agrees that the terms 'hegemony' and 'empire' shade into each other, but pursues an approach in which clearly distinguished ideal types are a precondition of analytical clarity (H. Spruyt, "American Empire" as an Analytic Question or a Rhetorical Move?, *International Studies Perspectives* 9 (2008) pp. 290–299). Likewise, the concept of 'condominium' clearly separate from that of 'empire' has been used to describe structures with formally equal members, such as EU member states (Philippe C. Schmitter, 'Imagining the Future of Euro-Polity with the Help of New Concepts', in G. Marks et al. (ed.), *Governance in the European Union* (London: Sage 1996) pp. 121–150).

4. This account of order rejects uniqueness, and is neutral as regards the legitimacy of any actual order. Order is embedded in the social practices of one or other empire. In much the same way, Michel Foucault showed the difference between rationality and insanity as an order embedded in the discursive practices of a particular historical moment (M. Foucault, *Histoire de la Folie À l'Âge Classique* (Paris: Plon 1961)). Likewise, his precursor Georges Canguilhem showed the same for the order of the 'normal' and the 'pathological' (G. Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, trans. by Carolyn R. Fawcett (New York: Zone books 1966/1989) – based on unpublished essays from 1943 on).

5. Periphery is the most common term in this field, as it was in the World System Theory of global order engendered with capitalism. There is, on the other hand, much to be said for the use instead of the term 'margin', with its suggestion of a potential for separation and independent action 'on the margins' (N. Parker (ed.), *The Geopolitics of Europe's Identity: Centers, Boundaries, and Margins* (New York: Palgrave 2008) pp. 5–16).

6. Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1986) pp. 45, 130. The all-embracing work of Wolfgang Mommsen, a few years before Doyle's, organised theories of imperialism as if to close their historical era, ending with theories about the after-effects of imperialism: 'neo-colonialism', 'dependency theory', etc. (W. J. Mommsen, *Theories of Imperialism*, trans. by P. S. Falla (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1981)).

7. They may also relate to other non-peripheral, if not actually imperial, orders beyond the empire of the given metropole, though this has no place in Doyle's account.

8. Doyle (note 6) p. 128.

9. *Ibid.* p. 130.

10. E.g., Darwin (note 1); and Ian Morris and Walter Scheidel (eds.), *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires: State Power from Assyria to Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009) ch. 1.

11. Doyle (note 6) 136–138.

12. The crucial insight, that metropolises' control varies according to the social forces in favour of collaboration in their colonies, appeared also in later Marxist critiques of Lenin's account of imperialism (A. Emmanuel, 'White-Settler Colonialism and the Myth of Investment Imperialism', *New Left Review* 1/73 (May–June 1972) pp. 35–57).

13. Doyle (note 6) pp. 205–206.

14. This is elegantly set out in Ronald Robinson's account of how 'white colonies' and areas of informal imperialism have distinct prospects of modernisation (R. Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration', in R. Owen and R. Sutcliffe (eds.), *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London: Longman 1972) pp. 119–142).

15. Münkler (note 1).

16. *Ibid.*, ch. 4.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 130–138.

18. Klaus Dodds gives illustrations of both post-World War II Western comments on geopolitics, and the ambitions that unsavoury regimes dressed in geopolitical claims (K. Dodds, *Geopolitics a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007) pp. 22–38). For Fascist Italy's engagement in geopolitics, see Marco Antonsich, 'Geopolitica: The "Geographical and Imperial Consciousness" of Fascist Italy', *Geopolitics* 14/2 (Summer 2009) pp. 256–277.

19. Matthias Albert, David Jacobsen, and Yosef Lapid (eds.), *Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press 2001); Dodds (note 18) chs. 2, 3; David Newman (ed.), *Boundaries, Territory and Postmodernity* (London: Frank Cass 1999); Peter J. Taylor, *Britain and the Cold War: 1945 as a Geopolitical Transition* (London: Pinter 1990) pp. 1–5.

20. John Agnew, 'Mapping Political Power Beyond State Boundaries: Territory, Identity, and Movement in World Politics', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28/3 (1999) pp. 499–521; Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (London: Routledge 1996); Peter J. Taylor, *The Way the Modern World Works: World Hegemony to World Impasse* (Chichester/New York: John Wiley 1996).

21. Mommsen (note 6) 70–76.

22. Quoted in D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Theory of Capitalist Imperialism* (London: Longman 1977) p. 47.

23. Mommsen (note 6) ch. 2.

24. Herbert Lüthy, 'Colonialization and the Making of Mankind', *Journal of Economic History* 21 (1961) p. 483.

25. John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2003) pp. 64–65.

26. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books 1997); Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership* (New York: Basic Books 2005); Stanley Hoffman, *Chaos and Violence: What Globalization, Failed States, and Terrorism Mean for U.S. Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 2006); Strobe Talbot, *The Great Experiment: The Story of Ancient Empires, Modern States and the Quest for a Global Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster 2008); Parag Khanna, *The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order* (New York: Random House 2008).

27. Josep M. Colomer, *Great Empires, Small Nations: The Uncertain Future of the Sovereign State* (London: Routledge 2007); Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe*, trans. by Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity 2007) p. 50ff.

28. Edmund Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform – Speeches and Letters*, ed. by David Bromwich (New Haven: Yale University Press 2000); Edmund Burke, *Thoughts on the Present Discontents* (London 1770).

29. Frances Fox Piven, *The War at Home: The Domestic Costs of Bush's Militarism* (New York: The New Press 2004); Chalmers Johnson, *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books 2006); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1991); William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America's Present Predicament Along with a Few Thoughts About an Alternative* (New York: Ig Publications 2007).

30. This is what David Harvey refers to as hegemonic states' 'territorial fix' (D. Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003)).

31. That is why conservative thought from Burke onwards has always harboured suspicions that pursuing an empire will divert attention from sustaining time-honoured values integral to the domestic society. A characteristically dense exposition of this line can also be found in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, §§243–246, incl. Hegel's annotations: he argues that colonisation encourages states to abrogate responsibility for the well-being of segments of their population and those segments, for their part, to cease to play their proper part in the whole. In present-day debate, Andrew Bacevich, who describes himself as a 'conservative realist', argues that the USA since Reagan has trapped itself in an imperialist tendency to go to war by indulging in the illusion that consumption (specifically that of oil) can go on unabated even

though the country's capacity to pay for it has been exceeded (A. Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books 2008)).

32. Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press 2004); Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, trans. by Shelley L. Frisch (Princeton: Marcus Wiener 1997) ch. 9; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus 1993).

33. Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism. The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (London: Penguin Press 2004); Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1999).

34. Jonathan Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process* (London: Sage 1994).

35. Fieldhouse (note 2)

36. Maier (note 1) pp. 48–57.

37. Darwin (note 1) pp. 157–219, 500–505.

38. Agnew, *Geopolitics* (note 25) ch. 7; Michael Barratt Brown, 'Imperialism Yesterday and Today', *New Left Review* 1/5 (Sep.–Oct. 1960) pp. 42–49; Arghiri Emmanuel, 'White-Settler Colonialism and the Myth of Investment Imperialism', *New Left Review* 1/73 (May–June 1972) pp. 35–57. Charles Maier himself gives a telling account of how America's empire has evolved along with the character of its economy (Maier (note 1) chs. 5–6).

39. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979); Immanuel Wallerstein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World System* (Cambridge: Polity 1991).

40. Wallerstein *World Economy*, (note 39) pp.1–36.

41. Immanuel Wallerstein, 'Globalization or the Age of Transition? A Long-Term View of the Trajectory of the World-System', *International Sociology* 15/2 (June 2000) pp. 249–265.

42. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso 1994) ch. 2.

43. As W. F. Wertheim put it, "No society is culturally and structurally homogenous. The seeds of dissension and growth are omnipresent. So . . . is the counterpoint phenomenon, as a source of all emancipation and of social evolution." For Wertheim, counterpoints entail the global incidence of the urge to develop distinctness and autonomy, in short 'emancipation' (W. F. Wertheim, *Evolution and Revolution: The Rising Waves of Emancipation* (London: Penguin Press 1974) p. 114).

44. Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Empire and Emancipation: Power and Liberation on a World Scale* (London: Pluto 1990) p. 76.

45. These phenomena are visible in inter alia: non-state networks (family, clan and/or trade corporation) that survive suppression at the hands of home state and the imperial administration to emerge in later *post*-colonial politics; long-standing domestic tensions that straddle the domestic and the colonised space; and oppositional racial politics imported into the domestic space (J. Nederveen Pieterse, *Empire and Emancipation: Power and Liberation on a World Scale* (London: Pluto 1990) pp. xiii–xiv).

46. Respectively, calculative money-making, industrial production, and mass consumption complemented by mass politics.

47. The term is adapted from Parker, *Geopolitics* (note 5), where it is used to refer to the way that countries marginal to the West/EU embrace European models whilst seeking to demonstrate superiority in terms of them.

48. For an outline of the world history of revolutions in terms of 'ripples of modernity', see N. Parker, *Revolutions and History: An Essay in Interpretation* (Cambridge: Polity 2000) p. 77ff.

49. Maier (note 1) pp. 49–59.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 57–59.

51. Christopher Layne and Bradley A. Thayer, *American Empire: A Debate* (London: Routledge 2006) ch. 1; John Davenport, *The American Empire* (New York: Chelsea House 2007) ch. 1.

52. Rob Kroes, *If You've Seen One, You've Seen the Mall Europeans and American Mass Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1996) ch. 9; Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (London: Verso 2003) ch. 4.

53. Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Favourite Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2003); Agnew, *Hegemony* (note 1).

54. Motyl, *Revolutions* (note 1) ch. 9.

55. Motyl, *Imperial Ends* (note 1).

56. Jan Zielonka, *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006).



57. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell 1991) pp. 237–246; Claude Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1991).

58. Malcolm Anderson captures this by distinguishing borders from ‘frontiers’ (M. Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity 1996) ch. 1).

59. Agnew, ‘Mapping Political Power’ (note 20); Paul Hirst, *Space and Power: Politics, War and Architecture* (Cambridge: Polity 2005) ch. 3; David Storey, *Territory. The Claiming of Space* (New York: Pearson: Prentice Hall 2001) ch. 2.

60. Though how true this is still depends upon the conditions under which imperial expansion is happening: current Chinese expansion can resemble the direct technological modernising of territory, as in earlier European empires (A. Lustgarten, *China’s Great Train: Beijing’s Drive West and the Campaign To Remake Tibet* (New York: Times 2008)).

61. Pertti Joenniemi, Kristian Soby Kristensen, and Karen Lund Petersen, *Changing Concepts of Risk, Security and War*, DIIS Working Papers, 1007/17 (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies 2007) pp. 4–27.

62. Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century* (note 42).

63. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2000)

64. Jack Goody, *Capitalism and Modernity: The Great Debate* (Cambridge: Polity 2004).

65. Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Verso 2007)

66. Kees Van der Pijl’s developing work unfolds an account of the ‘modes of foreign relations’ of a wide range of social units – tribes, empires or modern states – which crystallise out of the development of productive forces in the Marxist sense (K. van der Pijl, *Nomads, Empires, States: Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy*, Vol. 1 (London: Pluto 2007)). In his analysis, external relations are interpreted, alongside other ‘relations of production’, as a superstructural construct which is required to match current ‘forces of production’.

67. Andrew Bacevich and Sebastian Mallaby, ‘New Rome, New Jerusalem’, *Wilson Quarterly* 26/3 (Summer 2002) pp. 50–59.

68. Brzezinski (note 26, 1997, 2005); T. P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon’s New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons 2004); Layne and Thayer (note 51).

69. Georg Sørensen, ‘What Kind of World Order? The International System in the New Millennium’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 41/4 (Dec. 2006) pp. 343–346.

70. Standards that could emerge from this condition could resemble post-colonial and subaltern studies (G. Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press 1988)). They might also be extrapolated from the manner in which Derrida, under the influence of Lévinas, explored European values in his later work (J. Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today’s Europe*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 1992)).

71. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (ed.), *Global Futures – Shaping Globalization* (London: Zed Books 2000).

72. Two lines of argument can be adduced to exemplify this possibility. Hardt and Negri’s much cited *Empire* puts forward a radically innovative notion of empire which, they argue, is likely in the world as it is evolving under globalisation: where the ‘empire’ of the multitude is an immanent and potentially democratic power ‘from below’, rather than an order imposed from any centre (M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2000)). On a less abstruse level, Josep Colomer defends the EU as an ‘empire’ on the grounds that its highly decentralised, diversified form of governance favours democratic order within its smaller component parts (J. M. Colomer, *Great Empires, Small Nations: The Uncertain Future of the Sovereign State* (London: Routledge 2007)).