Scottish Geographical Magazine

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsgj19>

Political boundaries

Col. Sir Thomas Holdich R.E. K.C.B. K.C.I.E.

Published online: 30 Jan 2008.

To cite this article: Col. Sir Thomas Holdich R.E. K.C.B. K.C.I.E. (1916)
Political boundaries, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 32:11, 497-507, DOI:
[10.1080/14702541608541586](https://doi.org/10.1080/14702541608541586)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14702541608541586>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

THE SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE.

POLITICAL BOUNDARIES.¹

By Col. Sir THOMAS HOLDICH, R.E., K.C.B., K.C.I.E.

It has been said that more wars have been caused by boundary disputes than any other source of political contention. Whenever there is a war there is, inevitably, a boundary violated somewhere or other as the direct result of military movements, but this is an effect, rather than a cause. The cause is to be sought for amongst a great complexity of human motives—it may be a spirit of aggression—the sheer lust of world-power, or simply an irrepressible demand for more space for an expanding people. This everlasting changing and shifting of boundaries which, whether regarded as cause or effect, is the accompaniment of every great world-war would, one would have thought, have led long ago to a more careful consideration of the principles which should govern the setting out of boundaries between nationalities in such manner as to render them the most efficient factors in the preservation of peace; and yet the amount of really useful literature on this subject is exceedingly small. The complexity and importance of it has, I think, hardly been realised, and certainly no other subject could lend itself better to scientific discussion from either the military, political, or the geographical standpoint, or start more free from preconceived notions and dogmatic opinion. One or two able writers have indeed attempted to define the requirements of an international boundary from a theoretical point of view in a manner which is wholly admirable, in so far as it is based on a belief in the regeneration of humanity, and the existence of an honest desire for a millennium of peace and goodwill which should lead nations to dwell together in unity. Unfortunately there are very

¹ A paper read at the Newcastle Meeting of the British Association to Section E (Geography).

few signs of this happy tendency in these days. It does not much matter in what direction you look for signs of yearning loving-kindness amongst people who, being ordered and ruled from separate and distinct centres of government, still exist as rivals in the great world-field of commercial development and wealth-hunting, you will not find them. In no direction whatever are such symptoms significant enough to warrant the adoption of any scheme of boundary fixing which would lead to the mingling together of the human fringes of the nations and promote mutual assimilation in a spirit of brotherly love and common ideals.

Here we are faced with one of the difficulties which besets the discussion of the subject. What is a nation? or rather what are those conditions of government and geographical environment which constitute the basis of a nationality, binding all its individual members into one definite and complete whole in the consciousness of unity of purpose and ideals? An American writer defines a nation as "a population of an ethnic unity, inhabiting a geographic unity under a common form of government." He is careful to add that the exceptions are quite numerous enough to prove the rule. We had better leave it at that, and remember that under the great political empires of the past there were no nations; and that with the increase of democracies in the world will come an inevitable increase of international boundaries. It is, however, with the spirit of the nation, the sentiments which underlie its national ideals, that we have to deal in practice when laying out a line of separation, and this, so far as it affects boundary settlements between civilised communities, appears at first sight to be a very complicated problem. The bonds of ethnic affinity; a fervid community in religious sentiment; a mutual basis of agreement and aim as regards cultural development or political aspirations, have all been cited as sentiments strong enough to ensure such a peace-loving and peace-promoting assimilation as should render the existence of a dividing line a merely nominal geographical incident. As a matter of fact, none of these sentiments weigh for an instant against that perfervid form of patriotism which is inculcated by education (just as religion is inculcated), and supported by the irresistible effects of environment and self-interest. I do not mean to say that self-interest (in itself a mean and sordid motive) is at the root of patriotism, but I do mean to say that it is very easy to place self-interest on a very high pedestal of morality, and then to imagine that it is patriotism; and that it is a matter of the very deepest concern to any government which values the great principle of love for one's country, and the spirit of self-sacrifice in that country's cause, to see to it that the highest patriotic ideals, whilst yet uncontaminated by the breath of self-interest, are fostered and inculcated during the earliest phases of education.

It might be thought that community of origin and of language would be a powerful agent in the promotion of peace between peoples who share it. Unfortunately it seems to count for little or nothing when boundary disputes arise. Such international family quarrels are often the bitterest, nor can we say that community of religious faith is any stronger

as a binding agency than community of language and ethnical affinity. Such influences may almost be ignored, as well as those which arise from common aspirations after certain forms of culture, when men's passions are aroused by the greed of territorial expansion or the bitter grievance of its curtailment. It is quite sufficient for all practical purposes if we lump all such matters of sentiment together, and regard the total effect of them as "the will of the people." The will of the people is, in effect, the outcome and expression of all these influences, together with that greater, nobler, and more inspiring sentiment which the Japanese call "bushido," and which we call patriotism.

I have been concerned officially in the settlement of many boundaries, but never have I experienced (nor have I ever heard of) a settlement in which the people concerned on either side were so happily disposed towards each other as to ask only for a fair division of interests, and such a nominal hedge between them as would permit of neighbourly fraternisation and the interchange of courtesies. On the contrary, boundary disputes seem to possess quite an unreasonable and sometimes incomprehensible faculty for stirring up the very worst elements of international hatred and passion, and we are forced to the conclusion that a boundary settlement involves the partition of conflicting interests, which must be adjusted as far as possible so as to prevent those interests from ever clashing or morally interfering with each other again. So long as man is a fighting animal he must be prevented from physical interference with his neighbour by physical means. I grant that this is not a high ideal, but what else can we suggest? We have had bitter experience of late years, which should teach us again an old lesson of the value of high ideals and altruistic sentiment where men's passions are concerned, in this unredeemed world so full of beauty and of desperate evil; and we must reluctantly admit that the best way to preserve peace amongst the nations is to part them by as strong and as definite a physical fence as we can find. In short, a boundary must be a barrier, and the position of it must be influenced largely by the will of the people. These then are the two governing conditions of boundary-making. Let us consider the latter condition first.

All authorities seem to agree (there are not many of them) that the annexation of any territory directly against the will of its inhabitants is a political blunder. The assimilation of its people with the conquering nation is a slow, and often an impossible process. The Germans have not assimilated the French of Alsace and Lorraine; the English have hardly assimilated the Irish, and where race antagonism is believed to be supported by self-interest real assimilation seems to be hopeless. An admixture, so to speak, may be effected mechanically, but real chemical fusion never takes place. Under such circumstances it is seldom indeed that the acquired territory is a safe and thoroughly sound unit in the political entity. It adds little or nothing to the strength of a nation, although it may be economically useful, and it is apt to be a very thorn in the side of any government, an undoubted danger in times of stress and adversity. The expression of the people's will varies infinitely in form. In the savage and uncivilised countries of the black man there

may be no possibility of consulting it. The questions at issue may lie between white nations, and the black man has little to say to the disposition of his own property. But amongst civilised countries there is always a "will," and it is usually definite exceedingly. Various suggestions have been made as to the best way of ascertaining that will. A plebiscite even has been suggested. I cannot imagine a surer way of starting an armed conflict. The process of vote-catching is never one which lends itself to the promotion of good feeling and brotherly love at the best of times, even when the object is a political issue only half comprehended. When it is a matter of close personal interest involving a clear issue of local gain or loss, it certainly would stir up to its very depths the identical dispute which the boundary is planned to decide. Nor in practice will it be found that any such resource is necessary. However complicated may be the admixture of those sentiments which together combine to form a definite will on the part of the disputants, the expression of a people's will in terms of the majority is usually definite and unmistakable. When opinions are fairly divided, and the expression of them is weak and wobbly, inclining first one way and then another, weighing advantages against disadvantages, and coming to no decided conclusion, then indeed sentiment may well be allowed to give way to these physical conditions which should govern the selection of the line of partition, strong geographically, a barrier for defence against aggression, an age-long guarantee for the peaceful development of culture and commerce without interference or fear on either side.

Let me repeat that the reasons for giving first consideration to the sentimental values in a boundary dispute is the obvious fact, long ago confirmed by history, that no nation gains in strength by the organisation of a people latently hostile, and prevented by hereditary or ethnical instinct from any process of assimilation which will cement the bonds of political union.

Setting aside then the question of international sentiment, we may consider those problems which beset the physical side of the question, especially the relations and influence of geography and environment on a frontier, together with some few of the most important rules which should guide first the delimitation, and then the demarcation of a boundary; and I should like to commence by insisting, as far as I can, on some definitions which seem to be called for, judging from certain reports dealing with boundary matters which I have lately read, and on which I have been asked to express an opinion. The "delimitation" of a boundary is not the actual process of marking out its position in the field. That is better understood by the word demarcation. Delimitation is a process of defining, by means of maps and protocols, where a boundary should be demarcated in the field, and it is usually the function of those high political authorities who meet together to represent the interests of either nation concerned, and to decide on such geographical evidence as they can get what either side is prepared to accept. Too often it is assumed that with the delimitation of a boundary the great question at issue is finally settled. If the delimitation is based on perfectly sound evidence, and if the protocols and other technical

documents provided for the guidance of the demarcators are expressed both clearly and correctly, the subsequent business of demarcation becomes merely a secondary process giving effect in the field to that which has been decided in high conclave. This has seldom been the case in the past owing to a want of appreciation of the necessity for exact geographical knowledge, both practical and theoretical, on the part of the political delimiters; and it has happened that the terms of delimitation have led to far-extended disputes and to a process of demarcation which in one important instance at least has lasted for more than a century and a half. Another matter on which some confusion of mind has been apparent, even amongst officers of special ability in this form of public service, is the distinction which lies between a frontier and a boundary. If you define this distinction shortly it amounts to this—a boundary denotes a line and a frontier, space. The boundary limits the frontier, and it is the expansion of the frontier which so frequently renders a boundary necessary; a frontier is but a vague and indefinite term until the boundary sets a hedge between it and the frontier of a neighbouring state.

There are, in my opinion, certain fixed principles which are applicable to all boundaries no matter where they may be traced, whether amongst the gloomy forests of the Upper Amazon or the peaks and pinnacles of the Andes, amongst the sun-baked hills of Africa, or through the intricacies of the rugged borderland of India; whether in the black man's wilderness or the white man's populous and overcrowded provinces; and these principles, which are dependent on physical attributes, can never be safely ignored. The last half century has witnessed a perfect orgy of boundary making, and latterly the demand of scientific requirements (notably of geographical exactitude in definition and demarcation) have been fairly met. We can certainly claim that of late years our boundaries have been shaped scientifically by competent demarcation guided by the text of delimitations which, if not technically perfect, have at least been free from the ridiculous elementary errors of past generations of politicians, who were ignorant of the very first principles of geography.

I need not weary you with any repetition of past mistakes, mistakes that have cost us the value of many millions sterling, and have more than once reduced this country as well as other countries to the verge of war. I have referred to them often enough elsewhere. It is quite probable that we shall, ere long, be faced with a comparatively new phase of boundary problems where there can no longer be the excuse of want of sound map knowledge of the districts concerned to account for misleading and inaccurate delimitations, but where ethnical interests of the most important character will possibly present painfully complicated knots for disentanglement. In no case, however, can I imagine that the wishes of the majority of the people concerned will be difficult to ascertain, and in certainly the great majority of cases it will be those main principles involving physical attributes which will prove to be the most important factor in the settlement.

We should, in the first place, be absolutely certain that on both sides

of the settlement there is the same governing idea of a contract which is to secure the permanent peace of the border. Whilst this is the just and righteous aim of the boundary maker; whilst he has nothing in view but that which is to develop the influences of peace and the interests, commercial and cultural, of the peoples between whom he has to set a hedge, he must beware of any reservation which may become apparent during the process of settlement which would indicate that a loop-hole is to be left in that hedge through which advantage may be taken hereafter, when the hour shall strike, of some weakness which may facilitate a sudden and determined overthrow of the whole construction. In the strongest sense of the term then I must insist that a boundary must be a sound and unbroken barrier as far as possible, and that it must be selected most assuredly with the great object in view of hindering in every possible way any proposed scheme of violation. As a barrier it may be natural or it may be artificial. In either case it must be made as secure as nature or art can make it. Peace can only be based in this imperfect world on security. Security, as one able writer has justly put it, means "armament." In blood and tears have we at last learnt the lesson. May no specious idea of a new millennium blot it out from our minds, and may our political representatives, impressed at last with the lessons of the war, set about designing new political boundaries with lines as strong as they can be made. Prevention of war is much better than cure, better by the lives, it may be, of millions of brave men and the tears of thousands of women, and it may quite easily be prevented to a very appreciable extent by limiting the capacity of angry disputants to get at each other.

How are we to secure these strong boundaries? To a certain extent nature helps us, and where nature steps in with a really sound and impracticable fence nothing in the world can be better. Almost every geographical feature has already been impressed into the service of the boundary maker. We have mountain ranges, rivers and lakes, seas and deserts, all doing duty, to say nothing of countless minor features which make up the topographical plan of the earth's surface. Incomparably the best of these are mountain ranges. It may happen that they stand alone, untouched for miles by artificial designs, as great and impassable border lands, in the midst of which the boundary follows the great divides, majestic, unapproachable, immovable, subject to no vicissitudes of natural force short of violent earthquakes, requiring no artificial boundary marks for definition, no ridiculous waste of money over demarcation, no expenditure in boundary upkeep, presenting on either hand a magnificent wall of defence, unbroken, impressive, defiant. It is true that here and there across all the great mountain systems of the world there run the tortuous and narrow ways culminating in passes connecting the wide plains on either side. Over these passes and through their narrow ways armies have been conducted from time to time, and history records several notable instances of great invasions conducted across great mountain systems, but I venture to think this is not a phase of history which is likely to repeat itself. The power of scientific defence forbids it. Under any circumstance opportunities for transgressing the boundary

and trespassing beyond it into foreign fields are not many, and the trespassing is a matter which entails serious consideration, and the delay of preparation. I need not enlarge on the value of mountain boundaries. You are all familiar with such notable instances as the great wall of the Pyrenees, the more intricate Alpine system, and the magnificent continental divide of the Andine Cordillera, all of which have been pressed into international service; but to my mind the most amazing natural boundary in the world is that of the snowy Himalayan ranges which part India from the great northern uplands. These ranges, combined with the important offshoots of the Hindu Kush and its extensions, absolutely and securely hedge in India from any northern threat of invasion, leaving but one comparatively short north-western gateway doubtfully available through the whole wide extending frontier from Burma to Persia. If we cannot hold that gateway we had better leave India.

Next to an impressive mountain system we must be content with lesser divides, lesser in altitude, and inferior in the quality of difficult approach. If we cannot have Himalayas we may make good use of Carpathians. I need hardly refer to the excellent use which has been made of this formidable, but by no means unapproachable mountain system, not only historically, but notably during the varying phases of the present war. The Crown Colony of Galicia lying flat beyond these mountains has proved to be nothing but weakness to the Austrian Empire, which has been forced to defend her south-eastern frontier by the Carpathian ridges, rather than by the fortresses and rivers of Galicia. Whatever may be the significance of the mountain system as a geographical divide between the nations, it is of obvious importance that the actual boundary should follow the parting of the waters. To take a remarkable instance of the weakness which results from a failure to observe this condition, I may refer to the northern Italian frontier. Here the main watershed has been intermittently abandoned; valleys are crossed; local interests are divided; racial and social affinities are disregarded; mountain crests are traversed with an air of readiness which betokens a nominal rather than an actual boundary; and a permanent international grievance has been established which this war may, or may not, set right.

Failing a definite uplifted watershed, the ordinary divide between the heads of minor affluents of a river basin is quite a useful alternative. The advantages are those of permanence, definiteness, and economy, added to a certain command in altitude which renders it important as a military feature. It is seldom that a divide alters its position from the action of natural causes—on the whole it may be regarded as a permanent feature unlikely to be shifted or affected by the wear and tear of nature's destructive forces, and it is definite and often unmistakably recognisable without the aid of artificial landmarks, which cost money and are perishable. Consequently it is readily and quickly adapted to the purpose of boundary-making. Judging from the map of Europe, it may be said that these advantages have not been overlooked in the past. To a very great extent it is the divide between the rivers, and not the

rivers themselves, that have been adopted for international purposes. Rivers, perhaps, rank next in value to mountain chains, and they certainly play an important part in the great political partitioning of the world. They are at least unmistakable and definite features requiring little artificial assistance, and they do often serve the purpose of a barrier. Indeed it entirely depends on the conditions of environment whether a river makes a good boundary or a very bad one. Where the surrounding country is a waste of trackless forest or of wild upland, and where the river is confined to a narrow channel in a rock-bound bed, it may be admirably adapted for a boundary. The Oxus from the plains of Badakshan to its glacier sources in the Pamirs is a case in point. Where it is confined within a narrow bed, rock-bound, and sunk beneath the general level of a wild stretch of deserted upland in its upper reaches, it makes an excellent boundary. Where, however, it emerges from the mountain regions into the plains, and spreading itself into a complicated system of waterways, amongst which the main channel is indistinguishable, meanders westward, it is really no boundary at all. It may be crossed without much difficulty in many places although it is unbridged, and in its navigable reaches it is essentially a Russian river. There is a tendency in the case of every navigable river to become the exclusive property of the most pushing nation on its banks. The Rhine was always claimed by Germans as *our* river, even when it parted France from Germany. Lakes have been adopted freely as geographical features lending themselves to boundary-making, and, like deserts, they have on the whole proved efficient, even if the exact position of the dividing line is but ill-defined in their midst. There is indeed this great advantage about both of these geographical features ; it is seldom a matter of importance that there should be exact demarcation. There may be islands in lakes, or oases and wells in deserts which have to be accounted for in the partition, but beyond them, in the great wide sweep of inland water, or the sand spaces of a sun-dried wilderness, there is seldom the necessity for striking a distinct artificial line.

It would be interesting had we time to trace a geographical analogy between a desert frontier and a sea frontier, and to show how it has happened that through long ages of history a desert-girt land of promise and development has owed continued peace and progress to its environment just as much as a sea-girt island. It may happen that no geographical features of any significance are available for the satisfaction of the boundary-maker, and that continuous and obvious artificial means have to be employed to make a boundary plain. Even with the best assistance of nature artificial methods of marking a boundary will always be necessary where man's own artificial impress on the earth's surface is encountered. Passes over the heights and roads traversing less conspicuous divides have to be denoted, and the gateways of a country or a state demand careful acknowledgment ; but independently of such obvious points, on which it is not necessary to dwell, it very frequently happens that for thousands of miles the natural features (whether divide or river) are not marked enough to advertise the existence of a boundary without a line of pillars or marks of some sort at distances of intervisi-

bility. A divide even may include marshy flats from which rivers drain in opposite directions, or cultivated areas may intervene, so that at the best of times there is no getting away from artificial expression altogether. It is, however, the employment of means such as are wholly and purely artificial, where nature not only has no hand in the arrangement, but where her gentler efforts are traversed and discarded that so many ridiculously bad boundaries come to grief. The straight line, for instance, whether it represents a parallel of latitude, a meridian, or just a line projected on some particular azimuth, is almost invariably bad. It possesses no elasticity, it is often most difficult to determine, it is expensive and terribly tedious in the process of evolution. It may cut in two local interests of great importance, and play the mischief with a well-defined frontier. The worst mistakes in delimitation have occurred where a meridian (undetermined by exact geodetic measurement) or a parallel of latitude has been the weak resource of an ignorant arbitration which is dealing with a strictly geographical problem without waiting for proper geographical illustration. A straight line is generally an indication of geographical ignorance, a last resource when topographical information is wanting, so that it need not surprise us that it has in the ignorant past been distinctly popular. It has always proved to be immensely expensive, and I could occupy your time for hours in recounting historical instances of its adoption with the evil financial results thereof. It is, however, to the credit of European diplomacy of the past that there are not many straight lines in Europe; there has, indeed, been no excuse for them, for there cannot be many square miles of the continent that have not served as the basis for military action leading to a certain amount of exact topographical knowledge since Cæsar first conquered Gaul. What interests us at present, chiefly, is that particular phase of boundary-making in the future, which is to provide for the security, and, through security, for the peace of the quasi-civilised communities of Europe and the Near East. If I am right in assuming the general principle governing the selection of a boundary line to be that of securing a barrier, clearly we are landed at once in questions of military defence as a necessary corollary.

At the present time the principle for which we are fighting is that of maintaining the integrity of small nations; and the principle which apparently tends to govern the evolution of national societies, both small and great, is that of the democracy. As democracies increase, and empires are restricted, so will boundaries, together with the division of international interests, increase; but it must be remembered that the bed rock of all social evolution is the everlasting question of population. Thus the right of expansion in order to meet the imperious demand of multiplying people will promote boundary disputes and frontier wars as long as the world lasts. So that the security of a frontier is a matter of increasing importance in the world's economy, inasmuch as we can never expect an international convention to regulate the output of population in the same way that the output of armament or ships may be regulated, although one is just as important as the other in the interests of peaceful international evolution.

What then is to be the nature of the political boundary of the future from the military point of view if we wish to attain the security which is the only guarantee (and which will continue to be the only guarantee) for peace? So far as regards the actual line which denotes the boundary and limits the frontier on either side, there will be no great departure from those principles of selecting strong natural features, to which I have already alluded, and these natural features will in most cases lend themselves readily to military defensive purposes. Consequently we may assume that the mountain ridge—or the divide—will be adopted wherever possible. If we have learnt anything from the war, we have learned the enormous advantage to defence which is given even by a slight command in altitude. It is true that river flats and marshes have figured largely in the strategy of the war, in Poland, on the Russo-German frontier, and in Mesopotamia; and that the skilful use of marshes and inundations has largely affected the results of the campaign, but we may very safely say that no such accidents of topographical configuration would ever be selected as the basis of a boundary in preference to the advantages conferred by an elevated line. An open space of marsh-land, even if traversed by a definite river channel in its midst, could not often occur in European configuration as a useful alternative to the divide; so I do not imagine that in the redistribution of political boundaries at the close of the war, no matter where they may take place, there will be any great departure from the old order which adopted elevated positions and placed strong fortresses at intervals to guard frontiers. Nothing has occurred which need shake our faith in the value of this military precaution for the security of the frontier. Where the dividing line is unsupported by strong geographical features, such as are of themselves of military significance, the construction of fortresses, wherein may be gathered large military forces of sufficient strength to render it impossible to pass them by or ignore them, will still be considered imperative. It was the strength of the line of French forts from Belfort to Verdun, facing the Vosges Mountains and the Meuse, which determined the initial strategy of the German Campaign, and directed the advance through Belgium as indicating the line of least resistance to Paris. It was the gallant defence of Liège which destroyed the full effect of the great initiative, and gave priceless opportunity for mobilisation to the Allies. It is the Rhineland fortresses, and not the Rhine itself, which protect the western frontier of Germany when the hour comes for France to strike back. The unexpected collapse of Antwerp, of Namur, and of Maubeuge does little to modify this opinion. I shall be surprised if in the long future history does not point to the defence of Verdun as the pivot on which the whole fortunes of the war turned. Along with fortresses and with the controlling system of railways (with which we cannot be concerned just now) there will be new developments on or near the boundary which will be the outcome of present experiences. The rôle of trench-digging and of earthworks, which is comparatively new to European campaigning, and which has time and time again proved the one insuperable obstacle to rapid advance, will not be lost sight of or neglected in favour of

more impressive permanent works. Boundaries will be selected that admit of the linking up of natural features by a tracery of trenches and field works infinitely intricate, whilst artillery and all the mechanical war paraphernalia with which we have lately become acquainted will find their place in the general scheme. Indeed it seems that the European boundary of the future will be something more than the artificial impress of a line on the face of Europe, having no further significance than that of a hedge. It may well become an actual physical military barrier bristling with obstruction and points of steel, so complete and effective in its military appointments as to approach very closely to realising the ideal of absolute security. Thus will it really serve to diminish the probability of attack, and at any rate to induce long and very careful consideration before its violation is undertaken. It may be said that I am suggesting a defensive fence round every state that has any consideration for its own security such as might prove a serious bar to the exchange of friendly amenities. I fear that it is so, but my suggestion only indicates that which will, it seems to me, inevitably happen. Anyhow it is freely open to discussion, and I claim to do no more than briefly outline these principles which I consider must govern a subject on which there has been so far singularly little opinion expressed.

GENERALISATIONS IN GEOGRAPHY, ESPECIALLY IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY.¹

By GEORGE G. CHISHOLM.

PROFESSOR A. P. BRIGHAM of the Colgate University, Hamilton, New York, in the learned and valuable presidential address on "Problems of Geographic Influence," which he delivered to the American Association of Geographers at its meeting in Chicago in December 1914, published in the fifth volume of the *Annals* of that Association, states that in geography "our goal is broad generalisation," but he bewails and illustrates at the same time the injury done to the study of geography by hastily formed generalisations which excite the distrust of men of scientific bent. He rightly insists that if we make generalisations in geography we must make them with the same exactness as in any other subject. That does not mean, of course, that the generalisations referred to must be universally applicable in all circumstances without qualification, but merely that they must be accurately expressed in terms that correspond with the facts upon which they are based.

But that makes it necessary to be quite clear as to what is meant by geographical generalisations. It seems to me that to know that, we must know what geography means. But, unfortunately, Professor Brigham is unwilling to give us a definition of geography. He declares that he "will not try to go where angels have trod with devious and faltering

¹ Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the British Association, Section E, September 1916.