

Swedish-German geopolitics for a new century Rudolf Kjellén's 'The State as a Living Organism'

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1. Introduction

Rudolf Kjellén was an important political scientist during the first half of this century. He is perhaps the most influential Scandinavian political scientist ever. Together with the political geographer Fredrich Ratzel, Kjellén was the founder of the German geopolitical school. All his major works were translated into German, but they were, to my knowledge, never translated into English. They were important sources of inspiration for the leading geopolitical theorist and military general, Karl Haushofer.¹ By the time of his visit to Sweden in 1935, Haushofer was about to publish the 25th German edition of Kjellén's *Die Grossmächte* [The Great Powers].² The idea that states were not fixed juridicial entities but dynamic organisms competing on the international scene, was something that appealed to Haushofer. He was to fuse this thought with Ratzel's concept of *Lebensraum*, that was later to reach Hitler.

Kjellén, however, was no Nazi. His political thinking leaned less towards the national-romantic *Blut und Boden* and more towards the German Cosmopolitan tradition with its multicultural unity and drive towards a multinational league of states; a union that would respect the freedom and independence of states under the leadership of a central power.³ His description of this union is practically identical with what was later to become NATO. He believed in Germany, not the USA, as the guarantor power for the Continental European or at least for the Central European states. NATO's survival after the Cold War and its focus on ethnicity, territoriality and discourse analysis makes Kjellén's notions even more relevant. One can recognize Kjellén's geopolitical thoughts not only in the organic state of the early twentieth century, but also in the multinational and cosmopolitan military union of the latter half of the same century. We can also recognize the debate on 'the clash of civilizations' in very recent years. All these notions are rooted in different aspects

¹ Karl Haushofer, *Grenzen in ihrer geographischen und politischen Bedeutung* (Berlin Grünewald: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1927); Dan Diner, 'Grundbuch des Planeten'—Zur Geopolitik Karl Haushofer, *Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte*, 32: 1 (1984), pp. 1–28; Barbro Lewin, *Johan Skytte och de skytteanska professorerna* [Johan Skytte and the Skyttean Professors]. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis (Skrifter utgivna av Statsvetenskapliga föreningen i Uppsala, 100), (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1985); Rainer Sprengel, 'Land und Meer—Eine diskursanalytische Betrachtung', *WeltTrends* (1994), pp. 61–84.

² Edward Thormænius, 'Geopolitik och politisk geografi' [Geopolitics and Political Geography], *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*, 19 (1937), pp. 213–328.

³ Rudolf Kjellén, *Världskrigets politiska problem* [The Political Problems of the World War] (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1915).

of Kjellén's thoughts and the history of geopolitics cannot be discussed without reference to his works. He was in fact the political scientist who, as early as 1899, coined the phrase 'geopolitics'.⁴

Rudolf Kjellén was born in 1864. He studied in Gothenburg, defended his doctoral thesis at Uppsala in 1890, and, in the following year, he began to teach 'Political Science with Geography' at the newly-instituted college in Gothenburg. In 1901, he had become professor in 'Political Science with Statistics'. In 1916 he was summoned to Uppsala, where he became professor in 'Rhetoric and Political Science', which post he held until his death in 1922.⁵

Kjellén was a singer, politician and a scholar. He travelled the world with his fellow singers and was also given the opportunity of visiting the USA where he was fascinated by the "negroe" and his wordless elegance.⁶ Kjellén was a conservative parliamentarian, who worked to promote constitutional monarchy as opposed to excessive parliamentarianism. He tried to define the 'royal road' of Swedish politics as the undercurrent of a river following 'a winding track between dangerous banks on the right- and left-hand sides'.⁷ He was a socially concerned nationalist, who fought against the liberals and their minimal state as well as against the socialists and their maximal view of the state. Despite his hostility towards contemporary socialism, his social ideals had similarities with latter day social democracy. He influenced the Social Democrat economist and politician Gunnar Myrdal,⁸ and advocated a 'national-socialism', unlike the 'class-socialism' of his time. The latter, he regarded as destructive to the nation.⁹ But contrary to the later German national-socialism, Kjellén was no anti-intellectual or racist. He advocated respect for other races and cultures, and thought universal suffrage would function as a tool against political extremism. His ideas were closer to the Swedish Social Democrat and former prime minister, Per Albin Hansson, than to the Nazi leaders. But unlike the Social Democrats, Kjellén regarded war as an instrument that could be used to strengthen the nation, and rejected the pacifism, materialism and laxity of liberalism.¹⁰ Kjellén found himself at the centre of politics in the formative years of Swedish democracy. He was elected a member of the Second Chamber of parliament from 1905–8 and to the First Chamber from 1910–18, where he represented the so-called 'Young-Right' or 'Young Conservatives'.¹¹

As a scholar, Kjellén worked for an independent discipline of political science against liberal legalism. Political science, in his view, was not to be reduced to a sub-

⁴ Thernmænius, 'Geopolitik', pp. 213–328; Sprengel, 'Land und Meer', pp. 61–84; Peter J. Taylor, 'Geopolitische Weltordnung', *WeltTrends*, 4 (1994), pp. 25–37.

⁵ Ruth Kjellén-Björkquist, *Rudolf Kjellén: En människa i tiden kring sekelskiftet* [Rudolf Kjellén: A Man at the Turn of the Century]. (Stockholm: Verbum, 1970); Lewin, *Johan Skytte och de skytteanska professorerna*; Fredrika Lagergren, *På andra sidan välfärdsstaten* [On the Other Side of the Welfare State] (Göteborg: Brutus Östlings förlag, 1999).

⁶ Lewin, *Johan Skytte och de skytteanska professorerna*, p. 168.

⁷ Rudolf Kjellén, *Politiska essayer* [Political Essays], vol. 2 (Stockholm: Hugo Gebers förlag, 1914), p. 215.

⁸ Gunnar Falkenmark, 'Rudolf Kjellén—Vetenskapsman eller humbug?', in Gunnar Falkenmark (ed.), *Statsvetarporträtt—Svenska statsvetare under 350 år*. (Stockholm: SNS förlag, 1992), pp. 89–109.

⁹ Kjellén, *Politiska essayer*, vol. 2 (1914), p. 22.

¹⁰ Nils Elvander, *Harald Hjärne och konservatismen—Konservativ idédebatt i Sverige 1865–1922* [Harald Hjärne and the Conservatism—Conservative Debate in Sweden 1865–1922] (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1961).

¹¹ Kjellén, *Politiska essayer* [Political Essays], vol. 1 (1914); Lagergren, *På andra sidan välfärdsstaten* (1999).

discipline of other sciences like law, geography, ethnology, national-economics or history. According to Kjellén, it had to have its own identity. The state should not be reduced and separated into its many different functions. To Kjellén the state did not represent a mix of what he termed ‘geo-politics, ethno-politics, economy-politics, socio-politics and regimental-politics’ but a unity, *a living organism*, a ‘force and will’ that incorporated all these political fields.

Due to the Nazi defeat in World War II, geopolitics, and primarily the Swedish-German geopolitics, was tarnished. Numerous political scientists expressed repulsion towards Kjellén. They have held his organism theory, his acceptance of the ‘great power-morale’ and geopolitics in contempt.¹² Yet today we see that Kjellén’s thoughts—his focus on ethnicity and territoriality, his discourse analysis, and his views on the genesis of states and the formation of political unions—once again occupy the centre stage of scholarly discourse. Upon closer scrutiny his thoughts have, in practice, been highly influential throughout the twentieth century. Kjellén, however, was no real democrat, because ‘popular emotions are not governed by reason’, and ‘majority concerns may not recognize the minority’. He was, meanwhile, in many respects, the political scientist of the ‘golden middle-way’ and he achieved influence far beyond his conservative followers. However, despite his importance on the Continent, his political thinking had virtually no impact on Britain.

Kjellén’s practical political experiences were to shape his political thinking, with texts such as *Stormakterna I-IV* [The Great Powers] (1911–13), *Samtidens stormakter* [Contemporary Great Powers] (1914), *Politiska essayer I-III* [Political Essays] (1914–15), *Världskrigets politiska problem* [The Political Problem of the World War] (1915) and *Statens som livsform* [The State as a Living Organism] (1916). In the introduction to the latter, Kjellén describes it as his ‘main work, that lends unity to divergent works on subjects of theoretical and practical politics. The various studies are like streams forming a common river of a unified political idea’.¹³

2. Kjellén’s organic concept of statehood—the state in general

Kjellén makes fascinating reading. The reader finds himself at the heart of the current debate on ethnicity and territoriality, on power and identity, on metaphors and discursive analysis, despite the fact that he is confined to a time in which political science was in its infancy. His organic view of the state was an attempt to regard the state as an independent object of study with its own dynamic and logic, power and will, an organic unity of land and people, an organism with body and soul, a personality on the international stage. He explains this thought by using further metaphors from poetry and prose: like man, the state may lose a limb without perishing, but ‘there are others, without which the state could not survive.

¹² Falkenmark, ‘Rudolf Kjellén’ (1992), pp. 89–109.

¹³ Rudolf Kjellén, *Staten som Livsform* [The State as a Living Organism] (Stockholm: Hugo Gebers förlag, 1916), p. v; Rudolf Kjellén, *Stormakterna I-11* earlier edition 1905 (Stockholm: Hugo Gebers förlag, 1911–13); Rudolf Kjellén, *Politiska essayer* [Political Essays], vols. I-III. (Stockholm: Hugo Gebers förlag, 1914); Rudolf Kjellén, *Världskrigets politiska problem* [The Political Problems of the World War] (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1915).

Even state-bodies have their Achilles' heels and hearts. These vital parts are first and foremost the capitals and the arteries of communication'.¹⁴ Another example: Napoleon 'believed that by striking Moscow, he would strike at the heart of Russia; that was a false generalization that lay behind his military strategy, for Russia as yet had no heart in the Western sense of the word'.¹⁵ What has been termed, in the literature of the West, 'Russia's nomadic character', enabled Russia to withdraw from its central cities without disintegrating as an empire.¹⁶

Kjellén approaches his object of study, not by creating a model but by using metaphors formed by everyday experience, as will be evidenced by this article. It is an empirical approach as to how we, or rather, politicians, journalists and writers, *speak* of the state and how we immediately describe this general concept. He quotes newspapers: 'Austria comes forth as the champion of armed despotism', 'Turkey has been ambushed', 'Germany has vengefully isolated England', and he concludes: the state obviously is more than just a legal entity. He seeks to analyse the state as it appears to us, as judge and coercive power, as entrepreneur and parent, as diplomat and warrior, because 'the state must itself, by its actions, bear witness to its essence'.¹⁷

According to Kjellén's linguistic research, the states's unity of 'state and land' has been a connotation of the word from its introduction into the Swedish language in the middle of the seventeenth century. And he specifically turns against the minimal state of liberal individualism, that is reduced to a 'grumpy and impolite old man behind a wicket'.¹⁸ Kjellén's ideal of science is centred on critical distance, empirical scrutiny of current discourses and a striving to find the essence of things, but he maintains a humorous and partly ironic distance from his own metaphors. Conceptual dryness, models and a narrow description of the state's random forms of appearance, are not Kjellén's style. The concept of state is developed by a myriad of metaphors. By reading *The State as a Living Organism* we are invited into Kjellén's laboratory of political science.

To Kjellén, political science always risked being transformed into an apology for the randomly realized ideal of statehood. But, Kjellén says in his critique of liberalism, the state is inseparable from its land and people. We speak of *England*, *Finland*, *Poland*, and *Holland*, of *Denmark* and *Sverige* (in Swedish), of *Russland* and *Frankreich* (in German), of states as units comprised of land and people, as geographic and ethnographic categories. He quotes Friedrich Ratzel's *Politische Geographie*, 'Every state is in part a piece of humanity and in part a piece of land'.¹⁹ We also speak of 'Moder Svea' (the Mother Sweden) and 'Uncle Sam'. The state comes across as an 'organic individual', with its feet on the ground. In a critique of the then hegemonic school of liberalism, he once again quotes Ratzel and claims that as long as political science remains 'in the air', then 'geography must fill the vacancy'.²⁰

¹⁴ Kjellén, *Staten som Lifsform*, p. 50.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁶ Iver B. Neumann, 'The Geopolitics of Delineating "Russia" and "Europe"—The Creation of the "Other" in European and Russian Tradition', in Ola Tunander, et al. *Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), pp. 147–73.

¹⁷ Kjellén, *Staten som Lifsform*, p. 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁹ Friedrich Ratzel, *Politische Geographie* (München & Berlin: R. Oldenburg, 1897 [1903]), p. 4.

²⁰ Kjellén, *Staten som Lifsform*, p. 22.

As mentioned above, ‘the state-body’—as an organic unity of land and people, and as an organic individual with vital parts like ‘heart’ and ‘arteries’—must be regarded as a metaphor, illuminating a process or internal logic, not as a dogmatically fixed concept. It is used by Kjellén to say that lost parts of a country must not be compared to the loss of property, ‘but to an operation; a consequence of which is not only a loss of removed tissue, but also of a certain strength. [...W]here health is yet present, one finds an instinctive need to regain what has been lost by intensive internal development’.²¹ After the Swedish-Russian war and Sweden’s loss of Finland in 1809, Sweden had, according to Kjellén, to substitute its loss through internal development, especially by forest and river exploitation in the north. And he refers to the words of Swedish poet Esaias Tegner (*Svea*, 1815): Finland that ‘had just been torn like a pound of bloody flesh from the heart of the state!; [...] Let, Svea, your mountains doubly cast its tax; the harvest in your nocturnal forest sprout; Lead the waves of the river like loyal subjects, and from within the Swedish bounds Finland restore’.²²

Today, we might add that some European and particularly Central-European states seem eager to cut off parts of their territories. Underdeveloped, conflictual and undemocratic regions are regarded as ‘proud flesh’, which one would seek to amputate. This applies to Czech enthusiasm in granting Slovakia independence, and to Slovenia’s (and Croatia’s) amputation of the militaristic/backward Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, and to Russia of the early 1990s concerning its conscious exclusion of the Central Asian republics.²³ In the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, some Hungarian leaders began talking about border revisions including a possible future regaining of the ‘cradle of Hungary’: the Romanian Transylvania. Although after a couple of years, this idea was given up.²⁴

Ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall, this tendency throughout Central Europe has seemingly been contradictory to Kjellén’s way of thinking; in other words, the

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²² Tegner, Esaias, ‘Svea’, in Lars Gustavsson (ed.), *Svensk Dikt* (Stockholm: Wahlström och Widstrand 1978 [1815]), p. 255.

²³ By amputating its Central Asian territories, mostly the Turkic republics—always backward, inefficient and costly to Moscow—Russia became more of a European state, closer to the centre of Europe. In October 1991, three liberal ministers—Gennady Burbulis, Andrei Kozyrev and Yegor Gajdar—sent a memorandum to President Yeltsin, recommending that he grant independence to the Turkic republics and thus get rid of this overpopulated, backward and undemocratic region. Two weeks before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the President of the Kazakh SSR, Nursultan Nazarbaiev, said: ‘I am doing my best to preserve the USSR as an integral state but you, representatives of the Moscow intelligentsia, should know that Yeltsin’s team has quite a different strategy’ (Alexander Tsipko, ‘A New Russian Identity or Old Russia’s Reintegration?’, *Security Dialogue*, 25:4 (December 1994), pp. 444–5). Despite the weak national movements in the Turkic republics, Moscow granted independence to the Central Asian states in December 1991. It retained its military responsibility for Central Asia and Transcaucasia—defined in the Tashkent Treaty—and became involved in the wars in Georgia, Tadzhikistan and Chechnya. Generally, however, Moscow managed to cut loose from the Turkic people’s backwardness and distance itself from the high birth-rate, which for years had been a source of worry to the Russians. In 1993, the Chairman of the International Affairs committee of the Russian Parliament, Evgeni Ambartsumov, stated that Russia was not interested in an alliance predominantly with the Central Asian states, because that would pull Russia away from Europe (John Lough, ‘Defining Russia’s Relation with Neighboring States’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2:20 (14 May 1993), p. 60.

²⁴ József Antall declared in 1990 that he in his ‘soul’ was ‘Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians’ (i.e. including the Hungarian population in the neighbouring countries). However, in order to be accepted by the EU and to develop a more efficient economy, Hungary found it had to emphasize a political *status quo*. In 1995, the new Prime Minister Gyula Horn declared himself ‘Prime Minister of 10 million Hungarians’.

loss of a part of the 'state-body' has been accepted but only in order to strengthen the state's position in a greater 'organic' community and to get rid of less 'efficient' peripheral areas. In Czechoslovakia, Slovak leaders mobilized popular nationalism against Prague as a card in the Czech-Slovak power game. The Czechs then chose to take the Slovak quest for independence seriously in order to liberate themselves from the Slovak burden—its inefficiency and traditionalism. To quote a Prague weekly *Respect*, immediately prior to secession: 'Alone to Europe, or together to the Balkans'.²⁵ Prague was willing to let Slovakia go—or rather, important power elites in Czechia happily cut off its 'proud flesh', amputating its nationalistic East—in order to strengthen the Czech economy, make negotiations easier with the Western institutions, and move its centre of gravity westwards towards the EU and NATO. The fact that the more cosmopolitan West aims for centrality—and access to the EU and NATO—indicates a new European geopolitics less inclined to stress the state's own territory and more inclined to stress its ranking in the international hierarchy.

However, this idea of 'amputation of proud flesh' does not contradict Kjellén's universe. On the contrary, it draws on his metaphors to explain the radical changes that have taken place. This way of approaching the state as an object of study—to listen to the spoken word, to utilize the daily metaphors that describe a process and transform it into a concept—radically departs from the juridical, and even more so from the economists' approach. In the calamities of World War I, to speak of actors of war as economic or juridical objects struck Kjellén as meaningless. On the other hand, war and diplomacy cannot just be removed to the domain of historians. They are an integral part of activities of states and, if excluded from political science, the state in general cannot be understood: a state's declaration of independence is worth naught unless recognized by international law, which is tantamount to recognition by the Great Powers. The current system of international law has no 'room for newcomers [...] who are by their very birth guilty of breaches to that law. The established system with its neat portioning and minutely balanced juridical relations must after all be rearranged to make room for the newcomer. In the eyes of the international law and morale, the birth of every new state is obviously a scandal and the infant will be regarded as a bastard in the inquisitional books of international law'.²⁶

To Kjellén, the problem with political science of the time was its interdisciplinary and sub-divided nature, and its lack of an independent identity. For the political scientist of today this is a strange problem. Political science suffers neither lack of identity nor lack of students. Rather, it concentrates on limiting its territory and refining its identity to avoid intrusion from other disciplines, which would give it an interdisciplinary, 'multi-cultural' character which would naturally devalue a professor's competence and limit his power. Even the specific political science identity, as described by Kjellén, is met with resistance at many universities, since he advocates essay form and a plethora of metaphors to approach his concept. Meanwhile, Kjellén's early analyses have not only had a direct influence on Continental political science during the first half of this century, they also find resonance in the politics of the Cold War era, and not least the political discussions of today's international politics.

²⁵ Jacques Rubnik, 'The International Context', in Jiri Musil (ed.), *The End of Czechoslovakia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), p. 274.

²⁶ Kjellén, *Staten som Lifsform*, pp. 163–4.

3. 'Geo-politics' and 'ethno-politics'

To Kjellén, 'geo-politics', the geographical influence on the behaviour of states, must be supplemented by 'ethno-politics', which is the study of the 'ethnic organism', the population as a people. While 'geo-politics' looks to the state, 'ethno-politics' looks to the nation. 'One cannot divorce land from the state, without the state as a concept losing its meaning, and, the people leaving the land, kills the state'.²⁷ 'Geo-politics' and 'ethno-politics' are, according to Kjellén, complementary aspects of the state. Together they form the 'nature-side' of the state, while the 'economy-politics' (the household), 'socio-politics' and 'regiment politics' or the 'politics of the executive' (governmental) form the 'culture-side' of the state, in which 'it will appear more creative and free'.²⁸ Nations are thus to be regarded as nature, 'like organisms in a biological sense, whose only fixed points are their interests, prejudices and urges: the desire for realisation and growth, the will to life and the will to power. We shall not deny altruistic tendencies, and they may sometimes even get into power [sic], but they will develop only when not directly conflicting with the egoistic tendencies.'²⁹

In his writings, Kjellén tends to emphasize the 'nature-side' of the state believing that this limits and shapes the 'cultural-side', while it is through the rationality of the latter that the former can be disciplined. 'The nation has feelings, society (and the household) interests; regiment implies duties. The regiment [the governmental apparatus] pits its rational ambitions against the nation's essence of desire; the regiment pits its permanent institutions and its legally defended freedoms against the class struggle and coercion of society. The regiment is accordingly the essence of the "culture-side" of the state. It tries to transcend the superpower of nature/desire in free and purposeful acting.'³⁰

'Swedish-German geopolitics', as expressed by Kjellén with his organic fusion of the ethnic, the geographic, the economical and political, is well reflected in today's political development, but this geopolitical tradition constitutes an extension and redefinition of his geopolitical concept. This is something we are compelled to accept. As geopolitics in today's usage has come to be associated with a particular discipline of political science, and not, as with Kjellén, an aspect of the state, the term 'geopolitics' has also come to include what he termed 'ethno-politics, economy-politics, socio-politics, and regimental politics'.

Kjellén regarded the nation-state as a natural expression of the unity between land and people—a land with more or less 'natural boundaries' and with a degree of self-sufficiency. To Kjellén, geo-politics, ethno-politics, and economy-politics seem to have found their natural form in the nation-state. The people seek freedom through the state, while the state seeks 'spiritual content' in the people.³¹ The previous dynamics seem to work in a dual way in reference to the developments in the Balkans, on the one hand, and Italy, on the other: 'As a centrifugal force in which several nations fixed in the same state yearned for freedom, and as a centripetal force in which different states of the same nation yearned for unity'.³² He was obviously influenced

²⁷ Ibid., p. 40.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 96.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

³¹ Ibid., p. 112.

³² Ibid., p. 106.

by Hegel and writes that '[t]he state offers the nation a spiritual content, which it in itself lacks. The blind instincts of the nation are mitigated and controlled by juridical and rational ideas. Its force of nature has entered a higher level of consciousness giving it a rational form. Under the light of freedom, it has tied itself to historical responsibility'.³³

In the preceding paragraphs, the people and the land with its 'natural boundaries', are imagined as something given. We picture island-states like Britain, or peninsular-states like Spain, Italy and the Scandinavian ones with their marked borders and relatively homogeneous populations. But to Kjellén this is simply a tendency. The peoples are shaped through the centuries. He describes how the Spanish people grew out of the most diverse peoples. 'England conjures the same image; on the basis of Celts, Roman and Germanic races: you have Picts and Scots, Brits and Gaules of different sorts, Roman and French nomads are gathered therein; Danes arrived directly from southern Scandinavia and Angles and Saxons from North-west Germany; nevertheless, no-one disputes the English nation's distinct and fixed form. [...] The truth is that there is no such thing as a pure race; to base politics on ethnographic analysis is to base it on an illusion'.³⁴

Consequently one must distinguish the idea of the nation-state from practical politics, and it was apparent to Kjellén that the nation-state was becoming too small to correspond to the twentieth century's political and economic necessities. 'The classic example is close: if Fredric The Great's Prussia was enough for the eighteenth century balance, then Bismarck's Germany was needed for that of the nineteenth century. And now, when the standard has swollen to include the vast empires of England, Russia and the USA, the balance seems to advocate a *Mittel Europa*, be it in the minor form of Germany-Austria-Hungary (Naumann) or rather in the greater form, to include the Levant (Jaeckh). This is the picture of a state-complex or a state-block to meet geographical changes.'³⁵ In other words, these are indicators pointing towards unions like NATO or the EU. Kjellén, meanwhile, stresses that such a block of states lacks an ethnic unity and must respect the particular nations' identities, so as not to be transformed into a regime that 'smothers all autonomous life with the force of its culture'.³⁶ 'Neither *Mittel Europa* nor Pan-America have any relation to ethnic units. The former seeks to unite such diverse races as Germans, Slavs, Finns and Turks, and the latter strives to ignore the fundamental racial contradiction and unite Germans (together with the other ingredients in the Yankee blood) with Romans. Here, geography has a clear advantage over ethnography.'³⁷

Swedish-German geopolitics constitutes a fusion of geographic, ethnic and economic elements, that shape state politics and through 'regimental politics' mould its 'nature-side' by the reason of culture. This train of thought radically differs from Anglo-Saxon geopolitics, as we know it from the Cold War imagery. Swedish-German geopolitics, despite its shady past, is today revealed in a more relevant light.

³³ Ibid., p. 103.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 86–8.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

³⁶ Kjellén, *Världskrigets politiska problem*, p. 167.

³⁷ Kjellén, *Staten som Lifsform*, p. 115.

4. Germanic and Anglo-Saxon geopolitics

During the Cold War, geopolitics played a central role, not so much in the academic as in the political-military sphere. The formulation of the containment policy and the NATO alliance from the end of the 1940s, and its development in past decades, alongside weapons deployments from the 1970s and 1980s, were all motivated by geopolitical arguments. But officially, these arguments were supported first and foremost by the Anglo-Saxon geopolitics advanced by Halford Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman, Colin Gray and Zbigniew Brzezinski.³⁸ Like Kjellén, Mackinder warned of a Russian expansion on account of the new railroad's advantage to sea-transport. But unlike the Anglo-Saxon tradition, Kjellén and German geopolitics stressed not only, or even primarily, the relation between development of technology and geography, but also their connection with ethnicity, political thought and economic space. Undoubtedly, American political science, particularly Hans Morgenthau, has inherited important ideas from the German tradition, not least from Max Weber and Carl Schmitt,³⁹ but to the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the state and identity was more or less fixed. To the 'Germans' this was something that constituted a continuous process. Anglo-Saxon universalism stood in opposition to the German 'culturalism' or 'contextualism'.

In today's Europe, with unclear and changeable identities, focusing primarily on weapons and the reach of communication systems seems *passé*. One can no longer think politics without considering ethnicity, cultural identity and political ideas. When Samuel Huntington⁴⁰ discusses 'the clash of civilizations' it is an indication that politics has become something much closer to the ideas presented by Kjellén. The geographical dividing line that Huntington draws between East and West is almost identical to the one Kjellén, 80 years earlier, had stressed and termed 'the great cultural line between Russia and Europe'. Kjellén turned against Pushkin's thought that 'all small Slavic streams float to the Russian sea'.⁴¹ That which is to the west of this historic dividing-line, '[t]he White Sea—the Lake of Pejpus—the Rokitno Marshes—the River Don—[...] belongs to Europe—with culture preceding the race. The great divide is not Germanics versus Slavs, but Germanics+West- and South Slavs+Finnish cultural tribes versus Eastern Slavs [sic]. The concept of race is eliminated'.⁴²

³⁸ Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: Norton Library, 1919); Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1942); Nicholas J. Spykman, *Geography of Peace* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1944); Colin Gray, *The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era: Heartland, Rimlands and the Technological Revolution* (New York: Crane, Rusak, 1977); Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Game Plan: A Geostrategic Framework for the Conduct of the US-Soviet Contest* (Boston & New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986).

³⁹ Alfons Söllner, 'German Conservatism in America: Morgenthau's Political Realism', in *Telos*, 72 (Summer 1987), pp. 161–77; Tarak Barkawi, 'Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and Modern Strategic Studies', *Review of International Studies*, 24:2 (1998), pp. 159–84; Hans-Karl Pichler, 'The Godfathers of "Truth": Max Weber and Carl Schmitt in Morgenthau's Theory of Power Politics', *Review of International Studies*, 24: 2 (April 1998), pp. 185–200.

⁴⁰ Samuel Huntington, 'No Exit—The Errors of Endism', *The National Interest*, 17 (Fall 1989), pp. 3–11; Samuel Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations', *Foreign Affairs*, 72:3 (1993), pp. 22–49; Samuel Huntington, 'The West is Unique—Not Universal', *Foreign Affairs*, 75: (Nov.-December 1996), pp. 28–46.

⁴¹ Kjellén, *Världskrigets politiska problem*, p. 122.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 124.

Kjellén points to the cultural divide between the Germanic/Western Slavic Central-Europe and the East Slavic Russia. This divide, he predicted, may come to play host to a higher political organization, either in the form of a centralistic regime, or in the form of a Central European league of states under German leadership. A federal league of nations with Germany–Austria at the centre would give the West-Slavic peoples their only chance to avoid Russian domination. This, however, would require a Germany choosing its cosmopolitan, Austrian (Habsburgian) face, rather than its Prussian one. The Prussian racial intolerance towards the Poles must change towards respect for individual customs and culture similar to the Austrian state-concept with its multinational ‘system of freedom *vis-à-vis* Czechs, Poles *et al.*’⁴³ We now know that this Central European union or league never materialized. After World War I, the victors, instead, created a broad buffer zone of independent states that were to perish during World War II. Only thereafter did the Allies feel compelled to create a political-military union, a league of states under the leadership of a central power. This role was, however, reserved for the USA and not for Germany.

The resemblance between Kjellén’s ideas and the ideas that shape NATO is striking. The thought of a multinational and non-hegemonic league of states under the leadership of a central power that guarantees liberty and security is thus no current innovation. Kjellén assumed that Germany would be accepted by its Slavic neighbours, if it chose its multi-ethnic, Austrian-Habsburgian, face. Such a multinational union under German military and political leadership would be recognised as legitimate, and Kjellén assumed that the Central European peoples would turn to Germany in the same way as once Western Europe and now the Central-European peoples have turned to the USA.

This interpretation provokes us, once again, to look at the nature of NATO. During the Cold War, NATO came across to most of us as an alliance fortifying the West against an external enemy: the Soviet Union. But then this alliance should have collapsed after the Soviet disintegration. This did not happen despite the predictions made by neorealism.⁴⁴ NATO seems to have possessed an organizational and political identity, as well as a significant leadership, that has kept the organization alive. NATO signifies certain values—democracy, rule of law, market economy, individual liberty, national pluralism—that demand a political-military organization, or, if preferred, union. This political-military organization that has dominated the West bears a greater resemblance to what Kjellén describes as a solution to the Central European problem, than anything else that has traditionally been associated with the term ‘alliance’.

A contemporary of Kjellén and the father of British geopolitics, Halford Mackinder, presented his solution for Central Europe.⁴⁵ He advocated the creation of a zone of minor independent states between Germany and Russia, to contain these major powers from dominating Europe. Mackinder looked at the states as autonomous units that could, from a traditional British view of balance of power, secure territorial integrity, for example, through an alliance with Great Britain. This

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁴⁴ John Mearsheimer, ‘Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War’, *International Security*, 15: 1 (1990), pp. 5–56.

⁴⁵ Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919).

proved to be a major mistake. World War II erased these states' independence. The minor states turned instead to the major powers for protection, and were subjugated to these powers' political agenda, precisely as Kjellén had anticipated. The proposition for an alliance was presented during the war by Mackinder's follower, the American geopolitician Nicolas Spykman.⁴⁶ He believed an American alliance with the West European states would be essential for containing the Soviet Union. But he spoke, as did Mackinder, in terms of an alliance, not in terms of a political-military union under leadership of a central power. NATO came to be regarded as an alliance of independent states; in other words, a practical realization of Spykman's thoughts.

It is only after the Cold War ended that we can say with impunity that these ideas were wrong. Now we see NATO as something more than an alliance. The fact that NATO did not disintegrate after the fall of the Soviet Union indicates that NATO has been more integrated—with a common political idea and with common values under a clearly defined leadership. This hierarchic construction was in reality almost identical to what Kjellén termed 'a union of states' or what the German geopolitical philosopher Carl Schmitt termed a '*Grossraum*'.⁴⁷ However, both these writers assumed German, not American leadership. And they spoke primarily of Central Europe, rather than Western Europe. But it was the German geopolitics, in its cosmopolitan shape, that proved itself to be accurate in describing the future of Europe. With the more unified NATO, 'Anglo-Saxon' geopolitics was replaced by the 'German' geopolitics, even if, as yet, this has remained unrecognized.

German geopolitics, with its Kjellénean roots, is best divided into two currents: on the one hand the urban, cosmopolitan and multinational tradition, which Kjellén describes as the 'Austrian face', and which rests on the Habsburgian Empire's recognition of the individual people's own identity and relative freedom; on the other hand, the more rural national-romantic *Blut und Boden* tradition, 'the Prussian face', that regards borders as war-zones between different people and states, and regards the possibility of minor peoples creating their own states as the random weakness of the great powers. This latter thought influenced theorists like Karl Haushofer. His critique of the Jews was directed toward the metaphoric, the urban and cosmopolitan Jew, not the Zionist Jew who sought his own home and soil. His geopolitical thoughts were in truth transmitted to Hitler through their mutual acquaintance, Rudolf Hess, but Haushofer's criticism of Nazi anti-Jewish sentiments excluded him from the Nazi party.⁴⁸

To Haushofer, the outcome of World War I—the creation of both Central European as well as the Balkan states—was a result of the weakness of Russia and Germany. When Russia and Germany regained their strength, the small neutral states in the grey zone between were forced into submission (cf. the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). To Haushofer, Russia was the natural ally. He preferred 'the robbers of the steppe' to those of 'the sea'. The German attack on Russia was to him both politically and militarily, a disaster.⁴⁹ The essential element for Haushofer

⁴⁶ Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (1942); Spykman, *Geography of Peace* (1944).

⁴⁷ Carl Schmitt, *Völkerrechtliche Grossraumordnung mit Interventionsverbot für Raumpfremde Mächte—Ein Beitrag zum Reichsbegriff in Völkerrecht* (Berlin: Deutscher Rechtsverlag, 1941 [1939]).

⁴⁸ Diner, 'Grundbuch des Planeten' (1984) pp. 1–28.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–16.

was the cultural basis for the state, which put him in opposition to the Anglo-Saxon (but also to the Bolshevik) universalism—its individualism, liberalism and democracy—that perceives its own culture to be universal. The same critique is found in the writings of Kjellén and Carl Schmitt, but their ideals and political points of view are different. And the same debate is currently found in Huntington's criticism of Francis Fukuyama.⁵⁰ In Huntington's words: 'The west is unique, not universal'.⁵¹

Kjellén refers to an article by Albert Gottlieb (1914) and speaks of the dual universal world: "die zentralistische Herrschaft" and "die patriarchalische Vorrherrschaft". The former is ancient Rome, which smothers all independent life by the power of its culture; the same ideal as Russia, the modern Byzantine, now wishes to realize. The latter is contemporary Britain: she nurses her children beyond the sea, binds them with loose ties, but lacks any understanding and respect for their unfamiliar identity [...]. In the name of Volk-freedom, Gottlieb introduces a third type: "Führung ohne Herrschaft". Herrschaft [Dominion, OT] is based on force or cunning, *leadership* demands more; it demands not only superiority but also the ability to understand the alien [culture] and to respect and preserve its identity. But this is precisely the heritage of Germany.⁵²

Besides Kjellén's blood-metaphors and certain historical exaggerations, this entails relevant criticism of universalism. It was, according to Kjellén, universalism and its individualistic idea, as expressed by Napoleon Bonaparte, that created nationalism. 'This abuse, this overstretching of individualism, was necessary to make the nations in general wake up. It was on them, and only on them—on Spain's, Germany's and Russia's down-trodden and resurrected national consciousness—that the mighty stumbled. And by then a political discovery, the likes of which had not been seen since Christianity's discovery of the individual, was made: there is another character in history, and this character is the nation.'⁵³

Contrary to Haushofer's Great German construction, Kjellén's Greater Germany constituted a cosmopolitan league of states, a Central European union with respect for the particular nation's identity and idiosyncrasies. Kjellén's idea was a league of states made up of independent states under German leadership, that would guarantee their security and create an economic sphere of interest for Germany, in the same way as the colonies had come to represent a similar sphere to England. Or, to once again quote Kjellén's image of a future state-block: 'And now, when the standard has swollen to include vast empires of England, Russia and the USA, the balance seems to advocate a *Mittel Europa*.[...] This is the image of a state-complex or a state-block to meet geographical changes.'⁵⁴

This idea was further developed by Carl Schmitt (1941), who instead of Haushofer's *Lebensraum*, spoke of a Central Europe with Germany as leading force or *Reich*. Schmitt based his idea on the Monroe doctrine, that denied European and other powers' right to interfere in North and South American affairs. This gave the USA hegemony and leadership, while offering considerable independence to the

⁵⁰ Huntington, 'No Exit' (1989), pp. 3–11; Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations' (1993), pp. 22–49; Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *National Interest*, 16: (Summer 1989), pp. 3–18.

⁵¹ Huntington, 'The West is Unique—Not Universal' (1996), pp. 28–46.

⁵² Kjellén, *Världskrigets politiska problem*, pp. 167–8.

⁵³ Kjellén, *Staten som Lifsform*, p. 104.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Latin-American states. The Monroe doctrine opposed the European colonial powers' demands for intervention in Latin America and brought this principle into being by a league of independent states, whose security was guaranteed by the USA. Carl Schmitt sought to apply this thought to Central Europe with Germany as military guarantor: a league of independent states under German leadership and belonging to the German sphere of interest. This thought flourished as a result of President Woodrow Wilson's suggestion of a universal league of states: an extension of the Monroe-doctrine to a 'world doctrine'. A non-interventional *Grossraum* concept was, according to Schmitt, to be provoked by the US 'imperialistic world doctrine' which, on humanitarian principle, could legitimize interventions anywhere appropriate.⁵⁵

In the same way as Kjellén described nationalism as the antithetical creation of Napoleon's universalism, Schmitt describes how the Wilsonian and the Bolshevik universalism—on a higher level—creates the *Grossraum* concept as its counterpart; a thought that already existed, if only in the bud, in Kjellén's works. Historically there is no doubt that, towards the end of the 1940s, the Red Army's advances in the East, together with an impotent United Nations, led to the creation of a Euro-Atlantic 'league of states', a *Grossraum* we call NATO that was orchestrated around Western political ideas and guaranteed by its central military power, the USA. But it was only after the end of the Cold War that it has been realized that this league does not constitute an alliance, such as Anglo-Saxon political tradition believes, but a *Grossraum* under a clearly defined leadership in accordance with the Swedish-German geopolitical school of thought. This hierarchic political union once again raises the debate on nation-state, sovereignty and a union of 'concentric circles'.⁵⁶ The Anglo-Saxon discourse, however, has to reinvent these ideas. In Germany, there are twelve translated titles and twenty-five editions of Kjellén's works to refer to. There are, to my knowledge, no English translations at all. As underlined by Ole Wæver,⁵⁷ Anglo-Saxon International Relations theory may not be as universal as we would like to believe.

⁵⁵ Schmitt, *Völkerrechtliche Grossraumordnung*, p. 23.

⁵⁶ See the debate between Stephen M. Walt, Ole Wæver and Charles A. Kupchan in Charles A. Kupchan (ed.), *Atlantic Security—Contending Visions* (New York: A Council of Foreign Relations Book, 1998).

⁵⁷ Ole Wæver, 'The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations', *International Organization*, 52: 4 (Autumn 1998).