INTRODUCTION: RETHINKING GEOPOLITICS

Towards a critical geopolitics

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Is geopolitics dead? At first glance the end of the Cold War, the deepening impacts of 'globalization' and the de-territorializing consequences of new informational technologies seem to have driven a stake into the heart of geopolitics. As the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, so also crumbled a pervasive and persuasive order of geopolitical understanding about meaning and identity across global political space. Particularistic and parochial yet nevertheless hegemonic, Cold War geopolitics was always too simplistic a cartography to capture the heterogeneity and irreducible complexity of world politics in the second half of the twentieth century. Yet the very ideological directness of Cold War reasoning was its strength. It drained international affairs of its indeterminancies and lived off its ability to reduce the organic movements of history to a perpetual darkness of 'us' versus 'them.' It provided strategic elites with a discourse that they could instrumentalize to further their bureaucratic careers within the military–industrial–academic complex created by the Cold War. It provided political leaders with scenes for demonstrating hardheaded statesmanship, comforting and easy applause lines, and a workable model of 'gamesmanship' in international affairs. Last, but not least, it provided the public with a recognizable and gratifying fantasy story of heroes and villains fighting for the fate of the world in obscure and exotic locales across the globe. Cold War geopolitics, in short, was a powerful and pervasive political ideology that lasted for over forty years. It was also premised upon an extraordinary double irony. It simultaneously denied both geographical difference and its own self-constituting politics (Ó Tuathail 1996).

While regional variations of the Cold War script live on in certain locations – in US–Cuban relations, for example, and on the Korean peninsula – the days of Cold War geopolitics as the spellbinding 'big picture' of world politics, the global drama that eclipsed all others, have ended. Strategic analysts have been searching ever since for a new global drama to replace it, launching 'the end of history,' 'the clash

of civilizations' and 'the coming anarchy' among others as new blockbuster visions of global space, only to see them fade before the heterogeneity of international affairs and proliferating signs of geographical difference. Political leaders have struggled to articulate visions of the new world (dis)order amidst the overwhelming flux of contemporary international affairs, while those in the culture industries have invented a plethora of flexible new enemies and more implacable dangers to bedazzle, entertain and gratify the public. In a world of perpetual speed and motion, convulsed by globalization, saturated by information, and entranced by ephemeral media spectacles and hyperbole, geopolitics seems decidedly old-fashioned and out of place. Indeed, in the search for a new paradigm of world politics a number of strategists and politicians have proclaimed the end of geopolitics altogether, its eclipse and supersession by geo-economics, speed or eco-politics (Ó Tuathail 1997a). In many analyses, geopolitics has been left for dead.

This volume is not dedicated to resurrecting traditional themes of geopolitics. Rather we are concerned to radicalize its components, 'geo' and 'politics,' so that the self-evident character of the sign 'geopolitics' can be problematized and pluralized. Conceptualized in a critical way as a problematic of geo-politics or geographical politics, this volume seeks to radicalize conventional notions of geopolitics through a series of studies of its proliferating, yet often unacknowledged and under-theorized, operation in world politics past, present and future. The 'geopolitics' we seek to analyse is not the mummified remains of Cold War understandings of the concept but the plural traces of geopolitics that have long been with us in the practices of world politics. Geopolitics, for us, engages the geographical representations and practices that produce the spaces of world politics (Agnew 1998). Rather than accepting geopolitics as a neutral and objective practice of surveying global space – the conventional Cold War understanding of the concept – we begin from the premise that geopolitics is itself a form of geography and politics, that it has a con-textuality, and that it is implicated in the ongoing social reproduction of power and political economy. In short, our perspective is a critical one, our practice a *critical geopolitics* (Dalby 1991, Ó Tuathail 1996).

Critical geopolitics has emerged out of the work of a number of scholars in the fields of geography and international relations who, over the last decade, have sought to investigate geopolitics as a social, cultural and political practice, rather than as a manifest and legible reality of world politics. Critical geopolitics is informed by postmodern critiques that have placed the epistemological limits of the ethnocentric practices underpinning Cold War geopolitics in question. Dissonant and dissident voices have articulated feminist, post-colonial and poststructuralist perspectives on the power strategies of Cold War discourse itself, on its privileging and marginalizing, its inclusions and exclusions, on, in sum, the *geo-politics of geopolitics* itself. Informed by this variety of postmodernisms, which all point beyond orthodox representations, critical geopolitics has advanced five arguments that, in various ways, inform the chapters of this book.

First, geopolitics is a much broader cultural phenomenon than is normally described and understood by the geopolitical tradition of wise men' of statecraft (Parker 1985). As the geographical politics that enframes all foreign policy practices, geopolitics is not a specific school of statecraft but rather can be better understood as the spatial practices, both material and representational, of statecraft itself. Consequently, the critical study of geopolitics must be grounded in the particular cultural mythologies of the state. Critical geopolitics confronts and analyses the *geopolitical imagi-nation* of the state, its foundational myths and national exceptionalist lore (Agnew 1983) (see Figure 0.1).

The founding and specification of the state as a national community is a geopolitical act. This involves making one national identity out of many, establishing a boundary with an outside and converting diverse places into a unitary internal space. It also involves forging scattered and heterogeneous histories into a transcendent and providential duration (Dijkink 1996). These practices of nationhood involve ensembles of acts to create nation-space and nation-time, the projection of imaginary community, the homogenization of nation-space and pedagogization of history. The geopolitical imagi-nation is an ongoing and precarious project involving all three. It is certainly at work in the projecting of a visual order of space, usually in the form of cartographic surveys and national atlases, across an uneven and broken landscape that is being territorialized with lines delimiting administrative provinces and an official inside and outside. But it is also at work in the founding constitution of community and the renegotiation of boundaries of citizenship and belonging.

Furthermore, it is at play and under contestation in the multicultural struggles over the (re)consolidation of tradition, and the representation and remembrance of history. Counter-narratives of the nation are forms of critical geopolitics:

> Counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities. For the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of the anxiety of its irredeemably plural modern space – representing the nation's modern territoriality is turned into the archaic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism. The difference of space returns as the Sameness of time, turning Territory into Tradition, turning the People into One.
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> (Bhabha 1994: 149)

Critical geopolitics bears witness to the irredeemable plurality of space and the multiplicity of possible political constructions of space. Thus, and this is the second argument characterizing critical geopolitics, it pays particular attention to the boundary-drawing practices and performances that characterize the everyday life of states. In contrast to conventional geography and geopolitics, both the material borders at the edge of the state and the conceptual borders designating

this as a boundary between a secure inside and an anarchic outside are objects of investigation. Critical geopolitics is not about 'the outside' of the state but about the very construction of boundaries of 'inside' and 'outside,' 'here' and 'there,' the 'domestic' and the 'foreign' (Walker 1993). As Campbell (1992) has argued, the study of foreign policy involves more than the study of conventional inter-state relations. States are not prior to the inter-state system but are perpetually constituted by their performances in relation to an outside against which they define themselves. Foreign policy involves the making of the 'foreign' as an identity and space against which a domestic self is evoked and realized. 'The construction of the "foreign" is made possible by practices that also constitute the "domestic." In other words, foreign policy is a "specific sort of *boundary-producing political performance*"' (Ashley 1987: 51). In describing the struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States as 'not simply geopolitical' Campbell (1992: 26) suggests that territorial geopolitics is contextualized and sustained by a more pervasive cultural geo-politics. In other words (following Campbell's (1992: 76) capitalized distinction between 'foreign policy' and 'Foreign Policy'), a primary and pervasive *foreign policy geo-politics* makes the secondary, specialist and conventionally understood *Foreign Policy Geopolitics* of elites possible.

The essays in this volume demonstrate that there is no geopolitics that is ever 'simply Geopolitical.' Geopolitics is already about more boundaries than those on a map, for those boundaries are themselves implicated in conceptual boundarydrawing practices of various kinds. Critical geopolitics is concerned as much with maps of meaning as it is with maps of states. The boundary-drawing practices we seek to investigate in this volume are both conceptual and cartographic, imaginary and actual, social and aesthetic. Critical geopolitics is particularly interested in analyzing the interdigitation of all these practices, in examining how certain conceptual spatializations of identity, nationhood and danger manifest themselves across the landscapes of states and how certain political, social and physical geographies in turn enframe and incite certain conceptual, moral and/or aesthetic understandings of self and other, security and danger, proximity and distance, indifference and responsibility.

Third, critical geopolitics argues that geopolitics is not a singularity but a plurality. It refers to a plural ensemble of representational practices that are diffused throughout societies. While not denying the conventional notion of geopolitics as the practice of statecraft by leaders and their advisors, critical geopolitics complements this with an understanding of geopolitics as a broad social and cultural phenomenon. Geopolitics is thus not a centered but a decentered set of practices with elitist and popular forms and expressions. A three-fold typology of geopolitical reasoning is useful in loosely distinguishing the *practical geopolitics* of state leaders and the foreign policy bureaucracy from the *formal geopolitics* of the strategic community, within a state or across a group of states, and the *popular geopolitics* that is found within the artifacts of transnational popular culture, whether they be mass-market magazines, novels or movies.

Each of these different forms of geopolitics has different sites of production, distribution and consumption. Linked together, as seen in Figure 0.1, they comprise the geopolitical culture of a particular region, state or inter-state alliance. In understanding 'the geopolitical' as a broad socio-cultural phenomena it is important to appreciate both that geopolitics is much more than a specialized knowledge used by practitioners of statecraft and that the different facets of its practices are interconnected in various ways to quotidian constructions of identity, security and danger. Geopolitics saturates the everyday life of states and nations. Its sites of production are multiple and pervasive, both 'high' (like a national security memorandum) and 'low' (like the headline of a tabloid newspaper), visual (like the images that move states to act) and discursive (like the speeches that justify military actions), traditional (like religious motifs in foreign policy discourse) and postmodern (like information management and cyberwar). While its conventionally recognized 'moment' is in the dramatic practices of state leaders (going to war, launching an invasion, demonstrating military force, etc.), these practices and the much more mundane practices that make up the conduct of international politics are constituted, sustained and given meaning by multifarious representational practices throughout cultures.

Fourth, critical geopolitics argues that the practice of studying geopolitics can never be politically neutral. Critical geopolitics is a form of geopolitics but one that seeks to disturb the objectivist perspectivism found in the history of geopolitics and in the practices of foreign policy more generally. It is a 'situated knowledge' that

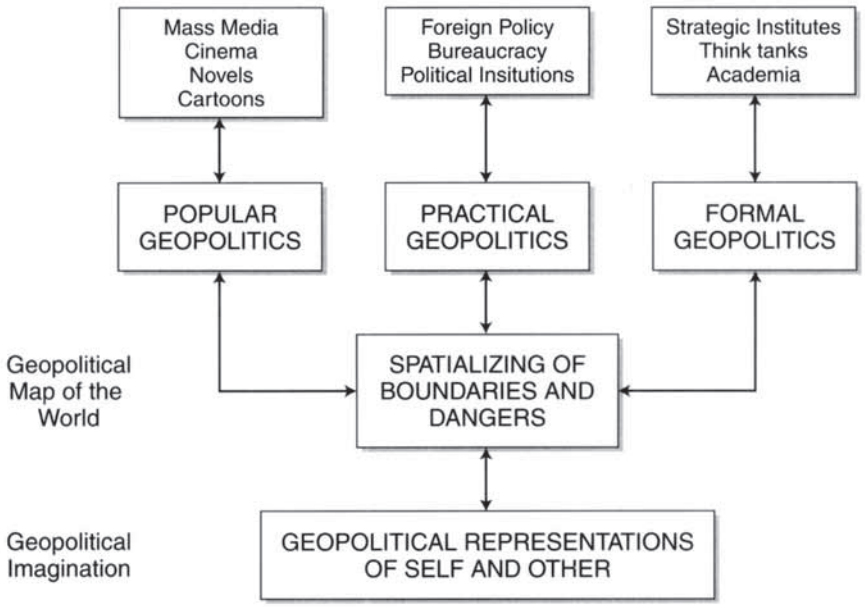

Figure 0.1 A critical theory of geopolitics as a set of representational practices.

intervenes to disturb the 'god trick' of traditional geopolitics, which claimed to represent effortlessly the drama of international politics as an intelligible spectacle without interpretation. This conceit, while certainly not particular to the geopolitical tradition, is a consistent feature of geopolitical texts from Mackinder to Kissinger and from Bowman to Brzezinski. Yet it is a conceit that is persistently being undone in the course of exposition and analysis, for writings that deny their interpretative status open themselves up to deconstruction. Classical geopolitics is a form of geopolitical discourse that seeks to repress its own politics and geography, imagining itself as beyond politics and above situated geographies in a transcendent Olympian realm of surveillance and judgement. The response of critical geopolitics is to insist on the situated, contextual and embodied nature of all forms of geopolitical reasoning.

One means of doing this is to insist on the gendered nature of geopolitical writings and interpretative acts, demonstrating how practices of statecraft are also practices of man-craft-ing (e.g. the political leader using military action to demonstrate his toughness, as Israeli Labor leader Shimon Peres did in unleashing Israeli warplanes against guerilla and civilian targets in southern Lebanon during his election battle with Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu in April and May of 1996, an election he nevertheless lost) and how acts of geographing are also acts of bio-graphing (the intellectual whose geopolitical representations are self-fashionings evoking 'the hardheaded geopolitician', or the tabloid newspaper whose jingoism is part of a strategy of defining itself as 'patriotic'). Geopolitics, whether high or low, is invariably complicitous with certain hegemonic forms of masculinity (Dalby 1994). In Mackinder's case, that masculine subjectivity is a privileged English imperial manhood, while in Kissinger's case it is an elitist *émigré* cosmopolitanism (Kearns 1997; Isaacson 1992). In the cases of Oliver North and Timothy McVeigh, that masculine subjectivity is an insecure and ultra-patriotic warrior masculinity (Gibson 1994).

Fifth, and finally, in conceptualizing geopolitics as 'situated reasoning' a critical perspective also seeks to theorize its broader socio-spatial and technoterritorial circumstances of development and use. Historically, the question of geopolitics has always been the question of states and their societies, technological networks and their relationship to territoriality (Matellart 1996). As a practical rationality devoted to thinking about space and strategy in international politics, geopolitics has historically been deeply implicated in what Foucault (1991) terms the 'governmentalization of the state.' Questions such as 'What is the path to national greatness for the state?' (a key question for Alfred Mahan), 'What is the best relationship of a state to its territory and how can the state grow?' (a fundamental question for Friedrich Ratzel), and 'How can the state be reformed so that its empire can be strengthened' (Mackinder's question) were the practical governmental questions motivating the founders of what we know as 'classical geopolitics.' The history of this practical problem-solving statist knowledge is bound up with the formation of states and empires and the techniques of power that made it possible for

them to develop discrete objectifiable territories and societies for management and control.

Geopolitics itself is part of the drive to create 'the right disposition of things' within states and societies through the adoption of certain visualization technologies (like cartography and social sciences such as geography), the establishment of certain techno-territorial networks (railways, telegraph cables, automotive highways, national media and now digital information superhighways), the implementation of certain governmental reforms (customs unions, tariff reforms, military spending programs) and the pursuit of certain military strategies and technologies (naval buildups, strategic lines of communication, defensive perimeters and strategic bases). Critical geopolitics, thus, situates its engagement with geopolitics within the context of literatures on the historical expansion of states (Giddens 1987; Mann 1993), techniques of governmentality (Barry, Osborne and Rose 1996) and histories of technology and territoriality (Mumford 1967; DeLanda 1991; Virilio 1997).

Inevitably, given that these five arguments radically problematize the meaning, location and stability of that which is considered 'geopolitics,' there is a tremendous diversity of influences and approaches, topics and themes within what we loosely call 'critical geopolitics.' The different essays gathered together in this volume are reflective of that diversity but they are all united in a common commitment to rethink geopolitics in creative and critical ways. They further extend the critical analysis of geopolitics begun in special issues of the geography journals *Society and Space* (1994) and *Political Geography* (1996), while supplementing the themes presented in our co-edited (with Paul Routledge) introductory volume *The Geopolitics Reader* (Ó Tuathail, Dalby and Routledge 1998). This volume is not meant to be a survey of the new conditions of geopolitics in the late 1990s; it does not discuss in detail such phenomena as the expansion of NATO, the problem of failed states, the geopolitics of finance, or the regional impacts of globalization. Rather, its focus is on *the conditions of possibility of geopolitical truth, knowledge and power.* From the more formal analytical styles of Kim Rygiel and Jouni Häkli through Timothy Luke's innovative prose to James Der Derian's journalistic immersion in the vertiginous simulations of cybercorporations, we have attempted to include a variety of stylistic modes of thinking critically about geopolitics. How one might analyse, engage and critique geopolitical practices is not an intellectual and political given. Neither is substance completely divorced from style. To rethink geopolitics necessarily requires a multiplicity of perspectives to unpack the many practices that involve questions of geopolitical power/knowledge.

Three themes thread their way through the chapters in this volume. The first is the theme of modern geopolitics and the state. As Agnew (1998) and others have suggested, the modern geopolitical imagination came into its own at the time of the consolidation of the modern inter-state system after the Treaty of Westphalia. Geopolitics was a form of state geo-power, its gaze a governmental one interested in 'the right disposition of things so as to lead

to a convenient end' (Foucault 1991: 93). Geopolitics, in other words, was not essentially a practice concerned with international space but a practice concerned with both domestic and international space, and the maintenance of the boundaries, material and otherwise, between them.

In the first chapter, Ó Tuathail reviews Agnew's conception of the 'modern geopolitical imagination' as a means of posing the question as to whether the boundary-challenging condition of postmodernity is inducing a 'postmodern geopolitics' beyond the modern geopolitical map. A rethinking of geopolitics, he suggests, is long overdue, for the existing spatial ontology that informs and enframes geopolitical thinking is under erasure by postmodernity. Organizing speculative theorizing on the postmodern into a schematic table of contrasts between idealized forms of modern and postmodern geopolitics, Ó Tuathail underscores how the dimensionality and practices of geopolitics are being transformed by globalization and informationalization. Yet, rather than endorsing any simple transition from the modern to the postmodern, Ó Tuathail complicates matters by raising the question of what Latour (1993) terms the 'non-modern,' the actually existing hybridity and impurity of our organizing ontological understandings. Through the lens of actor-network theory, geopolitics looks quite different from conventional understandings of it, the latter understandings being implicitly reliant upon assumptions about 'Man' in control and subordinate 'machines' as mere 'tools.' Ó Tuathail argues that contemporary geopolitical practices are in actuality quite messy (con)fusions that are neither essentially modern nor postmodern.

Perhaps the most notorious and infamous episode in the history of geopolitics and the state is the story of German geopolitics. In their chapter on the Holocaust, Doel and Clarke ignore what is conventionally taken to be German geopolitics – the nationalistic and militaristic school of geopolitical reasoning lead by Karl Haushofer during the interwar period – in order to focus on a more pervasive and deadly German geopolitics, the Nazi geopolitics, which sought to purify the German nation as it sought *Lebensraum* in the East. While the story of *Lebensraum*, the term coined by Friedrich Ratzel and appropriated by Hitler to articulate an expansionist and imperialist territorial project, is well known to political geographers, it has invariably been separated from the genocidal practices of the Nazis against the Jews and others, the others that made the Nazi vision of the German nation distinct. Exploring the varying ways in which the Holocaust is made meaningful through the threefold figure of singularity – it as an exception, an extremity and, in a Derridean-inspired alternative, an experience of serial erasure or 'seriasure' – Doel and Clarke insist on an openness to its unknowable density. In considering the spacing of the Holocaust, they reiterate critical geopolitics' refusal of the distinction between conceptual and physical spaces. The story of the Holocaust is marginal to conventional histories of German geopolitics (Parker 1985) because the interdependence of territorial and racial spacing in Nazi 'foreign policy' is ignored. Killing centers like Auschwitz as sites of spatial purification for the

Nazis were literally producing the conceptual and aesthetic Aryan nation the Nazis imagined. *Lebensraum* and *Entfernung* (the removal of Jews and others from the German lifeworld) were two sides of the same murderous geopolitics. Any consideration of the Holocaust that fails to take account of its spacing, Doel and Clarke conclude, is seriously impoverished.

Anders Stephanson's chapter of notes on the Cold War ostensibly takes up the question of this unusual term's origin but quickly becomes a wide-ranging reflection on the genealogy of war and the territorialization of its conceptualization within broader systems of belief. Noting the embeddedness of notions of cold war in spy novels and popular culture generally, Stephanson finds the concept signifying an absolutist non-recognition of one's antagonist as a worthy opponent and a consequent refusal of dialogue and diplomacy with this opponent. Precisely defined in this manner, Stephanson claims that the Cold War actually ended in the early 1960s, with Reagan's revitalization of its themes in the 1980s a shallow form of posturing. Stephanson also argues that its origins can be found in Roosevelt's policy of 'unconditional surrender' towards Nazi Germany, a policy with Civil War precedents and roots in US notions of national exceptionalism more generally. Practising the important refusal of distinction between physical and conceptual space, Stephanson traces how certain states, like the USSR and the United States, territorialized ecumenical philosophies. Arguing that the Cold War was a US project, Stephanson finds its logic in the American tradition of refusing negotiation in times of war, for wars were considered absolute moral struggles between good and evil. The global struggle between the USA and the USSR after World War II was quickly spatialized in these terms (and in universalized American Civil War terms as a struggle between the enslaved world and the free world), but this geo-ideological struggle never became actual war. The Cold War, Stephanson concludes, was a contradictory unity of non-war and non-recognition, a continuation of war by all means other than war – in third spaces – between two antagonists that refused to recognize themselves recognizing one another. When that non-recognition slipped somewhat and feeble diplomacy began, the Cold War, Stephanson suggests, ended.

Carlo Bonura extends the concern with the spatialities in political thinking into the contemporary academic debates about political culture and the methods whereby it might be described and measured. Drawing on work in contemporary international relations theory and critical geopolitics, he shows that the taken-for-granted nature of the cartographic practices of American political science rest on what John Agnew (1998) calls the 'territorial trap.' The social construction of sovereignty is, he argues, crucial because the incorporation of particular cultures, their articulation as nations, is the converse practice of the construction of the possibility of international relations. In the process, Bonura once again emphasizes the importance of 'remembering' the spatial practices of politics precisely where they are so frequently 'forgotten' because they are simply so obvious. Political identity is conjoined with

geographical location and specified in terms of states, even in many cases where researchers claim to be studying global phenomena under such rubrics as geocultural areas. The technical apparatus of 'political' culture is also tied into the assumptions about American-led global political arrangements, which perpetuate the differences between national identities and subsume complex political transitions within a foreign policy objective of fostering democracy in supposedly homogeneous areas.

Kim Rygiel's account of the contemporary Turkish state's attempts to construct a unitary 'modern' state in the face of ethnic and religious diversity emphasizes the practical impact of attempts to impose a national culture in locales where such efforts have generated opposition. The understandings of nation and space as unitary in the Turkish pursuit of secular modernity has led to bloodshed in the eastern part of the state and politicized populations caught in the crossfire between rebels and the state's security forces. The gendered implications of this process are noteworthy too, with the politicization of dress and in some cases women even joining the PKK guerilla movement to avoid arranged marriages and conventional lifestyles. The processes of cultural homogenization and state security are spatial strategies of inclusion and sovereignty assertion, but as Rygiel's analysis shows, these are neither socially simple processes nor are they undertaken without in this case ongoing violence on a large scale. But the point that is most important in much of this is that there is no simple designation of Kurdish identity that can be reduced to some set of fixed cultural attributes. In part, the definition of Kurdishness is one that is constructed in opposition to the violence of attempts at homogenization.

Jouni Häkli's chapter concerns itself with the deployment of a modern geopolitical gaze upon the surface of a 'Finland' that is being made the home of a Finnish nation in the nineteenth century. In a concrete case study of the visualization techniques stressed by Agnew, Häkli provides an account of how geography became an empirical knowledge with optical consistency for young Finnish nationalist and later government officials, enabling them to territorialize a country of historical and administrative provinces. Central to Häkli's argument is an ongoing tension between the deep space and popular geo-graphs (space writings) of provincial life and the administrative geo-graphs produced by governmental institutions and expert discourse. The former, he claims, always exceed the latter. Popular geo-graphs are part of an exorbitantly lived social spatiality that can never be fully captured by governmental practices and discourses; they are 'silent and scattered occasions for resistance to the official projections of territory.'

The second theme that threads its way through many of the essays in this volume concerns contemporary crises of identity and popular geopolitics. The chapters by Sharp and Dodds explore the power of popular visual images in creating a geopolitical unconscious that helps to enframe and inform foreign policy debate. Films provide a ready vocabulary for representing geopolitical scenes, scenarios and subjectivities. Use of a good script line can remake the subjectivity of a politician. Dogged by a 'wimp' or 'feminized' image, George

Bush remade his image into a hard manly one by appropriating Clint Eastwood's 'make my day' line. Sharp discusses post-Cold War American movies and traces a generalized phenomenon of 'remasculinization' in popular American film entertainment in the themes of 'good men overcoming chaos and disorder in the international realm' – typified by Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan – and 'heroic men struggling against the tyranny of a feminized state.' The disastrous consequences of such identities is a theme picked up later in Matt Sparke's chapter on Timothy McVeigh.

Klaus Dodds analyses popular geopolitics in a series of images that would appear at first glance to be a highly unlikely site for such analysis. He looks at a number of cartoons drawn by Steve Bell on the theme of the violence in Bosnia in the 1990s and the ambiguities of the 'Western' response to the suffering of populations undergoing ethnic cleansing and living through warfare and siege. Dodds demonstrates how the themes of exclusionary identities and cultural homogenization are implicated in the construction of geopolitical frameworks. Bell's cartoons helped to expose the inadequacy of the Western geopolitical framework towards Bosnia and the moral distancing that this framework involved. As visual critique, Bell's cartoons helped to un-enframe the Bosnia constructed by policy makers, making it a place of stark moral responsibility, a part of our universe of obligation once again. Bell's cartoons reinforce the point that geopolitical images are in all facets of popular culture, not just in the planning seminars of national security bureaucracies and foreign ministries.

Matt Sparke extends these themes in considering the (con)fusions of many different forms of geopolitics evident in the case of the Oklahoma City bombing. Problematizing the inclusionary/exclusionary dynamic of a geopolitical system he terms 'Heartland Geopolitics' – itself a (con)fusion of physical space and idealized space – Sparke traces its double displacement by the Oklahoma City bombing as domestic not foreign terrorism, and by the history of one of the convicted bombers, Gulf War veteran Timothy McVeigh. Projected initially upon a foreign Orientalist otherness, the Oklahoma City bombing turned out to be the work of domestic terrorists who, in a mark of the many-layered dimensions of Heartland Geopolitics and its attendant patriot system, represented themselves as authentic patriotic insiders striking a blow against the imposing 'foreign outsiderness' of the federal government – represented as ZOG or the Zionist Occupied Government in some of the racist, anti-Semitic far right literature – particularly enforcement agencies like the Federal Alcohol, Firearms and Tobacco Bureau, which had a branch division in the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

Mapped as a 'crazed outcast' after the bombing, lead suspect Timothy McVeigh was actually an inside product of the US government's own patriot system, the US military, in which he served as a gunner during the Gulf War. Sparke traces the subsequent displacement of the legislative clamour to 'do something about terrorism' in Congress, mostly on to minority death row inmates and illegal immigrants, as a shoring up of the 'heart of whiteness' of

Heartland Geopolitics. Ironically, McVeigh is a self-styled defender of this implicitly racist Heartland imagi-nation, a Ramboesque figure who chose to do the dirty work that no one wanted to do in order that 'white America' would be awakened to the threat posed to it by its corrupted and 'feminized' state. Geopolitics, as Sparke's essay makes clear, is everywhere.

The Persian Gulf is another region where popular, practical and formal geopolitics have long intertwined. Beginning with the Gulf War of 1991, Sidaway's chapter traces the emergence of the 'Persian Gulf' as a region of US strategic anxiety in the 1970s, particularly during the administration of Jimmy Carter. Popular representations of Zbigniew Brzezinski's Cold War 'arc of crisis' vision in magazines such as *Time* help to establish the region's geostrategic significance in the Western mind. Although nominally a East versus West vision, Brzezinski's geo-strategic representation also had an important North–South dimension that persisted after the end of the Cold War in 1990. Sidaway's chapter is a useful reminder that post-World War II geopolitics involved much more than the Cold War and that geopolitics is never far removed from geo-economics. It is also a reminder of how decades of media representation of a region as strategically vital in due time makes war in that region eminently more 'natural' and 'inevitable.'

The third and final theme in this volume extends concerns with popular culture and geopolitical identity further by focusing explicitly on informationalization and cyber-geopolitics. Paul Routledge examines the case of the Zapatista 'insurgency' in southern Mexico. Beginning symbolically on 1 January 1994, the Zapatistas were a guerrilla movement with a difference that sought to use global media vectors to advance their cause through info-war more than through real warfare. Symbolically challenging the image of Mexico expensively imagineered for the Salinas administration by American public relations firms during the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993, the Zapatistas deftly captured the world media's attention and used this initial attention to disarm the Mexican state symbolically and construct an effective global communications infostructure that disintermediated the Mexican state and its offical media (Ó Tuathail 1997b). In so doing, the case of the Zapatistas suggests new forms of political practice in the informationalized spaces of the global media. It also raises the important question of how practitioners of critical geopolitics can engage in a constructive dialogue with forces of opposition.

James Der Derian investigates the worlds of simulation and the construction of virtual realities in which wars can be planned, played and analysed by militaries facing numerous possible contingencies in the complex spaces of the contemporary world. He notes that real potential conflicts are in danger of being overwhelmed by the technologically mediated hyper-realities and hyperidentities made possible by virtual spaces. An important theme in his work is the juxtaposition of popular culture with the scenarios of warfare. Commercial video games and training exercises for the marines are often one and the same product. Popular geopolitics and practical geopolitics reproduce each other, and images of danger from military scenarios become part of the

discursive economy of popular imaginations invoked in political discussions of foreign policy. But, in an inversion of the conventional assumptions of military secrecy and corporate openness, his efforts to talk to the most high-profile imagineers of popular culture in Disneyland met a blank wall of silence, while the corporations supplying the military are anxious to demonstrate their wares. In the process of inventing scenarios and stories of future conflicts, the simulations tell only some stories of the history of, in this case, American warfare. The simulations that reinvent American identities do so by remembering only some of the violent past. The iconography of success is enshrined in the narratives that structure the identities that play the simulations. In the process, Der Derian concludes that all sorts of new dangers may be created.

Timothy Luke's chapter explores some of the potential political implications of the rapid growth of electronic and especially 'digital' communications of cyberspace. Using numerous neologisms, he considers the change in power in a world in which material flows across boundaries are replaced by electronic flows, atoms replaced by bits in the evaluation of political boundaries: virtual life replacing real political life. Thinking about possible new political identities in the language of the atom state fails to grasp the contemporary accelerations and interconnections in the virtual life of cyberspace, where geography is now a matter of laser flows and digital images. Luke offers a cautionary word on the assumptions of universal access to cyberspace, pointing out that only some people in some parts of the world have access to computers and the money to gain access to Internet servers, on a planet where 70 per cent of humans do not even have a simple telephone service. The digital nation is one that may transgress state boundaries, but it remains the virtual home of a small elite fraction of the world's overall population. Nonetheless, with the rapidly growing interconnections on the Net and the expansion of computer-using populations, the ability of states to maintain control over information and communication is becoming increasingly limited as cultural identities and technological capabilities collapse some of the traditional notions of space and political identity.

Simon Dalby's concluding chapter works at the largest scale, the globe itself, arguing that the contemporary languages of geopolitics are involved with the specification of the planet itself as apparently threatened and in need of securing and management. The ecosphere frequently enters into geopolitical discussions in ways that perpetuate many of the earlier geopolitical practices of modernity. By specifying the planet as threatened by environmental degradation, the precise cause of the degradation is often obscured and the managerial ethos of governmentality. This is reinforced by the use of powerful information technologies to monitor the physical properties of the planet, invoked to ensure that the political order premised on modern modes of consumption continues uninterrupted. The culture of consumption is taken for granted as the starting point for geopolitical specifications of danger to the culture of modernity. But inverting the logic of security by looking at the specific localities of the 'South' that are supposedly the cause of environmental

insecurities subverts the normal direction of geopolitical gaze and turns it back on the culture of expertise that can know a planet in such a manner. By turning the analysis back on the producers of geopolitical texts he argues, in parallel with many of the critiques in earlier chapters, that the attribution of blame for insecurity caused by, in this case, environmental degradation, to external Others, obscures the role of the global political economy in causing insecurity in numerous places. Although not a formal conclusion to the volume in the conventional sense, this analysis of the 'Pogo Syndrome', which obscures political responsibilities, in part through the cartographic representations of contemporary geopolitics, reprises many of the themes from earlier chapters.

This introduction is subtitled 'towards a critical geopolitics' because we do not understand this book as a statement of a fixed and finished project. Critical geopolitics is very much work in progress, a proliferation of research paths rather than a fully demarcated research field. Its continued development is dependent, we believe, on an intellectual openness to new forms of critical social theory from across the social sciences and humanities, and to a relinquishing of conventional disciplinary attitudes and delimiting borders. We look forward to new variants of critical geopolitics that will address the connections between political economy and geopolitical practices, cultural studies and popular geopolitics, gendered identities and geopolitical discourse, psychoanalysis and geopolitical imaginations, actor-networks and geopolitical cyborganizations, cyber-war and virtual geopolitics, globalization and the restructuring of geopolitical regions. We present the essays in this book in the belief that they provide some preliminary steps towards these and other future variants of critical geopolitics. We hope that these new variants and voices can extend the problematization of geopolitical practices to challenge the assumptions that practitioners have for so long taken for granted.

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