

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid (Gerard Toal), *Critical geopolitics: the politics of writing global space*.

Introduction: Geo-Power

Our Geographers do not forgett what entertainment the Irish of Tirconnell gave to a map-maker about the end of the last Rebellion; for, one Barkeley [Bartlett] being appoynted by the late Earle of Devonshire to draw a trew and perfet mapp of the north parts of Ulster (for that the old mappes were false and defective), when he came to Tirconnell, the enhabitants tooke off his head, by cause they would not have their cuntrey discovered.

—SIR JOHN DAVIS, SOLICITOR-GENERAL OF IRELAND, 16091

Geography is about power. Although often assumed to be innocent, the geography of the world is not a product of nature but a product of histories of struggle between competing authorities over the power to organize, occupy, and administer space. Imperial systems through-out history, from classical Greece and Rome to China and the Arab world, exercised their power through their ability to impose order and meaning upon space. In sixteenth-century Europe, the centralizing states of the “new monarchs” began organizing space around an intensified principle of royal absolutism. In regions both within and beyond the nominal domain of the Crown, the power of royal authority over space was extended and deepened by newly powerful court bureaucracies and armies. The results in many instances were often violent, as the jurisdictional ambitions of royal authority met the determined resistance of certain local and regional lords. Within the context of this struggle, the cartographic and other descriptive forms of knowledge that took the name “geography” in the early modern period and that were written in the name of the sovereign could hardly be anything else but political. To the opponents of the expansionist court, “geography” was a foreign imposition, a form of knowledge conceived in imperial capitals and dedicated to the territorialization of space along lines established by royal authority. Geography was not something already possessed by the earth but an active writing of the earth by an expanding, centralizing imperial state. It was not a noun but a verb, a geo-graphing, an earth-writing by ambitious endocolonizing and exocolonizing states who sought to seize space and organize it to fit their own cultural visions and material interests.

More than five hundred years later, this struggle between centralizing states and authoritative centers, on the one hand, and rebellious margins and dissident cultures, on the other hand, is still with us. While almost all of the land of the earth has now been territorialized by states,

the processes by which this disciplining of space by modern states occurs remain highly contested. From Chechnya to Chiapas and from Rondonia to Kurdistan and East Timor, the jurisdictions of centralized nation-states strive to eliminate the contradictions of marginalized peoples and nations. Idealized maps from the center clash with the lived geographies of the margin, with the controlling cartographic visions of the former frequently inducing cultural conflict, war, and displacement. Indeed, the rise in the absolute numbers of displaced peoples in the past twenty-five years is testimony to the persistence of struggles over space and place. In 1993 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that roughly 1 in every 130 people on earth has been forced into flight because of war and state persecution. In 1970 there were 2.5 million refugees in the world; today that figure is well over 18.2 million. In addition an estimated 24 million people are internally displaced within their own states because of conflict.² More recently, genocide in Rwanda left over 500,000 murdered and produced an unprecedented exodus of refugees from that state into surrounding states. Refugees continue to be generated by “ethnic cleansing” campaigns in the Balkans; economic collapse in Cuba; ethnic wars in the Caucasus; state repression in Guatemala, Turkey, Indonesia, Iraq, and Sudan; and xenophobic terror in many other states. Struggles over the ownership, administration, and mastery of space are an inescapable part of the dynamic of contemporary global politics.

It is along borders that one can best appreciate the acuteness of this perpetual struggle over space in global politics. In my own case, growing up along the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland was an education in spatial politics, for, in this borderland, geography and politics were intensely intertwined. Whether one said “Derry” or “Londonderry,” for example, in naming the second largest city in Northern Ireland was of great significance, since the prefix “London” revealed whether one acknowledged the legitimacy of the British writing of Irish space, a historically significant writing/righting that orientated Irish space around the capital of the British empire.³ The landscape of this borderland has long been marked by signs of spatial struggles: bombed-out customs posts, cratered “unapproved” roads (periodically refilled by local residents, only to be blasted once again by the British army), and increasingly high-tech panoptic military checkpoints manned by soldiers who move only in helicopters. While peace negotiations may bring change, this frontier remains for the present a borderland ensulptured with heavily fortified checkpoints, perimeterized by invisible electronic surveillance grids, and, in certain hot spots like South

Armagh, policed from above by hovering army helicopters with microwave radiation devices designed to generate electromagnetic maps of the population below. In this part of the world, geography is most conspicuously a problematic concerning the occupation and control of territorial space.

MODERNITY AND THE WRITING OF SPACE: THE GEOGRAPHIC INVENTION OF IRELAND

The problematic of the subjugation and management of space conceptualized as a territorial container requiring effective occupation by a central state apparatus first emerges in Europe in the sixteenth century. The medieval conceptualization and organization of space was religious, with maps representing the divine order of the world (Jerusalem at the center and the Mediterranean as the middle of the earth) and places organized into vertical, hierarchic ensembles (sacred places and profane places, celestial places and terrestrial places, and the like).⁴ This gradually gave way to an early modern horizontal organization of space associated with ideas of state sovereignty and the emerging state system.⁵ Galileo, Euclid, and Newton's representation of space as infinite, homogeneous, and absolute facilitated the rise of a modern territorial understanding of space as a horizontal order of coexistent places that could be sharply delimited and compartmentalized from each other.⁶ This conception of space was eventually recognized and codified in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

At the threshold of this modernity was the Elizabethan state's expansion beyond the Pale into the interiors of the island of Ireland from the middle of the sixteenth century. This expansionism provoked new forms of knowledge that sought to address the problematic of the conquest, delimitation, and mastery of space. A detailed cartography was essential in subjugating what were held to be the "wild and untamed" territories of the island. The greatest difficulty facing the armies raised by the English Crown was mastering the difficult and disorientating terrain. The woods, bogs, lakes, and mountains of Ireland concealed and sustained resistance to the jurisdictional ambitions of the English Crown. Large-scale maps were necessary for the English commanders to map out their overall strategy of conquest and subjugation, while small-scale maps were necessary for fortification schemes and to persuade an often reluctant queen to send more soldiers.⁷

Maps were also a crucial part of the technical infrastructure necessary for the plantation and governance of the space seized by the English Crown. Without maps, Ireland was an illegible

surface to English planners and administrators, a disorientating space that was not yet a territory. The function of cartography was to transform seized space into a legible, ordered imperial territory. The Elizabethan plantation of Munster and the subsequent plantation of Ulster in the early seventeenth century were imperial enterprises that required considerable cartographic resources. Together with private adventurers and colonial entrepreneurs, colonial administrators like Sir John Davis and Lord Mountjoy elaborated plans to make Ireland a “razed table” upon which the Elizabethan state could transcribe a neat territorial pattern.⁸ In doing so they invented “Ireland” as a geographical and discursive entity. As David Barker writes:

Not only did the Queen's administrators establish towns, lay out roads, and so on, but in a certain sense, they made Ireland. ... As in England, what these officials needed was a demarcated terrain that they could be said to control, a specific geo-political entity that would be answerable to the discourse they brought to bear on it. Ireland came into being as a “nation” as those who administered it marched across it, mapped it, wrote about it, and, generally speaking, produced and assembled a physical domain which, for them at least, was coextensive with the space of their own discourse. The country which resulted from their bureaucratic labours was, as much as anything else, a figure of speech — their speech.⁹

This production of “Ireland” as a geographical location went well beyond mapmaking.¹⁰ The late Elizabethan period saw the production of a series of descriptive geographical surveys of the political condition and economic potential of the island.¹¹ Motivations for these surveys varied. Some sought to provide accounts of political problems and champion not only a political strategy (such as Davis's argument for a thorough colonization of the country) but their own employment prospects. Other works were associated with plantation enterprises and sought to represent Ireland as a lucrative place for commercial investments. In all, Ireland was an incomplete place in need of “civility.” Observers inveighed against the strangeness of Irish customs, the paganness of Irish religious practices, and the need for a variety of improvement schemes to make the land fertile. Descriptions of the physical landscape were inseparable from governmental, commercial, and moral discourse. Dense woods were not simply dense woods, nor towns mere towns. Rather dense woods were an index of the wild and untamed nature of the Irish; they were sites of danger and potential resistance that called forth plans for the remolding of the landscape to fit English notions of order and progress. Towns were part of this cosmology of order, indicative of the advance of Anglicization and civility.¹² Irish lands were the object of a Christian (i.e. Anglican) civilizing mission. Davis

remarked that “it stands neither with Christian policy nor conscience to suffer so good and fruitful a country to lie waste like a wilderness.”¹³ Ireland was a wild feminine land awaiting cultivation, a virgin territory in need of husbandry.¹⁴

Unlike the Native American encounter with the Spanish in the New World, or the British encounter with the Aborigines in Australia, the world of the Gaelic lords was not radically outside that of Elizabethan England.¹⁵ The leader of the rebellion against the English Crown in the late sixteenth century was Hugh O'Neill, an Irish-born but English-educated lord who had previously aided the Crown's forces against other rebellious lords and who held the royal title of Earl of Tyrone. Yet, despite the relative proximity of the world of Irish lords to that of the English Crown, by the time of Davis, the preclassical episteme's rendering of “the Irish” as socially inferior to “the English” (an episteme, according to Foucault, organized on the basis of resemblance, affinity, and similarity) was giving way to a classical episteme that inscribed the “Irish” as irreducibly and permanently inferior (the classical episteme being organized on the principle of discrimination and difference).¹⁶ From the late sixteenth century, “Ireland” was the site of an English Renaissance self-fashioning, a negative mirror of an emerging English self-image, a locational projection of negations of Englishness. The “Irish” were no longer similar to the “English” but an unassimilatable otherness that needed to be comprehensively conquered before the Irish could be reformed. “Irish nature” was innately rebellious, while “Ireland” (frequently punned as Ire-land in Elizabethan treatises) was a barbarous country that had culturally polluted those English (the Old English) who had settled there and intermarried with the native Irish. To Davis “a barbarous country must first be broken by a war before it will be capable of good government; and when it is fully subdued and conquered if it be not well planted and governed after the conquest it will eftsoons return to the former barbarism.”¹⁷ In positioning the “Irish” within the classical episteme's understanding of barbarism, they were axiomatically judged as a people without history and geography. They were thus an irritant obstacle to the progress of the one true “English” history and geography, stubborn savages blocking the production of an ordered landscape of Anglican civilization and royal harmony.

GEOGRAPHY AND GOVERNMENTALITY

Bartlett's decapitation is at the threshold of a modernity that was to distinguish itself by its ambitious redrafting of space around the principles of empire and state sovereignty (which

were, in the case of Elizabethan England, the same thing). Crucial to the imposition and, as time went on, the increasingly intensified functioning of this modernity were those governmental apparatuses that produced the territorialization of space and also the (Euclidian-Galilean) spatialization of territory. These governmental practices and the art of government insinuated within them sought, with varying and uneven degrees of force and reason, to impose ordered visions of space, territory, and geography upon ambivalent lands, terrains, and cultures. The genealogical conundrum they mark is a problematic I wish to term geo-power, the functioning of geographical knowledge not as an innocent body of knowledge and learning but as an ensemble of technologies of power concerned with the governmental production and management of territorial space. The problematic of geopower concerns the modern governmentalization of geography from the sixteenth century onward, a time, as Foucault notes, when government as a general problem demanding public and intellectual thought explodes in terms of its relevance and significance.¹⁸

Foucault's elaboration of the question of "governmentality" in his 1978–79 course, "Security, Territory and Population," is suggestive in helping specify this problematic, but it should be remembered that Foucault's arguments are somewhat speculative and exploratory. In his "Governmentality" lecture, Foucault seeks to specify the broad contours of a genealogy of theories of the art of government. The question of government is not simply a question of the government of a state by a prince but a question of the government of personal conduct and the government of souls and lives. Foucault seeks to differentiate a narrow medieval and princely understanding of the art of government, which took the sole interest of the prince as its object of rationality (most pointedly in Machiavelli's *The Prince*), from a more ambitious but nevertheless somewhat immobilized introduction of economy (household management) into the art of government. Here the notion of government is extended both in an upward (the person who wishes to govern the state must first learn how to govern himself or herself) and downward (a well-run state should promote well-run families and properly behaved individuals) direction. Government is "the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end" (93).¹⁹ Foucault traces the origins of this art of government to the sixteenth century and "the whole development of the administrative apparatus of the territorial monarchies." It was also "connected to a set of analyses and forms of knowledge which began to develop in the late sixteenth century and grew in importance during the seventeenth, and which were essentially to do with knowledge of the state, in all its different

elements, dimensions and factors of power, questions which were termed ‘statistics,’ meaning the science of the state” (96). Finally, this art of government, which brought into existence what Foucault later calls an “administrative state,” also encompasses the practices of mercantilism and the Cameralist's science of police.

The development of a rational art of government from the sixteenth century, however, was somewhat immobilized and stifled by the persistence of monarchical conceptions of sovereignty. It is not until the early eighteenth century, according to Foucault, with the emergence of the problem of population, that the art of government recenters itself around the theme of economy not as family management but as the management of the population of the state (that is, economics in a modern sense). Prior to the emergence of population, Foucault claims, “it was impossible to conceive the art of government except on the model of the family, in terms of economy conceived as the management of a family; from the moment when, on the contrary, population appears absolutely irreducible to the family, the latter becomes of secondary importance compared to population, as an element internal to population” (99). What came into being in the eighteenth century, Foucault suggests, was a “governmental state” that defined the population as a datum, as a field of intervention, and as an objective of governmental techniques. “Political economy” was the science and objective of the governmental(ized) state.

Foucault's genealogy of the art of government and the forms of the state is exceedingly sketchy and sweeping in its conception. Nevertheless, bringing together theories of the art of government with the development of governmental apparatuses and forms of knowledge designed to develop knowledge of the state provides us with a framework to specify geopower as a historical problematic of state formation. In specifying this problematic, Foucault's own observations on the changing place of space and territory in the history of the art of government are underdeveloped and potentially confusing. For example, Foucault's contrast between the “government of territory” (which he associates with the juridical sovereignty that concerned Machiavelli) and the “government of men and things” is somewhat misleading. The more specific contrast he strives to make is between a narrowly juridical conception of territory (a state of divinely ordained jurisdiction) and a broadly materialistic and resourcist conception of territory (a state effectively occupied and mapped for wealth, colonization, and security). As he himself notes, the administrative state is, among other things, concerned with “territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility,

etc.” (93). This changing vision of the territory of the state required permanent bureaucratic technologies of power that could map, describe, catalog, inventory, order, and arrange the “things” of government. Often, Foucault suggests elsewhere, the city was the model for the reordering and rearranging of the territory of the state.²⁰

Also somewhat misleading is Foucault's suggestion that the governmental state “is essentially no longer defined in terms of its territoriality, of its surface area, but in terms of the mass of its population with its volume and density, and indeed also with the territory over which it is distributed, although this figures here only as one among its component elements” (104). But again the point is not simply that territoriality is no longer important but that its conceptualization and instrumentalization within the practices of government have changed. The historical dimensions and forms of that change—the differing arts of government practiced historically by the likes of Thomas Cromwell (circa 1485–1540), Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (1727–81), or Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821)—are only now getting the sustained study they deserve. Each of these figures represents an interesting moment in the history of geo-power. Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's principal secretary, is situated at the threshold of the earliest form of the administrative state, the expansionist and centralizing state form that characterized the “new monarchies” of the sixteenth century.²¹ Turgot, a French physiocrat and reputedly the person who first used the term “political geography,” was an innovative state administrator at a time when the administrative state of the *ancien régime* was collapsing because of the contradictions of France's absolutist monarchy.²² The failure of his fiscal reforms during his brief tenure between August 1774 to May 1776 as controller-general for Louis XVI marked a crucial stage in the demise of the *ancien régime*. Turgot's work anticipates the demise of the logic of an administrative state beholden to absolutism and the beginnings of a governmental state. Napoleon's regime marks the fully fledged expression of the governmental state, a state where geography played a crucial role as a scientific technology aiding not only military conquest but also the gathering of statistics for rational government by The Great State.²³

STUDYING GEO-POWER

Arguably, the problematic of geo-power in England began with the reforms of Thomas Cromwell during the English Reformation. Certainly the territorial ambitions of the Elizabethan state and Bartlett's decapitation was a consequence of an initial phase in the

historical development of geo-power. He was the first of many geographers who would be murdered because their profession was a technology of power in the service of a centralizing and imperialistic state.²⁴ His death helps crystallize some methodological points that are worth establishing at the outset concerning the relationship between geography and power.

First, geography is not a natural given but a power-knowledge relationship. For Foucault, power and knowledge directly imply one another: “There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”²⁵ As a general methodological principle, we should not approach the histories of forms of knowledge as if knowledge can only exist outside the injunctions, demands, and interests of power relations. Rather, histories of knowledge should be situated within the historical and geographical context of the power relations that not only were there when the form of knowledge emerged and consolidated itself as a system of statements and procedures but that also helped give the form of knowledge its very birth and existence. “Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it.”²⁶ The very identity of the subject position “geographer,” “cartographer,” or “geopolitician,” for example, the specification of geographical/cartographic/ geopolitical objects to be recognized and represented by this subject, and the “geographical techniques” by which these objects are arranged, presented, and projected are all effects of power-knowledge relations.

Second, the general power relations within which to situate modern geographical knowledge is the centralization and imperialist expansion of the modern European state system across the globe from the sixteenth century onward. Centralization and imperialist expansionism required new aggressive forms of geographical power/knowledge to supervise the seizure and disciplining of space. Imperialism, as Edward Said has noted, is after all “an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control.”²⁷ The battle between the Gaelic power structure in Tirconnell and the English Crown was a conflict over sovereignty generated by an expansionist state encroaching upon the hitherto relatively unchallenged local autonomy of regional lords.²⁸ Bartlett was appointed by an Earl of the Elizabethan state, and his mission was to redraft the space of Tirconnell so the region could be incorporated within the realm of this state. His job was to geo-graph the earth of Ulster, to make its terra incognita an imperial territory so its resistant foreignness could be eradicated and replaced by a recognizably

Elizabethan space.

Given the contemporary politics of Ireland, I should note here that the conflict between the last of the Gaelic lords in the late sixteenth century and the Elizabethan colonial apparatus was never a straight conflict between a clear and unambiguous Irish and English identity. The Irish nationalist argument of a discrete Irish island being invaded by a foreign English Other is a determinist form of geographical reasoning that falsely equates national identity with island geography and ignores the fluidity of Ireland's borders and social system. As the historian Roy Foster notes, the word "foreign" was applied to the "English" enemy by various "Irish" lords at this time but it could also be used for anyone who threatened one's lands. "Localist, aristocratic archaism was a more dominant motif of the Gaelic consciousness in the early seventeenth century than anything like a national sense of identity."²⁹ The inside and outside of Ireland were never firmly established and beyond dispute. The very formation, consolidation, and maintenance of geographically specified identities is precisely what was in contestation in the north of Ulster at the time of Bartlett's murder. It was not a question of a struggle between fully formed states but of the historical and geographical struggles to impose state sovereignty. The politics of geo-graphing, then, does not begin as a problematic of geography and international politics but a problematic of the attempt to produce international politics geographically. Rather than assuming a fully formed state system and state-delimited identities, my concern is the power struggle between different societies over the right to speak sovereignly about geography, space, and territory. To begin with the geographical identities created and fostered by the state system is to fall into what John Agnew has called the "territorial trap."³⁰ It is to forget the historical struggles that went into the creation and maintenance of states as coherent territories and identities seeking international legitimacy.³¹ It is to operate with a frozen, ahistorical model of the state that fails to appreciate forms of spatiality (organizations of space) other than that of an idealized territorial state presumed to have a discrete inside and outside.

The third methodological point concerns institutionalized ways of seeing and displaying space. Bartlett's activity on the colonial frontier in Ulster was only the beginning of the process of geographical violence that was to spread across the rest of the globe in the following centuries. As containers of a fledgling modernity, the expansionist new monarchies of the sixteenth century were slowly, unevenly, and erratically (depending on the state in question) imposing a general perspectivalist vision of space and a neutral conception of time

upon the territories they incorporated and annexed. As Timothy Luke has argued, the state sought to establish its power by in-state-ing itself in space. It sought to secure its authority as both the omniscient illustrator and omniscient narrator of territory.³² Space was homogenized (Euclidianized) and measured from a central point, which was normally the seat of government or royal authority. This central point constituted the fixed spectatorial position from which panoramic visions of official state territory were constructed. Ulster was provincialized (made into a province) in this manner.³³ In historical practice, of course, these panoramic visions of territory differed considerably as the techniques and technologies for displaying space in a perspectivalist manner evolved. Bartlett, whom Davis, revealingly, felt obliged to specify as an officially appointed authority, produced maps of the province of Ulster that look, to today's eyes, like shaded drawings (see Figure 1).³⁴ Nevertheless, these were shaded visions of space that sought to establish an English military gaze over the provincialized space of Ireland. They sought to render this troublesome region visible, to site it as imperial space.

But Bartlett lost his eyes and head. His murder, because the inhabitants would not have their country discovered, highlights a fourth aspect of geo-power: resistance. In seeking to keep their territory a blank space on the maps of the Elizabethan state, the chiefs of Tirconnell were actively resisting the drive to systematize and codify a singular imperial geography at the expense of multiple local geographies. In traditional Gaelic bardic culture, according to Foster, “the terrain was studied, discussed and referenced; every place had its legend and its own identity. Dindsenchas, the celebration of placenames, was a feature of this poetic topography; what endured was the mythic landscape, providing escape and inspiration.”³⁵ By the early seventeenth century, however; this Gaelic bardic culture was largely destroyed. With the effective subjugation of the indigenous population and power centers of the island came an intensified cartographic textualization and expropriation. The Cromwellian campaign in Ireland was followed by the Down Survey of Sir William Petty. First commissioned in 1654, its purpose was to facilitate the distribution of forfeited lands to Cromwellian soldiers and those who had given money for the army's support. Still, large parts of Ireland resisted mapping by the administrative apparatus of the English Crown. It was not until the Ordinance Survey of 1824 that detailed and comprehensive six-inch maps of the island were undertaken, being finally completed just before the famine in 1846. In Anglicizing and co-opting Gaelic names, the survey was smoothing out the struggle over

geography that began in Elizabethan times. “Masquerading as a process of systematic record,” one critic notes, “the mapping of Ireland was a prolonged act of cultural displacement and textual processing, in the course of which ancient place-names and boundaries were incorporated and reinscribed.” As a result of the Ordinance Survey, “an official Ireland was produced, an English-speaking one, with its own ideology of Irish space.”³⁶

Resistance to the writ of the imperial state, nevertheless, remained a central feature of Irish history, a resistance that frequently expressed itself in anti-imperialist geographical terms. By the nineteenth century we can begin to speak of a modern Irish nationalist imagination, a contested but largely Catholic nationalist vision of a unitary Ireland independent of British rule. The Gaelic revival of the early twentieth century, in which William Butler Yeats played a large part, helped invent a heroic anti-imperialist geographical imagination for this nation. Both Seamus Deane and Edward Said point to the cartographic impulse in Yeats's work and the effort to create a new territoriality outside the imperialist frame in literatures of anti-imperialist resistance.³⁷ Said describes this as the “search for authenticity, for a more congenial national origin than that provided by colonial history, for a new pantheon of heroes, myths, and religions.”³⁸ Although there were many ironies in this attempt to write against a hegemonic imperial history and geography, it was nevertheless a refusal to be represented in accordance with the official imperial vision of time and space. The decolonization struggle in Ireland was never only a struggle to decolonize physical space and territory but also to decolonize identity, history, and geographical knowledge.³⁹

Reflecting on the general problematic of empire, geography, and culture, Said has remarked that “none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography.”⁴⁰ This struggle, as he and others suggest, is not a straightforward struggle over the naming of places or the ownership of land, important though these issues are. Nor is it solely a matter of soldiers and cannons, with mapmakers in train, busily textualizing the landscape, carving it up and subjugating it to a mathematical grid designed as the basis for a plantation or envisioned community of order, loyalty, and civility. The struggle over geography is also a conflict between competing images and imaginings, a contest of power and resistance that involves not only struggles to represent the materiality of physical geographic objects and boundaries but also the equally powerful and, in a different manner, the equally material force of discursive borders between an idealized Self and a demonized Other, between “us” and

“them.” Viewed from the colonial frontier, geography is not just a battle of cartographic technologies and regimes of truth; it is also a contest between different ways of envisioning the world.⁴¹

GEO-POWER AND GEOPOLITICS

By the late nineteenth century, a new horizon of geo-power was surfacing as the last pockets of unclaimed and unstated space were surrounded and enclosed within the colonizing projects of expansionist empires and territorializing states. As the Eurocentrically imagined blank spaces on the globe succumbed to the sovereign authority of governmental institutions and imperial science, the surface of the globe appeared for the first time as a system of “closed space,” an almost completely occupied and fully charted geographical order. The dawning of this new order of space, together with the transformative effects of technological change on the exercise of imperial power across space, provoked the emergence of a distinctive genre of geo-power within the capitals of the Great Powers. The name this new genre of geo-power acquired was “geopolitics.”

The term “geopolitics” is a convenient fiction, an imperfect name for a set of practices within the civil societies of the Great Powers that sought to explain the meaning of the new global conditions of space, power, and technology. It names not a singularity but a multiplicity, an ensemble of heterogeneous intellectual efforts to think through the geographical dimensions and implications of the transformative effects of changing technologies of transportation, communications, and warfare on the accumulation and exercise of power in the new world order of “closed space.” Like other forms of geopolitics, these writings were governmentalized forms of geographical knowledge, imperial rightings from an unquestioned center of judgment that sought to organize and discipline what was increasingly experienced as unitary global space into particularistic regimes of nationalistic, ideological, racial, and civilizational truth. Circulating within the developing media of civil society (which ranged from elite markets for scholarly books to the yellow journalism of jingoistic newspapers), these discourses were motivated attempts to frame the spectacle and flux of the new global political scene within the terms of imperialistic and militaristic agendas, agendas actively cultivated and pushed by political, economic, and bureaucratic interest groups within the state-societies of the Great Powers.

If the term “geopolitics” is a convenient fiction, it is also an inconvenient one, for it is a sign

overloaded with many different meanings even in the critical discourse of academia. Among many critical scholars, geopolitics has become an appealing and handy summary term for the spatiality of modernity as a whole. Michael Shapiro, for example, describes the institutionalization of state-centric discourse as “modern geopolitical discourse,” a discourse that silences “the historical process of struggle in which areas and peoples have been pacified, named, homogenized, and fixed in modern international space.”⁴² Rob Walker is even more general when he writes of “how theories of international relations manage to constrain all intimations of a chronopolitics within the ontological determinations of a geopolitics, within the bounded geometric spaces of here and there.”⁴³ Among critical geographers, geopolitics has been inflated to describe the most general dimensions of modernity. John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, for example, suggest that modern geopolitical discourse begins in the encounters between Europeans and others during the so-called Age of Discovery, when a modern/backward and European/non-European schema for dividing up the world came into use.⁴⁴ Simon Dalby suggests something abstractly similar in claiming that “the essential moment of geopolitical discourse is the division of space into ‘our’ place and ‘their’ place; its political function being to incorporate and regulate ‘us’ or ‘the same’ by distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘them,’ ‘the same’ from ‘the other.’”⁴⁵

The difficulty with such generalized inflations of the concept of geopolitics, however, is that they can efface the historical and geographical particularity of geopolitics as a way of envisioning and writing space-as-global from the turn of the century. The term “geopolitics” was first coined in 1899. As a consequence of the imagined significance of a German school of geopolitics in explaining Nazi foreign policy during World War II, geopolitics became the name of a tradition with a canon of classic texts and a parade of prophetic men. After the war, the term's relative and forced coherence dissolved, although it retained great symbolic significance for certain right-wing thinkers in civil society and certain military academies from South Africa to South America. It had symbolic significance in that geopolitics had the cachet of a coherent materialist approach to international politics, an approach that named itself in suitably masculinized terms as “hardheaded.” For the Right, geopolitics was a politically correct, anti-Marxist materialism that had its foundations in the permanent realities of the earth. It was figuratively rooted in an imagined earth of natural laws, eternal binary oppositions, and perpetual struggles against dangerous rivals. In certain institutions and circumstances—among military officers in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile in the 1950s, for

example—geopolitical thinking was *de rigueur*. Out of this training in geopolitics developed national security state doctrines that underpinned the murderous activities of bureaucratic authoritarian regimes in Latin America over three decades. In Chile, Augusto Pinochet, a professor of geopolitics at the Chilean War Academy, led a successful military coup, overthrowing the state's democratically elected government, and installed himself as military dictator and president. The U.S. government that encouraged this coup was likewise enamored with geopolitics. In the Nixon White House of the early 1970s and the Reagan White House of the early 1980s, geopolitics was also *de rigueur*, although what was meant by geopolitics differed from administration to administration. Because of Kissinger's popularization of the term, geopolitics spiraled well beyond the so-called geopolitical tradition to become a synonym for the space of global politics. The inflation of the term in recent critical intellectual discourse, therefore, is understandable and not new.

My tactical resistance to this inflation is not motivated by a desire to recover an original or stable meaning for the term but by a desire to recall and respect its complex and often unacknowledged genealogical history. Geopolitics is not a concept that is immanently meaningful and fully present to itself but a discursive “event” that poses questions to us whenever it is evoked and rhetorically deployed. It is a problematic best approached historically and contextually, a problematic concerning the writing of the global that requires an antiglobal(izing) method of inquiry that avoids treating “it” as a stable and singular “it,” a linear and smooth historical surface for theoretical work. Because of this, I have composed a book of interventionist essays rather than a systematic study of an immanent and unitary concept. In calling this book *Critical Geopolitics*, I am not naming a new critical position to oppose an old reactionary one but rather opening up a complex and somewhat neglected problematic for analysis. While each of the chapters can be considered discrete and self-standing essays, they are arranged to intersect with and build upon one another. All share a general concern with the entwining of governmentality and geographical knowledge in the writing of global space. All explore the politics of geo-graphing global political scenes. They have common sources of intellectual inspiration (Foucault mostly, but sometimes Derrida) and recurrent themes of interest (governmentality, power/knowledge, and ocularcentrism).⁴⁶ The resultant book is not a panoramic vision or panoptic survey of a singularity called “geopolitics” but a set of con-textual explorations of the problematic imperfectly marked by the term “geopolitics.”

Chapter 1 introduces the general context, key intellectuals, and discursive strategies that characterize the so-called classical geopolitical tradition. In this chapter I begin to develop an immanent critique of this tradition, which I subsequently refine in chapter 2 into a general problematization of the spatialization of global politics by intellectuals of statecraft. The phenomenon of the geopolitical tradition, I suggest, forces us to confront the general question of how global space is produced and organized by governmentalizing intellectuals of statecraft. How is “international politics” written spatially? How is it envisioned geographically? How is it made visible as a spatial spectacle? How is it seen and scened, and to what end? These are the questions raised in the first two chapters and subsequently pursued in the following chapters. Pressed with critical vigor, the phenomenon of geopolitics discloses a broader problematic that I term geo-politics, the politics of writing global space. Critically scrutinizing the textuality of that which is presented to us as “geopolitics” leads us to problematize the pervasive geographical politics of foreign policy discourses, the ways in which the global political scene is geo-graphed by foreign policy regimes of truth.

In disclosing a broad problematic of geo-politics from an interrogation of geopolitics, it is not my wish to use the hyphen as the mark of an absolute difference between a manifest geopolitics, on the one hand, and a latent and ubiquitous geo-politics, on the other hand. Geopolitics is permanently hyphenatable. As chapters 3, 4, and 5 demonstrate, whenever we seek “geopolitics” we end up encountering not a distinct and stable object but different historical condensations of geo-politics. Building upon a discussion of the British geographer Halford Mackinder in chapter 1, chapter 3 considers the writings of Mackinder in some detail and seeks to deconstruct the way in which he sought to institutionalize a British imperial geopolitics as the very form and *raison d'être* of the discipline of geography in the early twentieth century. Chapter 4 reviews the emergence of “geopolitics” as a discursive object in wartime America and seeks to explicate the imaginative economy that came to be written around it as a dangerous but desirable practice at this time. Chapter 5, the longest in the book, reviews various historical attempts to write a meaning around “geopolitics” in a critical manner. Such a review illustrates not only that the critical investigation of geopolitics has a long history but that the efforts to round up and capture geopolitics within a critical cage often lead to an essentializing of the concept and a concomitant blindness to questions of contextuality.

Chapters 6 and 7 move beyond an engagement with the history of the concept of geopolitics

to investigate the practical geo-politics of U.S. foreign policy discourse. Chapter 6 considers how a new location on the global scene of the early 1990s—Bosnia—came to be written in U.S. foreign policy between 1991 and mid-1994. Chapter 7 addresses the efforts of two U.S. intellectuals of statecraft (Edward Luttwak and Samuel Huntington) to rescript the global political scene amid the vertigo of postmodernity, a vertigo precipitated for them by the end of the Cold War, compounded by globalization and intensified by global media vectors dissolving the distance between the near and the far, subjects and objects, spectators and spectacles, thus imperiling the very conditions of possibility of the modern spatial scene. Both chapters scrutinize the politics of the governmentalizing will to organize global political space into particular visions of order and disorder, geo-political visions I attempt to question, displace, and disrupt.

There is no concluding chapter, for my goal is not to bring the problematic of geopolitics to closure in the traditional sense. This book is only a start on the road toward a richer genealogy of geopolitics as a twentieth-century constellation of geo-power. It seeks to sketch out the journey and make a few specific historical road stops, stops that I recognize are limited in that they are largely confined to the Anglo-American realm. Many other stories of American, Argentinean, Brazilian, Chilean, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Russian geopolitics remain to be told, as do the fascinating flowmations of the new geopolitics of the post—Cold War world. All the essays in this book are works of geopolitics with a radical agenda. They seek to disturb the innocence of geography and politicize the writing of global space. As such, they make common cause with all those who have resisted and continue to resist the exercise of geopower by those centers of modern authority who wish only to make the world in the image of their maps.