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Charles S. Maier began his impressive career as a historian specializing in modern Europe with an orientation toward comparative studies as evidenced by books starting with *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I*. He continued with studies on twentieth-century Europe, culminating in *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* but also expanded his comparative focus to international history, most notably in *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors*. In that study, Maier explores the rise of the United States to dominance, tracing the key elements that shaped the U.S. rise before 1900 in a global context, and, with the development of a modern national state from the 1880s to the 1940s, prepared the U.S. for hegemony.¹ Maier provided the context for assessing the nature of the U.S. ascendancy with a comparative study of major empires throughout history. In a lengthy essay, *Leviathan 2.0: Inventing Modern Statehood* published in 2014, which Maier notes in his response that he wrote while researching *Once within Borders*, he devoted increasing attention to the issue of territoriality within a global context.²

As Francis Gavin asserts at the beginning of his review, “at its most imaginative and powerful, great historical scholarship explores concepts we take for granted as universal and unchanging, and historicizes them, challenging our core assumptions and revealing variation and disjunctures over time.” Maier accomplishes this, Gavin notes, by focusing on territory, “how we think about territory, and how it has mattered to our political, social, and economic lives, and has changed tremendously over the past six centuries.” Maier explains his focus as an attempt to write the “history of territory as such, of its idea and, just as important, its social practice and manifestations in the last half millennium. The book traces how territory was endowed with critical attributes, became a major resource for state and economic development, thereafter an obsession in some cases, and has now perhaps been irreparably weakened in efficacy, leaving some citizens with a great sense of political melancholy and others with a determination to revalorize its capacities.” (2)

Maier takes on this challenge in six chapters and a conclusion. Starting with the “Spaces of Empires”, the major land-based empires including China under the Han Dynasty, Rome, and the Ottoman empire, Maier recognizes the volatility and variations among them as he moves to the maritime empires and the expansion of space to global linkages after 1500 and failed attempts to impose territoriality on the oceans. In “Spaces of States” Maier explores state building in Europe from 1550 to 1700, with emphasis on France and the building of forts to signify the boundaries of the state and efforts to defend it against rival emerging states. In subsequent chapters Maier develops how France and other states strove to maximize their internal control, economic resources, and revenue by use of cadasters and cartography, which contributed to the emancipation of serfs and the reliance of slavery on overseas plantations. In “An Invincible Force: Railroads, Continents, and Colonies,” as Walter McDougall points out, Maier takes territoriality to its apex, in the arrival of the


modern age of industrialism and imperialism and territoriality’s important role in the scramble for colonies and wars of the twentieth century. Those, of course, contributed to the creation of hopeful alternatives to the destructive consequences of these wars, from postwar international organizations to more recent supranational bodies such as the European Union, non-governmental organizations, and multilateral trade organizations.

The reviewers are very impressed with the breadth of Maier’s study, the impressive research in extensive secondary sources, the comparative insights that are developed, and, most of all, the historian’s skills and sensibility that Maier exhibits again in this work. Once within Borders, Daniel Immerwahr suggests, is “something different” than the many efforts to move beyond the “nation-state as the presumed unit of analysis:” it is a “thoughtful, well-researched overview of the idea of territory itself by a ranking historian.” James Steinberg praises Maier’s rejection of certainties on casual relationships and his preference for suggesting relationships that occur such as during the building of fortifications and the emergence of modern statehood. Gavin agrees that “Maier’s deep historical sensibility makes him skeptical towards parsimonious, mono-casual explanations, and he is wonderfully at ease revealing tension, paradox, and puzzles through his narrative.” McDougall clearly enjoyed Maier’s insights as well as the breadth of the book, comparing it favorably with many of the most influential historical studies of the past half-century, and suggests that Maier’s “shrewd insights, grand generalizations, and subtle details show the rest of us how to think about when, where, and why our conventions about global space emerged.”

The reviewers do raise some issues and questions, which Maier answers in his response. Gavin raises the question of how territoriality fits “into today’s political, socio-economic, and geostrategic landscape,” and Steinberg notes that Maier, in his concluding chapter, “wrestles with the apparent contradiction of our time—the simultaneous delocalizing force of technology and the apparent growing power of political forces of nationality, identity, and exclusion.” Maier responds that the reviewers have identified a “major puzzle with which the book concludes” and suggests that lack of successful governance at the international level “sends us back to territory and state power. For the foreseeable future territoriality remains potent.” Immerwahr would have welcomed more analysis on the post-1945 period and suggests a third alternative to Maier’s suggestion that the current turmoil may lead back to the space of empires “with its more permeable frontiers and the difficulty of excluding ‘barbarians.’” He offers a third alternative to states and empire, a network “where identity and decision-making are spread across linked pointlike spaces: global cities, residential compounds, offshore financial havens, military bases.” Maier suggests that the “network metaphor needs specification” since Immerwahr’s network spaces are in territorial spaces.

Participants:

Charles S. Maier is the Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History at Harvard University. He has written numerous essays and books on European politics and international relations between the world wars and after World War II, including Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany (Princeton 1997); “The Cold War and the World Economy,” in The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds. (3 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), I, 44-66. His most recent publication is Once within Borders; Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

Francis J. Gavin is the Giovanni Agnelli Distinguished Professor and the inaugural director of the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs at SAIS-Johns Hopkins University. From 2005 until 2010, he directed The American Assembly’s multiyear, national initiative, The Next Generation Project: U.S. Global Policy and
the Future of International Institutions. Gavin’s writings include Gold, Dollars, and Power: The Politics of International Monetary Relations, 1958-1971 (University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America’s Atomic Age (Cornell University Press, 2012). He received a Ph.D. and M.A. in History from the University of Pennsylvania, a Master of Studies in Modern European History from Oxford University, and a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Chicago.

Daniel Immerwahr (Ph.D., Berkeley) is an assistant professor in the history department at Northwestern University. He is the author of Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015). He is currently preparing a book on the U.S. overseas territories, titled How to Hide an Empire, for Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

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At its most imaginative and powerful, great historical scholarship explores concepts we take for granted as universal and unchanging, and historicizes them, challenging our core assumptions and revealing variation and disjunctures over time. Benedict Anderson altered our notions of identity and nationalism in his classic, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*.¹ David Landes transformed how we think about and understand time and its measurement.² Charles Maier accomplishes something similarly important in his landmark study, *Once within Borders*. Maier demonstrates that how we think about territory, and how it has mattered to our political, social, and economic lives, has changed tremendously over the past six centuries. This book is also timely, as territory has again become a deeply contested issue, both within and between states.

Territory—how it is conceptualized, marked, and regulated—has profound influence on how humans live together in at least three ways. First, territory is connected to how we think about security. Are we safer when borders are easily penetrable or non-existent, where peoples can move with ease, sharing ideas and commerce, and intermingling? Or is security best guaranteed when territorial spaces are clearly defined and defended, and the peoples within such spaces clearly identify with and are identified by their location within a particular territory? Second, territory is directly linked to prosperity. How is economic activity organized within a territory? Is it self-sufficient and highly regulated by either custom or political authorities, or does trade and commerce flourish between territories, driven by opportunity rather than the hand of the state? Is the territory directly connected to particular roles, vocations, and an ensuing socio-economic order? Third, territory is related to our identities and how we see ourselves. Do we attach ourselves to a specific place, and derive our political affiliation and cultural identity from the land in which we and our ancestors have dwelled? Or do we see ourselves as detached from a single space, belonging to more than one locality and deriving our sense of ourselves and our belonging to different, more global identity categories (like religion or vocation)? All three of these categories obviously intermix and mingle, and territory can hold almost contradictory meanings and realities all at once; Maier’s deep historical sensibility makes him skeptical towards parsimonious, mono-causal explanations, and he is wonderfully at ease revealing tension, paradox, and puzzles throughout his narrative.

An important part of how we think of and are shaped by space and territory falls under the larger rubric of politics, or how territory is organized, structured, and ruled. Maier highlights two broadly different ways territory has been politically imagined and actualized since 1500: the space of empires and the space of states. To a certain extent, these categories are ideal types; as Maier acknowledges, the composition and reality of states and empires both vary and overlap. The comparison, however, is instructive. Empires have a long history, are fungible, can evolve and shift with rapidity, and require the metropole to work with local authorities and demonstrate greater tolerance for diversity of peoples. They are also marked by tumult and unrest at the periphery, where their grip is less tight and they encounter either nomads or other empires. Empires justify themselves through expansion, a key factor in making them hard to stabilize and prone to great swings in fortune:


“Individual empires, historical comparison suggests, require ruthless vigor, conquest, and reform to become established and notable. Then they excited rivals on the margins; their elite absorb revenues on the local level that are needed by the central administration; imperial succession produces repeated crises, contestation, and often rebellion. No wonder their vicissitudes encourage grand theories about rise and fall….” (24)

A key variable in this volatility is the role of technology. Extraordinary developments in ship building and navigation pushed the space of empires to look to the sea and establish rule over lands separated by ocean. This only increased imperial stresses: “Managing imperial territory involved a constant geographical balancing act, which at the same time increased social tensions and often challenged the religious or secular principles of legitimacy.” (42)

Though volatile and often dissimilar, the space of empires was the norm for political rule before the modern period. The space of states, on the other hand, is a more recent phenomenon; states have sought to centralize power, often encourage political and cultural uniformity, rationalize economic activity, and remove the uncertainty of empire by marking clear territorial borders. Maier highlights these developments by chronicling the rise and improvement of two older technologies in Europe and in particular, seventeenth-century France: cartography and forts and fortifications. Represented by the work of French philosopher René Descartes, increasing mathematical provision allowed for a finer, more detailed accounting of space and a delineation of territory. The design and construction of more imposing and impressive fortifications – as pursued by the engineer Sebastien le Prestre de Vauban – signaled the state’s willingness to mark and defend these territories. “The European state was increasingly defined within borders,” as Maier argues (76). Part of this movement was outwardly focused – to remove the ambiguity in the borderlands, to set out clearly what belonged to whom. In time, however, this movement of the state turned inwards, to both the land and the peoples within a given territory:

“Territorial rationalization and territorial acquisition expressed and advanced the multiple activities that established early modernity; political domination, taking possession, and moral regulation. Sovereignty, ownership, and morality came with the territory literally and figuratively.” (78)

States maintained imperial desires to expand, to conquer new lands, but they did so with greater precision and energy. This was made possible both by technology and the state’s increased ability to use the territory it already controlled more efficiently and intensely. Reforms—agrarian and otherwise—provided the economic motor to generate more wealth and technology, which allowed the state to generate more of both and push inward and outward, pursuing a ‘virtuous’ cycle. At least until the early twentieth century, when there was no uncontested land to conquer, great powers pushed up against each other, and decades of murderous conflagration over territory ensued

As with all great histories, Maier’s account raises as many questions as it answers. Territory is obviously valued at different times and in different places; in the United States and Russia, for example, land was cheap and labor dear (which drove slavery and serfdom), whereas in Western Europe and East Asia land was more scarce. How did different valuations influence views on territory and how it should be managed and ruled? More to the point, how does territoriality fit into today’s political, socio-economic, and geostrategic landscape? On the one hand, wealth and even security are less dependent upon land than before. Changes ranging from massive increases in agricultural yields to tremendous increases in trade and money flows have rendered the mercantilism of past empires infeasible. Technology—both in communications and transport—shrinks space and easily jumps borders; factors spanning norms to nuclear deterrence have led to the virtual disappearance
of large-scale wars of conquest. Yet as the past year has witnessed, from Brexit to the election of an American President who promised to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border, more old-fashioned views of territory have returned. Maier, as a responsible historian, will not make any firm predictions. This extraordinary history, however, does allows us to better understand the issues at stake, and how territory has been understood, fought over, and defined in centuries past.
This is a major work. Not only in its scope—1500 to the present—but in its conceptual breadth. The discipline of history emerged as a science of the nation-state, and for most historians since the late eighteenth century that is what it has remained: nation-state studies. It is only relatively recently, within the timescale of the discipline, that historians have aggressively sought to transcend the nation-state as the presumed unit of analysis. We have seen the rise of diasporic, borderlands, oceanic, transnational, imperial, and global histories. But with *Once within Borders*, we have something different: a thoughtful, well-researched overview of the idea of territory itself by a ranking historian.

Territoriality is one of those concepts, like ‘time’ or ‘consciousness,’ that are ubiquitous and fundamental, and thus easily ignored. Once you contemplate them, though, they grow vertiginously complex. Bordered territory is what constitutes politics and identity; it is, on the most basic level, what separates an ‘us’ from a ‘them,’ a ‘here’ from a ‘there.’ And yet how borders get drawn and what they mean turns out to have varied greatly with time, and to have mattered a great deal.

Maier’s book begins not with “state space,” his chief object of study, but with the “spaces of empire” that preceded it. Empires, Maier argues, are inherently “restless” polities (49). They rise and fall. They do not have border lines so much as frontier zones, marking the contested outer edges of their spatial ambitions. Internally, they enclose diverse peoples, and much of the activity of large empires is concerned with pacifying their own diffident subjects.

Yet starting in the middle of the sixteenth century in Europe, the space of empire was displaced by the space of states. This was, in Maier’s telling, an entirely distinct regime. I think of the space of empire as a dark canvas dotted by irregularly spaced light bulbs of different colors and luminosities. Each represents a center of power and identity, shining its light brightly in the area around the bulb, but dimming with distance and—at the outer edges—blurring into the light from other sources. The space of states, by contrast, can be envisioned as a painting by the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian: regular regions with thick and visible borders, each filled entirely with a single uniform shade. The space of empire is richly varied, the space of states is partitioned but, within each partition, homogeneous.

Of course, the space of empire and the space of states are ideal types, never fully realized *in situ*. Nevertheless, Maier shows how much political and intellectual energy went into realizing these ideals. He zooms in on the seventeenth-century French polymath Sebastien le Prestre de Vauban as his representative of the new spatial order of the state. Vauban built the extensive frontier fortifications on France’s outer borders, clear and enforceable physical demarcations establishing a solid border around the realm. Tellingly, at the same time that France fortified its border, it tore down forts within the kingdom, forts that had previously been used for internal pacification.

Vauban did not restrict himself to border defense. Toward the end of his life, he turned to another question: political economy. Once the space of the state had been stabilized, the authority of the state could be consolidated. And so Vauban sought to survey the land, rationalize the rights and obligations that were attached to it, and raise revenues on behalf of the state. This was ultimately “a reform too far” in Vauban’s life, which ended in 1707, but by 1800 the practice of cadastral mapping was becoming a core element of European statecraft (89). “Whoever seeks to govern a territory without this guiding thread will be tapping in the dark,” noted the Prussian Finance Minister Karl August von Struensee (100).
Thus began a whole series of state efforts to control territory and rationalize practices within it. Agrarian reforms aimed not only at increasing production (and thus state revenues) but at achieving a rural peace, ideally with productive, settled, and stable agriculturalists. If the goal in the earlier ages of empire had been territorial expansion, the space of states introduced a new goal: using territory intensively. The ‘wealth of nations,’ as the economist Adam Smith put it, became a desired attribute of bordered spaces.

Yet the ambition for territorial expansion did not vanish. As campaigns for productivity gave rise to new technologies, particularly steam-powered ones, it became possible to seize space on a much grander scale. The United States colonized its west, Russia moved east, and European nations turned to Africa and Asia, with railroad lines and telegraph cables stringing these ambitious polities together. Intensively governed state space became the pattern for the planet.

Still, the planet is only so large and, inevitably, these muscular, expanding territories butted up against each other. By the 1890s, major powers were complaining that there were no more frontiers to spread into. A decade later they were launching polar expeditions to snatch up the last unclaimed spaces on the map. And in the 1910s they were at war. Geopolitics, the ideological frame that haunted the first half of the twentieth century, counseled the major industrial countries that they needed room which could only at that point come from carving up their enemies’ territories.

What happened next is harder to say. Maier, though navigating vast chronological distances at top speed, offers an admirably legible account up to 1945. The all-important period that follows, however, is harder to make out. Surprisingly, it takes up only roughly the back third of his final substantive chapter (Once within Borders follows themes and jumps merrily around, so an exact page count would be pointless). What, exactly, are we to make of such important space-reconfiguring developments as decolonization, the Cold War, U.S. hegemony, the advent of human rights, the United Nations, the near-disappearance of wars of territorial expansion, post-1970s financial globalization, or the internet? Maier touches on all of these topics, but briefly and often obliquely. The Cold War and the United Nations garner only three main-text citations apiece, as listed in the index. Decolonization, human rights, and the internet are not listed at all, nor are their cognates.

Yet it is clear from Maier’s thoughtful epilogue that, whatever happened between 1945 and now, the bordered state’s grip has loosened considerably. Markets abound, capital flows, people move, and the states have lost some of their ability to control what transpires within their borders. It is now possible to imagine a world untethered from territory, which is presumably an owl-of-Minerva precondition for Maier writing this grand synthetic account.

“Today’s turmoil,” Maier opines, may transform the space of states back into the space of empires, “with its more permeable frontiers and the difficulty of excluding ‘barbarians’” (281). Perhaps. But I wondered if those were the only two options. It seems equally plausible to think we are seeing the emergence of a third, undiscussed type, more akin to a network, where identity and decision-making are spread across linked pointlike spaces: global cities, residential compounds, special economic zones, offshore financial havens,
military bases. Unlike state space, network space does not involve intensive, uniform government of a contiguous territory. But unlike the space of empire, it does not have a frontier.

Of course, it is difficult to see where the forces of history are pointing, especially because, as Maier rightly insists, the state space is still very much with us. What is new, though, is that borders—not particular borders, but borders in general—have become the basis for fierce ideological contestation. Maier describes an epochal struggle between cosmopolitans, who seek to transcend territory, and populists, who depend on it. Remarkably, the populists are winning, at least for the moment. Borders are back—*viz.* Brexit, the election of U.S. President Donald Trump on a platform of building a wall, and the surprising success of *Front national* leader Marine le Pen in France.

It is too early to call the fight, and Maier ends on an ambiguous note. At the end of his final chapter he describes territoriality and sovereignty as “the morning dew of a few millennia, perhaps, now evaporating under the sun of a global capitalism, social media, and mass migration” (276). And yet in the final words of the book, he reminds us that, for all of the transplantations and disruptions recent history has brought, we remain, in the end, “still within borders” (296).

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1 A prominent theoretical discussion of such spaces is Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructural Space* (New York: Verso, 2014), especially chap. 1 on the notion of the “zone.” Maier does discuss such enclaves but limits himself to a single evocative paragraph (292–293).
Many academic historians of a certain age have looked upon Charles S. Maier as an inspiration and role model for nearly five decades. Trained in the midst of the Cold War, he began his career in the once essential, now marginal, field of modern European politics and society. His first book, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) was an instant classic assigned to graduate seminars as much for its historiographical merit as for its rich historical content. He continued to write and edit volumes on twentieth-century Europe all the way down to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the astounding origins of which he traced in *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). Nonetheless, Maier also kept two steps ahead of the field in what used to be known as diplomatic history but was metamorphosing into the new international history, transnational history, and global history. Hence, if *Once within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500* turns out to be Maier’s last big book, it richly deserves to be called the capstone of an extraordinary career.

“Until recently we could take territory for granted; it was protective and offered security and belonging, with less and less self-conscious effort,” writes the author. “Now the security that territory once offered seems precarious everywhere and to be maintained only with constant surveillance” (1). Those elegant sentences from the opening paragraph of the book are reminiscent of a similar observation made by George F. Kennan at the start of his celebrated Walgreen Lectures series in 1950. He noted that American security had undergone a tremendous decline over the decades since 1900 despite the meteoric rise of the United States to unprecedented world power. The result was that national security, once taken for granted, had become an obsession. Maier observes in like fashion that territoriality has become an obsession at today’s historical conjuncture. So he set out, characteristically two steps ahead, to write a book whose shrewd insights, grand generalizations, and subtle details show the rest of us how to think about when, where, and why our conventions about global space emerged; in short, a history of territoriality itself.


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Moreover, so many classic historians familiar from our graduate student days are alluded to in the text, among them Ludwig Dehio, Karl Polanyi, James Billington, Marshall Hobsdon, Richard Herr, and E. P. Thompson. Hence one is almost compelled to slow down and savor a book that reads like a sentimental journey through the stages of one’s own education.

Maier begins by defining his terms, which include the distinction between territory as “a division space” and as “an identity space.” For most of modern history, at least in the West, the two spaces were largely contiguous, but have coincided less and less since the take-off of globalization during the 1970s (2-3). He also describes his methodology, which bows rather than kow-tows to critical theory and postmodern deconstruction. In fact, Maier’s interpretations are refreshingly self-conscious, common-sensical, and grounded in hard data. He writes: “So the history of territoriality must remain an investigation into the activities in which territory has a formative presence: military strategy, cartography, property claims, economic production, and exchange” (7). Despite that solid evidentiary base he is cautious when it comes to causation: “For all the formidable objections raised by postmodern analyses, I persist in believing in the value of causal narratives. If compelled to choose, I would point to the material and technological possibilities of each epoch, fully aware that the latter emerge from intellectual advances. Ultimately, the historical world is simultaneously overdetermined (given the inextricability of causal logic) and underdetermined (given the horizons of knowledge) in its openness to surprise and contingency” (12). In fact, Maier dances around questions about causation throughout much of the book, but he laudably avoids prolepsis and rejects teleology. History is what happened.

In his first chapter covering 1500 to 1650, Maier introduces the reader to the artificiality, or constructed nature, of territoriality through brief but elegant passages on the world before sovereign states (conventionally dated from the Treaties of Westphalia in 1648) by describing untethered human societies ranging from nomads and marauding tribes to empires, whose ‘Spatial Imaginary’ differed from that of modern states. Before the exploration of Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama, mighty land-based empires such as Han China and Rome arose on the edges of the Eurasian-North African landmass, plus ‘gunpowder empires’ such as the Ottoman in its interior.3 But the real story begins when Maier introduces the maritime empires forged by oceanic exploration during the Renaissance. At this point he alludes the “formidable antiliberal German theorist of power and law Carl Schmitt” (18), about whom he will have much more to say later on. But for now suffice to say it was Schmitt who realized the Age of Discovery gave rise to what he called “global boundary thinking” (18).

Maier makes the intriguing suggestion that global empires seem to arise in pairs. Thus the rivalry between the Portuguese and Spanish maritime empires gave way over time to the rivalry between Dutch and English followed by rivalry between the British and Franco-Spanish Bourbon empires, followed in turn by the twentieth-century confrontations among the Anglo-American empires, the maritime Japanese, and the continental Germans and Soviets. During the early phases of this familiar story – most associated, perhaps, with Paul M. Kennedy’s The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from

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1500 to 2000\(^4\) – the rival states in pursuit of overseas empires constructed rules of the game under the pretense, at least, that the oceans and seas could be made subject to territorality. The anarchic dictum “no peace beyond the line” (33) thus gradually gave way (thanks to Hugo Grotius and other founders of international law) to the principles of \textit{liberum maris} on the high seas and \textit{mare clausum} in a realm’s own territorial waters. Multiethnic empires that seemed to imply a transcendence of territory “become hostage to it instead” (49).

The second chapter highlights state-building in Europe itself from 1550 to 1700, an enormous story which Maier renders intelligible by his ingenious pairing of contemporaries in the service of Louis XIV: René Descartes, the great theorist of spatiality, and Sebastien de Vauban, the great engineer whose frontier forts defined the boundaries of the realm and mastered the military technologies of the age. The third chapter, “Contesting the Countryside,” begins with an account of Vauban’s final years when he turned his attention to the internal economies of territorial states. The precocious Frenchman understood that real wealth ought not to be measured in silver and gold, as mercantilist theory prescribed, but rather “in the abundance of basic commodities” (87). European states, concerned as they were with centralization of authority, legalization of property rights, and maximization of revenues, gradually grew obsessed by techniques of measurement, especially rural cadasters and cartography. Maier concludes: “The map in short was the uncontested project of expanding empire and ambitious state wedded to the scientific curiosity that impelled European expansion. The cadaster represented the triumph of the centralizing forces in the long battle between monarchs and landed elites” (108).

In “Projects for an Agrarian Regime (1770-1890),” the fourth chapter, the author describes how states’ determination to mobilize their populations and increase economic production led to two seemingly contrary phenomena: the emancipation of European peasants and simultaneous enslavement of African labor on overseas plantations. The purview of this survey-within-a-survey is enormous, ranging from Russia to Central and Western Europe to the Anglo-American world, Mexico and Argentina, and economic theories from the German revolutionary Karl Marx to the American reformer Henry George. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, “the end of free land” (think Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis), the “ills of industrial capitalism, the undermining of democratic possibilities, the loss of individual autonomy darkened the progressives’ fin-de-siècle perception of global space” (183).

The fifth chapter treats industrialism and imperialism, the twin engines of the modern age according to Geoffrey Barraclough’s classic, \textit{An Introduction to Contemporary History}.\(^5\) Indeed, Maier’s almost loving description of “An Invincible Force”: Railroads, Continents, and Colonies, might be considered the book’s climax since those were the forces that propelled territorality to its apex. Karl Marx imagined that the railroad and telegraph meant the annihilation of space. In fact, they did the opposite. They transformed rather than transcended the politics of space by vastly expanding the territorial reach and administrative power of states, thereby enlisting railroads “in the service of global capitalism and white dominion” (213). Really annihilated was localism. The chapter’s comparative history of (mostly state-sponsored) railroad building is excellent, but even more fascinating is Maier’s intellectual, technological, and diplomatic history of territorality’s role in the


familiar ‘Scramble for Colonies.’ This is also the occasion for his second mention of “the German reactionary theorist Carl Schmitt” because Schmitt realized that “international law was a product of European colonization, whether in the Americas in the sixteenth century or in Africa in the late nineteenth century” (224).

The final substantive chapter examines the wars of the twentieth century and the ‘science’ to which romantic notions of territoriality gave birth: geopolitics. It was a delight to revisit in these pages so many old friends such as political geographers Rudolf Kjellen, Friedrich Ratzel, Halford Mackinder, Karl Haushofer, and Nicolas Spykman. But once again: “The most far-reaching analysis came from the rightwing legal theorist Carl Schmitt” (251). He gets five full pages this time, because it was he who prophesied the future we inherit today. (So in his own way did William Thomas Stead, in The Americanization of the World; or, The Trend of the Twentieth Century (1902). Schmitt divided the white race into commercial, maritime Seevolk (led by the Anglo-Americans) relentlessly pushing for universal empire and a borderless world; and blood-and-soil rooted Landvolk (such as the Germans) resisting in the name of a pluralistic world. “In his discussion,” quips Maier, “it sounded almost cozy” (252). Schmitt later repented of his Nazi apologetics, but his theory was borne out by globalization during and after the Cold War. Not that it has ‘liberated’ the world from territoriality insofar as the United Nations itself has made a fetish of sovereign and supposedly equal nation-states. But functional alternatives to the territorial state have emerged, such as supranational authorities like the European Union, international authorities like the Mekong River Commission, multilateral alliances like NATO, non-governmental organizations practicing governance rather than government, and transnational banking networks specifically designed to escape national sovereignty.

Maier asks at the end whether territoriality and sovereignty were “the morning dew of a few millennia” destined to evaporate “under the sun of a global capitalism, social media, and mass migration” (276). He cautions against that conclusion, if only because territory remains the primary “emotional reference point for legal belonging” (295) and a folk loyalty expressed through the Populist politics of our time. But the burden of this amazing book is that territoriality is an historical artifact constructed at discreet times and places rather than part of an immutable human nature. That means human communities may well someday shed territoriality like an old skin and merge in global federation, whether enlightened or oppressive, such as Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry imagined might happen by the year 2150.

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In the conclusion of Charlie Maier’s magisterial study *Once within Borders*, he observes that “Few institutions so fundamentally structure our legal and sometimes physical existence as a frontier” (277). A generation ago, many would have argued that this epigram was destined for the ash heap of history, as the forces of technology and economic integration seemed to make the physical demarcation of territory a relic—like the rubble of the Berlin Wall. From Francis Fukuyama to Thomas Friedman, analysts argued that a new era of transnationalism was erasing traditional boundaries of citizenship and forging new identities that escaped boundaries of nationality. While some saw this as the impending realization of Kantian universal peace, others worried that it represented the coming of a new age of disorder, as old institutions of governance were swept away, with none to take its place.

Of course today, as Maier recognizes, frontiers are back with a vengeance. If a generation ago the Berlin Wall fell, today new walls are being built – both literally (President Donald Trump’s proposed wall with Mexico; Hungarian President Viktor Orban’s fence to exclude Syrian refugees) and figuratively (China’s Great Firewall). Disputes over territory and sovereignty, from Crimea to the South and East China Seas, once thought to be marginal, now vie with transnational threats like terrorism and infectious disease, in dominating the agenda of policymakers.

Maier’s book seeks to help us understand how and why territory has, and continues to have, such a powerful influence on politics within and between states, and how conceptions of territory themselves have driven history. For students of American history and readers of Maier’s magnificent earlier work, this should come as no surprise; for its founders, America’s geography and identity were intertwined; territory was not simply a space for individuals to inhabit but evidence of divine favor for a people to create a distinctive ‘Empire of liberty’ (Thomas Jefferson) that set it apart from the corrupt nations of the Old World. In part Maier’s tale is a familiar one, as the consolidation of the nation state became the crucible for the development of internal political legitimacy and the driver of external political order and conflict. The Sovereign’s ability to provide security and prosperity to the residents of a ‘territory’ is at the root of the authority to govern –this is the basis


4 “Our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions,” John O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17:1 (July-August 1845), 5.

5 “[T]he theory of statehood…established the international parity of monarchs…; it allowed the secular authority to claim power above and beyond religious convictions….” (77)
of Chinese Communist Party’s claim to legitimacy (the modern equivalent of the mandate of heaven) – and the justification for the American colonists’ right to separate from England.

But Maier goes beyond the Westphalian analysis to explore what at first seems a contradiction—the relationship between territory and empire, an exercise that involved distant powers drawing often arbitrary lines where none existed, and asserting the right to govern, not just distant peoples but even the global commons. He quotes the seventeenth century British jurist, John Selden: “the Sea, by Law of Nature, or Nations, is Not Common to All Men but Capable of Private Dominion or Propertie as well as the Land” (37). This effort to ‘territorialize’ the undifferentiated commons foreshadows contemporary arguments about maritime and airspace sovereignty today,—from China’s ambiguous assertion of sovereignty over the South China Sea to its purported attempt to establish an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in international airspace over the East China Sea.

Maier rejects the geographic quasi-determinism associated with the British geographer H.J. MacKinder,6 and implicitly its more recent incarnations,7 yet insists that territorial imperatives do in some general way constrain, writing that “Fortifications did not bring about modern statehood…. But they are connected to the territorial state as much as are confessional conflict, the two century revival of Roman law… and political theory” (79). He adopts a familiar historian’s humility “The political scientist may call for parsimonious explanations, but the historical world, I believe, rarely lets us untangle causes (or isolate clean coefficients for multiple regressions)” (79-80). Elsewhere, he observes “The story is not really causal. Territoriality does not play the generative role that Marxists assign to class conflict, Freudians to the Oedipus complex or biologists to genes. Wars for territory result from conflicting ambitions or collective insecurity, not geography per se” (7). In this respect Maier follows the arguments of Nicholas Spykman.8 Although he does not discuss the literature, Maier aligns with the more nuanced analysts of geopolitics and ‘geostrategy’ rather than their more single-minded brethren.9

Although Maier touches on some of the contemporary manifestations of the territorial imperative (for example, in his discussions of the scramble for the Artic, and the response to the refugee crisis in Syria), he somewhat underplays the re-emergence of traditional territorial conflict. From Russia’s claim to the Crimea and parts of Ukraine though appeals to the Kievan Rus’ empire, to China’s historical argument for the ‘Nine Dash’ line in the South China Sea and sovereignty over the Ryukyu Islands, territory as a source of conflict remains very much on the contemporary agenda. In both cases, the attainment of revanchist territorial claims

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7 See for example, Robert Kaplan, The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us about Coming Conflicts and the Battle against Fate (New York: Random House, 2012).

8 “The geography of a country is rather the material for, than the cause of its policy, and to admit that the garment must ultimately be cut to fit the cloth is not to say that the cloth determines the garment’s style or its adequacy.” Nicholas J. Spykman, “Geography and Foreign Policy,” American Political Science Review 1 (February 1938), 30.

9 See, for example, the essays in Colin S. and Geoffrey Sloan, eds., “Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy,” Journal of Strategic Studies (November 1999).
are about more than extending borders to provide a security glacis or to command resources (natural gas and fisheries in the South China Sea; naval facilities in Sevastopol). They are fundamental to those regimes’ claims to legitimacy, a source of authority distinct from the security and economic basis of territoriality and empire so well and thoroughly explored in the book, and an alternative to formal democratic legitimacy. He also notes, but in passing, the resurgent nationalism that has stoked conflict in the wake of empire’s dissolution (most notably in the Middle East and Africa), noting that the conflicts are about more than race, religion or ancient hatreds, but are also tied to conflicting claims to territory, a reality manifest in our daily headlines, from Mosul and Irbil, from Jerusalem to Kosovo Polje. (268)

In his concluding chapter, Maier’s wrestles with the apparent contradiction of our time—the simultaneous delocalizing force of technology and the apparent growing power of political forces of nationality, identity, and exclusion. He identifies the source of the tensions as arising from the disjuncture of “decision space” and “identity space” (3)—in other words, from the erosion of the nation state as a locus of authority as well as loyalty. He is equally critical of the cosmopolitan who denies territory as identity as the populist who glorifies it, seeking to redeem the idea of place from its reactionary associations, while acknowledging the need for new forms of governance that are not territorially based to meet contemporary challenges. Maier’s solution to the conundrum is to evoke the idea of dual citizenship, embracing both territorial and extra-territorial identities, while recognizing the limitations of the latter—“the European citizenship of the EU seems to offer a rather pallid supplement to national citizenship” (295). But as Maier’s own analysis suggests, following Max Weber, at the core of territoriality, whether state or empire, is successful governance—an idea he equates to Michel Foucault’s “governmentality” (77-78.) The success of governance at the political and economic level fueled the rise first of nation then of empire—and it is the perceived failure of governance at the transnational level today that has fueled the return to nationalism. If and only if these transnational institutions can ‘deliver’ physical and economic security will they successfully compete with the nationalist narratives offered by President Trump, the supporters of Brexit or the French politician Marine le Pen.

Reading Maier reminds us that history belongs as much to the humanities as to social science. Maier is at his most evocative when he discerns analogies between the evolution of mathematics and political concepts of territory, from his parallel between the evolution of the nation state and mathematics of the seventeenth century arguing that “state space follows rules defined by l’esprit mathematique of the seventeenth century exemplified by Descartes’s coordinates, Kepler’s orbits and later Newton’s laws” (80), to his later reflections on similarities between modern physics, i.e., uncertainty, entanglement of particles at a distance and non-locality, with the deracinated identities of modern corporations or international criminal gangs. He eschews causality, but implies that there is a common dynamic driving the two developments, noting that “Without our ascribing any simple one way causality, it remains the case that construction of analogous spatial frameworks advanced in different domains at the same time” (288). It leaves one to wonder whether policymakers might be well served to consult physicist Stephen Hawking in addition to former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger or political scientist Joseph Nye about the next phase in the evolution of the international system.
Author’s Response by Charles S. Maier, Harvard University

Any customary expression of debt to my readers for their thoughtful reviews of *Once within Borders* would be inadequate. Their own contributions are to be reckoned with: Francis Gavin has written on issues of international finance and nuclear competition; Daniel Immerwahr has been probing American aid and foreign policies; Walter McDougall, who long ago toiled as I did on the legacies of World War I, has since written large-scale pioneering work on oceanic history and space exploration; and James Steinberg brings first-hand perspectives from the highest level of policy making. Their careful reading is a tribute in its own right; that they have praised the book is doubly gratifying.

As they sense, *Once within Borders* culminates a long period of inquiry into the long history of what I believe is an essential condition for shaping the world of nations: the enduring but evolving influence of territoriality or bordered global space—so obvious a framework for politics and society that it is rarely conceived of as potentially a historical category in its own right. Immersed, however, for so long in a project that has been hard to explain to colleagues and friends, the historian can lose a sense of personal orientation—is the work potentially significant or trivial, does it illuminate, can it claim originality, might it have some utility in understanding the world as it has come to be? So the author waits anxiously until readers render their verdict.

Rather than recapitulate their reviews, let me use this space to think about some of the questions they have raised and suggestions they have offered. We live in an era when territoriality can no longer be taken for granted as a permanent condition for global society—a situation that impelled my own research although I came to believe that territory will remain a foundation for organizing politics even as its characteristics are transformed. Gavin asks “how does territoriality fit into today’s political, socio-economic, and geo-strategic landscape?” Technology and powerful economic flows leap over frontiers, he writes even as he adds that frontier thinking has returned with a vengeance. Steinberg emphasizes a similar point—the clash “between the delocalizing force of technology and the apparent growing power of political forces of nationality, identity, and exclusion.” In effect, both readers pick up the major puzzle with which the book concludes—why in an epoch when the resources of territory should be attenuating, has it apparently re-emerged as so powerful a driver of policies?

My suggestion was that territory’s potency has mutated: it is measured, for instance, more in symbolic televised control of paradigmatic public spaces (think Saigon during the Tet offensive, Tiananmen or Tahrir Squares) than in mere geographical extent. Furthermore populations have become stratified socially in terms of their territorial attachments—cosmopolitans, such as most professionals, contend with populists. Steinberg responds to my citation of Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’—the state’s effort to nurture the material and human resources that societies can generate—to suggest that it is the failure of international governance that has raised anew the emphasis on territorial resources, whether in terms of loyalty or material assets. This is an intriguing idea, but I would stress that ‘governance’ is not ‘governability.’ The latter term indicates the sovereign’s concern for development policies that a regime can implement. It presupposes state power. Governance, in contrast, requires rational persuasion and consensus where state power is absent, methods derived, so to speak, from Habermas, not Hobbes. It is an effort at rule-making in spheres where a potentially coercive agency is absent, as it is at the international level unless explicitly delegated by treaties. Steinberg reminds us that the frailty of its achievements sends us back to territory and state power. For the foreseeable future territoriality remains potent.
McDougall, I believe, has accurately discerned this recognition as a continuing theme of the work. For him, as for me, Carl Schmitt remains—sadly perhaps—the harsh voice of realism, and he picks up my discussions of where Schmitt argued that even international law was the product of territorial appropriation.¹ It emerged as the code by which the appropriators sought to avoid their own war over empire. As McDougall recognizes, Schmitt viewed the Anglo-American concepts of untrammeled trade and investment as an almost unfair weapon against the merely territorial bases of German *Grossraumwirtschaft*. (In fact research about German successes with radio communication suggest that the society was becoming competitive in the transnational arena as well.²)

Immerwahr offers the images of a chiaroscuro canvas and a sharply delineated Mondrian to evoke my contrast between the space of empires and the space of states. But he argues that this contrast serves less well in ordering postwar history and that my narrative loses its clarity as a key to recent events. Let me grant his criticism in part—after all, it is always hazardous to discern the grand tendencies of recent history. But I would also emphasize a chronology that downplays the importance of 1945 in terms of territorial epochs and instead prioritizes a break around 1970. Insofar as territorial thinking is concerned, the era of the Cold War, through 1968/70, continued the tendency of policy makers and their publics to interpret the globe as divided into great rival territorial blocs, larger than any hitherto, with each bloc justified and structured by an opposed ideology. Richard Edes Harrison’s maps for Henry Luce’s *Fortune Magazine*—with their strikingly colored polar projections—served for both the Second World War and then the Cold War. But history did become more complex after the late 1960s: the era of détente and dissent and “interdependence,” the term of the 1970s that preceded globalization.

Of the developments that Immerwahr cites as muddying my scheme, the Cold War and U.S. ascendancy firmed up territorial confrontation—recall the tension created by Communist China’s shelling of Quemoy and Matsu in the 1950s, islands important only to show the limits of respective spheres of influence. On the other hand, financial globalization, the emphasis on human rights, and the internet, which Immerwahr also cites, emerged as solvents of territoriality from the 1970s on. In my brief survey for Akira Iriye and Emily Rosenberg’s collaborative global history, *Leviathan 2.0: Inventing Modern Statehood*, which I wrote while researching *Once within Borders*, and indeed in my 2000 *American Historical Review* article, “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History,”³ I proposed that if historians adopted constructions of territoriality as a major source of periodization, the long century from about 1850 to about 1970 would constitute a coherent epoch. How the almost half century since 1970 will ultimately appear is less clear. Does the emancipation of

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information from local constraints in the digital age herald a post-territorial dispensation, or will national authorities manage to control data and communication, whether through traditional sovereign claims or new technologies? I doubt they can succeed over the long run, but their efforts still testify to the enduring importance of territoriality.

Immerwahr suggests that instead of envisaging a possible return from the space of states to the space of empires, we should consider a possible networked territoriality where “identity and decision-making are spread across linked pointlike spaces: global cities, residential compounds, special economic zones, offshore financial havens, military bases.” We are all into networks these days: they are the quasi-spatial trope of our times, and I correlated the metaphor with developments in theoretical physics such as quantum entanglement. But the network metaphor needs specification. Just to take global cities or military bases, do they constitute a territory in their own right? Military bases, in any case, remain the outposts of states or empires. Global cities such as Tokyo, Singapore, Hong Kong, Doha, or London may constitute a financial ‘space;’ they may even observe and live by certain financial-market rules. But they are also enclosed within separate territorial spaces. I would suggest that Immerwahr is really sketching a post-territorial vision where identity and authority are displaced on behalf of a non-spatialized set of objectives and norms. The question remains whether such an alternative structure of interests (hardly of identity, however) can replace territoriality. It is the inquiry that prompted my reading for twenty years, and a definitive answer must be elusive.

In the end, I am heartened that the questions and responses I suggested have struck so responsive a chord. And I am certain we all agree that the issues need historians to take them up alongside geographers, international lawyers, and social theorists. The world is filled with categories or presuppositions for ordering the life of our societies that we take as timeless and axiomatic, but reveal themselves as deeply historical.