



LAND AND POWER

GEOGRAPHY MAY BE THE CAUSE OF SOME OTHERWISE INEXPLICABLE POLITICAL DECISIONS, SAYS ALISTAIR MACLENAN

At the end of January and in my capacity as the chairman of the UKGEOforum, I invited ex-foreign correspondent for TV broadcaster Sky News, Tim Marshall, to give a lecture.

During his career of more than 24 years with Sky, Tim reported from all over the world and many times from conflict zones that were created by the often-contentious decisions taken by presidents, prime ministers and royalty. He witnessed the consequences of those decisions for the people and communities involved and he conveyed those stories back to an audience sat comfortably in their front rooms.

I asked him to be the speaker after reading his third book, *The Prisoners of Geography*, in which he explains the influence and constraints that the physical geography of countries, their neighbours and the wider regions has had and continues to have on the decisions that their leaders can and, in some cases, must take.

On a freezing cold night, Tim walked a packed room through the geography of the three superpowers and explained that protecting their self-interest meant taking decisions that could appear overly aggressive, obstinate or odd – if you didn't consider the geography.

As the Ukraine continued its political journey westwards and made ever-warmer overtures to the EU, why did Russia react so swiftly and aggressively? Why was it imperative for Putin to annex Crimea, irrespective of the inevitable penalties?

Well, when you consider their access to the sea, it becomes a little clearer. If you want to be a great power, you need a navy that can operate 365 days a year. That is impossible if nearly all the vast coastline to the north of your country is unusable for many months of the year. Russia's only warm, deep-water port is Sevastopol, which is in Crimea. It's likely that even the most democratic of Russian leaders would have moved to protect their access to the high seas of the world as their neighbour moved towards an organisation they see as a threat.

Rightly describing the US as the 'best piece of real estate in the world', given its farmlands, flat plains and rivers, Tim showed that even in the 'Land of the Free', access to the oceans can bring the world to the brink of disaster.

Whilst the Cuban Missile Crisis was the first time two superpowers had used nuclear weapons as bargaining chips, the location of Cuba had worried many a US president. It sits just off the coast of Florida and potentially gives it the power to control both the Yucatan Channel in the Gulf of Mexico and the Florida Straits.

These are the only two ways to reach the port of New Orleans, which sees in the region of 60 million tons of cargo a year pass through its docks.

Had Russia (or the Spanish in the past) been allowed to control Cuba, it would have made those two straits of water either side of the island very narrow indeed for US sea traffic from one of the busiest deep-water ports in the US.

And however many Hollywood actors proclaim that Tibet should be free of Chinese rule, its role as a buffer between the Sino-empire and the other emerging world superpower, India, means that Richard Gere is likely in for a long wait.

Tim was keen to stress that geography was only one of the factors to influence these decisions – pure self-interest, greed and megalomania can never be completely ignored – but understanding how man interacts with the natural world around the land he calls home will provide a valuable insight into the politician's mind. I cannot recommend *The Prisoners of Geography* highly enough.

Alistair MacLenan is founder of the geospatial B2B marketing agency Quarry One Eleven (www.quarry-one-eleven.com)

INTERGEO 2017 UPDATE

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE WITH SMART CITY SOLUTIONS



DANIEL KATZER SETS THE SCENE: WE'RE IN BERLIN IN THE YEAR 2032, JUST BEFORE THE START OF INTERGEO. AT EXACTLY 8.58 A.M., HERBERT M. GETS OUT OF A DRIVERLESS TAXI IN FRONT OF HALL 3 AT THE CITY'S EXHIBITION CENTRE. AFTER TAKING HIS LUGGAGE FROM THE PASSENGER SEAT, HE CLOSES THE DOOR AND THE AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE HEADS OFF TO PICK UP ITS NEXT PASSENGER.

M. got a good night's sleep because the taxi pulled up outside his home in Cologne at exactly 1 a.m. as arranged. It gave him time to enjoy the view while reclining on the couch in the back of the vehicle as it headed for Berlin. Based on his priorities, his TripAdvisor app had booked and arranged the electric car for M. as the most cost-effective, environmentally friendly and comfortable mode of transport.

M. is an urban planner and used the cloud to organise and manage his appointments at INTERGEO. In augmented reality mode, his slimline tablet now directs him to the people he needs to meet at the world's premier platform for smart city planners. Once he has completed his business in the Smart City SOLUTIONS pavilion, M. takes the time to explore the smart city of Berlin.

Fresh meat by drone

At midday, he uses an app to book an electric car to take him round the capital's main attractions in sightseeing mode, complete with audio and video files. M. sits back comfortably and watches the ultramodern surroundings pass by. He admires the capital's urban planning perfection –architecture in harmony with nature; the bustling parks, and the multi-storey urban gardens.

The car drives quickly without any of the congestion-related delays that were the norm twenty years earlier. At lunchtime, M eats a turkey salad with lettuce grown

in the city's Prenzlauer Berg district and perfectly cooked turkey delivered directly from the surrounding countryside by drone thanks to intelligent logistics.

Although Berlin now has four million inhabitants due to its location in the heart of Europe, the city gives the impression of being a hive of activity but not overcrowded. In the co-working space, he contacts his colleagues in Berlin's Smart City senate department in a video session. He goes through prognostic algorithms for traffic and logistics scenarios with the laboratory for urban solutions, which is responsible for the Smart City Berlin initiative.

Nucleus for future solutions

We're now back in present-day Berlin. The Smart City SOLUTIONS platform at INTERGEO focuses on solutions for the digital city of the future. Urban planner Herbert M. has travelled from Cologne to Berlin by car. As usual, his journey took two-thirds longer than it should because of the congested motorways. Even so, he used the time to gather inspiration for scenarios of a networked, digital city that, at the moment, appear futuristic.

At the event, he meets specialists from business, government and representative bodies, and attends presentations of scenarios for a cleaner, healthier, more efficient and more sustainable urban environment offering a better quality of life. In the exhibition, he

finds new products and services for dealing with the mountains of data generated by the Internet of Things. He discusses digital city strategies that civil servants from a variety of locations have applied, and is excited to hear of the latest developments in the intelligent logistics of driverless electric cars.

M. is convinced that smart technologies will have changed everything in 25 years' time. And he'll no longer get stuck in traffic on his way to INTERGEO. But he can only guess at exactly how things will turn out.

Experience the future of digital cities today by visiting the Smart City SOLUTIONS platform of INTERGEO, which takes place from 26 to 28 September in Berlin.

More on INTERGEO can be found at:

**www.intergeo.de and
www.intergeo-tv.com**



Daniel Katzer is Director Trade Fairs and Conferences and project manager of INTERGEO with HINTE GmbH (www.hinte-messe.de).

INTERGEO®

GLOBAL HUB OF THE
GEOSPATIAL COMMUNITY

BERLIN

2017

26 – 28 SEPTEMBER



GEOSPATIAL 4.0

OPEN

GOVERNMENT

DIGITAL

BUILDING

SMART CITIES

Reserve your stand space
on UK Pavilion – Only £3150 + VAT

Contact: Mai Ward
maiward@geoconnexion.com
Tel: +44 (0) 1223 279151

DVW

Host: DVW e.V.
Conference organiser: DVW GmbH
Trade fair organiser: HINTE GmbH

SPONSORS:



HEXAGON



Trimble