

INTRODUCTION

Thinking critically about geopolitics

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All concepts have histories and geographies and the term “geopolitics” is no exception. Coined originally in 1899 by a Swedish political scientist named Rudolf Kjellen, the word “geopolitics” has had a long and varied history in the twentieth century, moving well beyond its original meaning in Kjellen’s work to signify a general concern with geography and politics (geo-politics). Coming up with a specific definition of geopolitics is notoriously difficult, for the meaning of concepts like geopolitics tends to change as historical periods and structures of world order change. Geopolitics is best understood in its historical and discursive context of use. Back in the early years of the twentieth century, Kjellen and other imperialist thinkers understood geopolitics as that part of Western imperial knowledge that dealt with the relationship between the physical earth and politics. Associated later with the notorious Nazi foreign policy goal of *Lebensraum* (the pursuit of more “living space” for the German nation), the term fell out of favor with many writers and commentators after World War II (O’Loughlin, 1994). During the later years of the Cold War, geopolitics was used to describe the global contest between the Soviet Union and the United States for influence and control over the states and strategic resources of the world. Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger almost single-handedly helped to revive the term in the 1970s by using it as a synonym for the superpower game of balance-of-power politics played out across the global political map (Hepple, 1986).

Since then geopolitics has enjoyed a revival of interest across the world as foreign policy makers, strategic analysts, transnational managers and

academics have struggled to make sense of the dynamics of the world political map. One reason why geopolitics has become popular once again is that it deals with comprehensive visions of the world political map. Geopolitics addresses the “big picture” and offers a way of relating local and regional dynamics to the global system as a whole. It enframes a great variety of dramas, conflicts and dynamics within a grand strategic perspective, offering an Olympian viewpoint that many find attractive and desirable. Furthermore, while unavoidably textual, it nevertheless promotes a spatial way of thinking that arranges different actors, elements and locations simultaneously on a global chessboard. It has a multidimensional global cachet—global both in a geographical (worldwide) and a conceptual (comprehensive and total) sense—and *appears* more visual than verbal, more objective and detached than subjective and ideological. In addition, geopolitics is of interest to certain people because it seems to promise unusual insight into the future direction of international affairs and the coming shape of the world political map. Many decision makers and analysts come to geopolitics in search of crystal ball visions of the future, visions that get beyond the beclouded confusion of the immediate to offer glimpses of a future where faultlines of conflict and cooperation are clear. In a shrinking and speeding world of intense time-space compression wrought by telecommunication revolutions and globalizing economic networks and webs, the desire for perspectives offering “timeless insight” is stronger than ever. In complex post-modern times, in sum, geopolitical visions and visionaries seem to thrive.

In today's *new* world order, specifications of the post-Cold War relationship between geography, power and world order vary considerably as geopolitical visionaries vie with each other to delimit a "new geopolitics." For some, the end of the Cold War has allowed the emergence of a new geopolitical order dominated by geo-economic questions and issues, a world where the globalization of economic activity and global flows of trade, investment, commodities and images are re-making states, sovereignty and the geographical structure of the planet. For others, the "new geopolitics" describes a world dominated no longer by territorial struggles between competing blocs but by emerging transnational problems like terrorism, nuclear proliferation and clashing civilizations. For yet others, the relationship of politics to the earth is more important than ever as states and peoples struggle to deal with environmental degradation, resource depletion, transnational pollution and global warming. For the environmentally minded intellectual and policy maker, the "new geopolitics" is not geoeconomics but ecological politics or ecopolitics. Clearly, there are many competing visions of the "new geopolitics."

In compiling a Geopolitics Reader for the very first time, we have tried to collect the most illuminating examples of the old and the new geopolitics, the historical geopolitics of the early twentieth century as well as the multidimensional new geopolitics of the late twentieth century. A simple contrast between an old and a new or a classic and contemporary geopolitics, however, is inadequate as a means of grasping the heterogeneity of geopolitical discourses in both the past and the present. Respecting the significance of historical dimensions of geopolitics, yet wishing also adequately to convey historical and contemporary contestations around geopolitics, we have composed a Reader of five parts, two of which address geopolitics historically and two of which deal with the geopolitics of today, while the final section addresses resistance to geopolitics both historically and contemporaneously. Inevitably, because of the limits of space, we have had to leave out certain readings, perspectives and

regional geopolitical rivalries, a decision that does not mean we consider their significance marginal.

Part 1 of the Reader is the shortest in terms of readings. It addresses the imperialist origins of geopolitical thought, documenting the entwining of geopolitical visions with imperialist strategy and racist white supremacist thinking in the period leading up to World War II. While all the imperial powers of this time had geopolitical philosophies marked by racist attitudes and beliefs, we have chosen to concentrate on the key rivalry between the British Empire and the German state in the early twentieth century, a rivalry at the heart of World Wars I and II.

Part 2 addresses Cold War geopolitics, documenting the origins, consequences and eventual passing of the Cold War as a structure of world order and a complex of geopolitical discourses and practices. Again, we have chosen to focus on the key rivalry, this time between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In Part 3 we provide an introduction to the geopolitical debates over the nature and meaning of the "new world order" that was officially proclaimed as such by President Bush during the Gulf crisis and subsequent war against Iraq in 1990–1991. Because the end of the Cold War effectively left the United States as the sole remaining superpower, we have concentrated on US-centered attempts to give this "new world order" meaning.

Part 4 is devoted exclusively to environmental geopolitics. With rainforest depletion continuing unabated, pollution levels in many cities reaching dangerous new highs, and atmospheric ozone depletion taking place at alarming rates, the politics of how the earth is (ab)used and managed are now more important than ever. The readings we have chosen provide an introduction to the many political struggles over the nature, meaning and cause of contemporary environmental change.

Part 5 is an innovative section that is devoted to the theme of resistance and geopolitics. Although we stress the essentially contested nature of geopolitical discourses throughout the other parts of the book and include many critical readings within them, we felt it was important to document the often overlooked or ignored underside to geopolitics.

Since, as we shall see, so much of geopolitics in the past was concerned with imperialist expansion and ideological struggles between competing territorial states, we felt it was important to acknowledge and document the attempt by many critical intellectuals and social movements throughout history to resist the international “geopolitics from above” of hegemonic states and to assert, in opposition, their own localized “geopolitics from below.” Since geopolitics has for so long been a militaristic practice monopolized by statist elites, conservative politicians and geopolitical “experts,” it is important that we broaden the debate and consider the many different voices—minority civil rights, post-colonial, indigenous, feminist, trade unionist, etc.—opposing the dominant understanding and practice of geopolitics by foreign policy “statesmen” and so-called “wise men” (Enloe, 1990; Isaacson and Thomas, 1986). Finally, the Reader concludes with a reflection on the many different dimensions to geopolitics as knowledge and power at the end of the twentieth century.

Each section of the Reader has a comprehensive introduction to the readings that follow. These introductions place the readings within their historical and geographical context, and discuss their significance within the history of international politics and world order. Whenever possible, we have tried to include readings that directly comment and/or critique each other. In this way, you will be able to appreciate the essentially contested nature of geopolitical readings and texts. To further this goal, we have also chosen to illustrate the Reader with images and political cartoons that are themselves “geopolitical texts” of a graphically visual nature. Some of these images are disturbing while others are the type of humorous images that disclose the unacknowledged psychic anxieties and investments that often motivate geopolitical theory and practice. The best of these cartoons, such as the ones by Tony Auth, Steve Bell and Matt Wuerker (1992), are acts of transgression that call into question dominant relations of power, truth and knowledge. In contrast to the Olympian eye of the geopolitician, they deploy

an anti-geopolitical eye (Dodds, 1996; Ó Tuathail, 1996a).

Informing and organizing the Reader as a whole is a critical vision of geopolitics, a perspective that has come to be known as “critical geopolitics” (Ó Tuathail, 1996b). Concisely defined, critical geopolitics seeks to reveal the hidden politics of geopolitical knowledge. Rather than defining geopolitics as an unproblematic description of the world political map, it treats geopolitics as a discourse, as a culturally and politically varied way of describing, representing and writing about geography and international politics. Critical geopolitics does not assume that “geopolitical discourse” is the language of truth; rather, it understands it as a discourse seeking to establish and assert its own truths. Critical geopolitics, in other words, politicizes the creation of geopolitical knowledge by intellectuals, institutions and practicing statesmen. It treats the production of geopolitical discourse as part of politics itself and not as a neutral and detached description of a transparent, objective reality (Dodds and Sidaway, 1994).

In order to help you think critically about the multifaceted and fascinating dimensions of geopolitics, we wish to outline two “methods of study” that critical geopoliticians bring to bear upon the study of geopolitics. Each of these “methods” will help you develop a deeper understanding of the readings that comprise this volume. They provide a conceptual framework for evaluating the arguments and claims made in the readings. They will also reinforce the central argument this Reader seeks to make, namely that *the production of geopolitical knowledge is an essentially contested political activity*. Geopolitics, in short, is about politics!

GEOPOLITICS, DISCOURSE AND “EXPERTS”

The French philosopher Michel Foucault once stated that “the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power” (Foucault, 1980:52). Throughout his many challenging historical and philosophical works, Foucault

sought to document how structures of power in society (the military, police, doctors and judicial systems, for example) create structures of knowledge that justify their own power and authority over subject populations. The military, for example, explains and justifies its power in society by promoting a discourse concerning “national security,” a discourse in which it claims to be authoritative and expert. This important and constantly changing discourse in turn, as Foucault suggests, induces its own effects of power. If most “military experts” proclaim their agreement that “we” need to control this region or buy that weapon system to “safeguard our national security,” then there is a good chance that the military institutions of the state will receive increased resources from political leaders for new missions and new weapons systems. This does not always happen, of course, because other “experts” might disagree with the military or other institutions and interests might protest at the large amounts of money being spent on the military at the expense of pressing social needs. The military’s discourse of “national security” often clashes with the “social security” discourse of other intellectuals and interest groups. Controlling the meaning of the concept of “security”—defining it again and again in military and not social terms, for example—by controlling the dominant discourse about it, therefore, becomes an extremely important means of exercising power within a state. Monopolizing the right to speak authoritatively about “security” in name of everyone—the ability to evoke the “national interest” or a universal “we”—is at the crux of the practice of power. The exercise of power, Foucault astutely observed, is always deeply entwined with the production of knowledge and discourse.

The idea of geopolitics has been implicated in many different structures of power/knowledge throughout the twentieth century (see Table 1). Even before the term geopolitics was even coined, there were a number of important intellectuals who wrote about the influence of geography on the conduct of global strategy in the late nineteenth century. The American naval historian Alfred Mahan (1840–1914), for example, wrote about the importance of the physical geography—territorial mass and physical features

in relation to the sea—in the development of seapower by expanding states in his classic study *The Influence of Seapower Upon History*, which was first published in 1890 (Mahan, 1957). The road to national greatness, not surprisingly for the professional naval officer Mahan, was through naval expansionism. The German geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) also wrote about the importance of the relationship between territory or soil and the nation in the development of imperial strength and national power. In his book *Political Geography* (1897), Ratzel, who was deeply influenced by social Darwinism, considered the state to be a living organism engaged in a struggle for survival with other states. Like a living organism, the state needs constantly to expand or face decay and death. Ratzel’s social Darwinism celebrated the German nation and German soil as superior to all others. Germany, he argued, should expand at the expense of “inferior” states (organisms) to secure more *Lebensraum* or living space for itself.

The writings of Mahan and Ratzel were not unusual. As we shall see in Part 1, the theme of imperial expansionism was also central to the writings of Halford Mackinder, Karl Haushofer, Adolf Hitler and others. *It is within imperialist discourse that geopolitics first emerges as a concept and practice*. In the early part of the twentieth century, geopolitics is a form of power/knowledge concerned with promoting state expansionism and securing empires. All the leading geopoliticians were conservative white male imperialists who sought, in their own way, to explain and justify imperial expansionism by their own particular national state or, as they and others often termed it, their “race.” As one can well imagine, the writings of this elite caste of men were full of the hubris of empire and national exceptionalism: their country represented the zenith of civilization; their way of life was superior to that of others; their ideals were the ideals of all of “mankind” or humanity. Geopoliticians considered themselves to be masters of the globe. They thought in terms of continents and strategized in worldwide terms, labeling huge swaths of the globe with names like “heartland” and “rimlands” (Spykman, 1942). Present also were multiple

Table 1 Discourses of geopolitics

| <i>Discourse</i> | <i>Key intellectuals</i> | <i>Dominant lexicon</i> |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Imperialist geopolitics | Alfred Mahan Friedrich Ratzel Halford Mackinder Karl Haushofer Nicholas Spykman | Seapower <i>Lebensraum</i> Landpower/Heartland Landpower/Heartland Rimlands |
| Cold War geopolitics | George Kennan Soviet and Western political and military leaders | Containment First/Second/Third World countries as satellites and dominos Western vs. Eastern bloc |
| New world order geopolitics | Mikhail Gorbachev Francis Fukuyama Edward Luttwak George Bush Leaders of G7, IMF, WTO Strategic planners in the Pentagon and NATO Samuel Huntington | New political thinking The end of history Statist geo-economics US led new world order Transnational liberalism/neoliberalism Rogue states, nuclear outlaws and terrorists Clash of civilizations |
| Environmental geopolitics | World Commission on Environment and Development Al Gore Robert Kaplan Thomas Homer-Dixon Michael Renner | Sustainable development Strategic environmental initiative Coming anarchy Environmental scarcity Environmental security |

supremacist arguments, sometimes overtly expressed but more often tacitly assumed: the supposed “natural” supremacy of men over women; the white race over other races; European civilization over non-European civilizations. One particularly virulent form of this entwined sexism, racism and national chauvinism was the ideology of the Nazi Party in Germany which celebrated idealized visions of “Aryan manhood” while persecuting and vilifying what it constructed as “Jewish Bolshevism.” In this case, the power of discourse was to become murderous as those who were corralled into the category “Jewish Bolshevism” were at first persecuted and later sent to their death in concentration camps and death factories like Auschwitz (Mayer, 1988).

The outbreak of a Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union provided a

new context for the production of geopolitical power/knowledge in the post-war period. *It is within Cold War discourse that geopolitics matures as both theory and practice.* Whereas the imperialist geopolitics of the early part of the twentieth century tended to emphasize the conditioning or determining influence of physical geography on foreign policy and global strategy, the Cold War geopolitics that came to be produced around the US—Soviet antagonism entwined geography so closely with ideology that it was difficult to separate the two. Halford Mackinder described part of the Russian landmass as the “heartland,” a geographical and territorial region, but to George Kennan, the architect of the US post-war policy of “containment” of the Soviet Union, Russia was never simply a territory but a constantly

expanding threat (Reading 6). The very geographical terminology used to describe the world map was also a description of ideological identity and difference. The West was more than a geographical region; it was an imaginary community of democratic states that supposedly represented the very highest standards of civilization and development. Even historically “Eastern” powers like Japan and South Korea were part of this imaginary and symbolic “West.” The Soviet Union was represented as an “Eastern power,” the mirror image of the West. It was, in the crude cinematically influenced vision of President Ronald Reagan, “the evil empire.” The regions and peoples of Eastern Europe were known as “the Eastern bloc.” All states with Communist governments were said to belong to the “Second World” which contrasted with the “First World” which was, of course, the West.

In distinction to both the First and Second World, geopolitical and social science experts from both capitalist and communist countries defined a so-called Third World of poor and developing countries out of the heterogeneous rest that fitted into neither camp. Distinguished not only by its traditionalism and underdevelopment, the Third World was conceptualized as a zone of competition between the West and the East and a distinct object of study within post-war social science (Pletsch, 1981). Across the diverse states of the Third World, certain geographical regions became zones of fierce competition and geopolitical strategizing. Geopolitical “experts” from both sides constantly evaluated and surveyed the strategic value of such regions as the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, southern Africa, Indochina, the Caribbean and Central America. Geopolitics became a game of superpower politics played out across the world map. A new Cold War hubris developed in Washington and Moscow as their competing geopolitical experts designated spaces of the world as belonging either to “us” or to “them,” to the “free world” as opposed to the “totalitarian world” in the discourse of Western Cold War geopolitics, to the “people’s democracies” as opposed to the “capitalist and imperialist West” in the discourse of Soviet Cold War geopolitics. Both the American and the Soviets were preoccupied with the “fall” of

certain states to the enemy. This fear was particularly acute in the United States after the so-called “fall” of China to the Soviet camp in 1949 and it soon spawned the anti-communist hysteria of McCarthyism within the United States. What this in turn helped produce was the “domino theory,” a form of geopolitical reasoning that conceptualized states as no more than potentially falling dominoes in a great superpower game between the communist East and the capitalist West. The domino theory marked the apotheosis of Cold War geopolitics as a type of power/knowledge that completely ignored the specific geographical characteristics of places, peoples and regions. Complex countries like Vietnam were no more than abstract “stakes” in a global geopolitical power game (Reading 8). The tragedy of the triumph of this type of discourse in US political culture—a triumph made possible by McCarthyism destroying the careers of many of the US’s best “regional experts” on Vietnam and China—was that it ended with the US and other Western soldiers fighting for one side in a bloody civil war in a country they knew very little about and whose real strategic significance was marginal (Halberstam, 1972). The Korean, Vietnam and subsequent Reagan sponsored Central American wars in the 1980s are vivid instances of the “power effects” and murderous consequences of the discourse of Cold War geopolitics. The same can be said for the Soviet interventions in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979.

As a consequence of the end of Cold War in the early 1990s, international politics has experienced a crisis of meaning. The old defining struggle between a capitalist West and a communist East has passed. No overarching defining struggle of international politics has taken its place. Many experts, nevertheless, have tried to define what they claim to be the essential contours of the new world order. *It is within discourse on the new world order that geopolitics is being renewed and re-specified as an approach and practice.* Before even the breakup of the Soviet Union, intellectual experts like Francis Fukuyama and Edward Luttwak offered different visions of the post-Cold War new world order. Offering a late twentieth-century version of the

long-standing Western hubris towards the rest of the world, Fukuyama claimed that humanity was reaching “the end of history,” for Western liberalism was triumphing across most of the planet. Current Western states were at the pinnacle of history; most of the rest of the world were, at last, realizing this (Reading 13). In contrast to Fukuyama’s idealist West-and-the-rest vision, Edward Luttwak foresaw a world where states as territorial entities would continue to compete with each other, though now in geo-economic and not geopolitical conflicts (Reading 14). He stressed trade conflicts between the United States and Japan in a way that suggested a new West (United States) versus the East (Japan) faultline developing in world affairs.

Luttwak’s vision of geo-economics is strongly statist but other geo-economic visions stress the relative decline of states and the importance of transnational flows and institutions. “Transnational liberalism” or “neoliberalism” is a doctrine that holds that the globalization of trade, production and markets is both a necessary and desirable development in world affairs (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995). It is most notably articulated (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) by the leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) industrialized states (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States) and by neoliberal economic “experts” in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In contrast to the optimism about globalization articulated by neoliberals, the American neoconservative political scientist Samuel Huntington stresses the power of transnational geocultural blocs over transnational geoeconomic flows in his vision of the future of world order. Huntington argues that ancient civilizational blocs underpin world affairs. Obscured by the Cold War, they are emerging once again as the faultlines of a West-versus-the-rest clash of civilizations (Reading 19).

Co-existing with these discourses on the new world order are related discourses and ensembles of experts who address the politics of environmental change. Initially an issue of little concern, the “environment” has over the last few decades emerged as an object of

considerable focus and concern, an objectified externality in need of study and management and a dynamic system that is the source of many of our newest discourses of threat and danger. Entwined with many other issues like development, population growth and the structures of inequality within the world, the question of “nature” has become the “problem of the environment” while the scale of this problem—initially local and national—has become conceptualized as global. A new object of discourses that did not exist a few decades ago, the “global environment” is now the subject of considerable scientific research efforts in the advanced industrialized world, of transnational conferences and legal statutes and of the newest discourses on the global by a caste of intellectuals we can describe as “environmental geopoliticians.” *It is within discourses on global environmental change that the relationship between the earth and the human within the geopolitical tradition is being re-negotiated and a new “environmental geopolitics” is being created.* Like other geopolitical discourses, this relatively new domain of knowledge has its own particular systems of expertise, institutions of governance, caste of “green” intellectuals, perspectivalist visions of the globe and relations of power. As the readings in Part 4 demonstrate, the definition, delimitation and geographical dimensions of “the global environmental problem” are essentially contested. Knowledge of “the global environment” is never neutral and value-free. Many of the measures proposed to address global environmental degradation and pollution reflect vested interests and protect certain structures of power that are deeply implicated in the creation and perpetuation of environmental problems.

INTELLECTUALS, INSTITUTIONS AND IDEOLOGY

In specifying geopolitics as we have within larger discursive formations—imperialist discourse, Cold War discourse, and discourses on the new world order and global environmental change—

we have noted the importance of so-called “experts” in specifying and proclaiming certain “truths” about international politics. The processes by which certain intellectual figures become “expert” and get promoted or certified as such by institutions like the media, academia and the state, whereas other intellectual voices and perspectives get marginalized, vary considerably over time and across space. In most instances, these processes are quite complicated, involving as they do factors like schooling and socialization, gender and social networks, place, personality and political beliefs. As a critical tool for thinking about these issues, the triangle of intellectuals, institutions and ideology is one you should bear in mind when thinking about geopolitics as power/ knowledge (see Figure 1). Let us consider each point of this triangle in detail.

The practice of statecraft has long produced its own intellectuals, those theorists and former practitioners who wrote and continue to write “how to” books about international politics. One of the most famous “how to” books is

Machiavelli’s *The Prince* in which he outlines a series of practices (many quite criminal) that the prince should follow if he wishes to remain in power. This “advice to the prince” literature is the specialization of *intellectuals of statecraft*, those intellectuals who offer normative and imperative rules for the conduct of strategy and statecraft by the rulers of the state. Intellectuals of statecraft take a “problem-solving” approach to theory, taking the existent institutions and organization of state power as they find them and theorizing from the perspective of these institutions and relations of power. Their goal is not to change the organization of power within a state but to augment and facilitate its smooth operation (Cox, 1986). In dominant states like Great Britain during the nineteenth century and the United States after World War II, intellectuals of statecraft are the functionaries who think strategically with the interests of the state in mind and address its problems of “hegemonic management.”

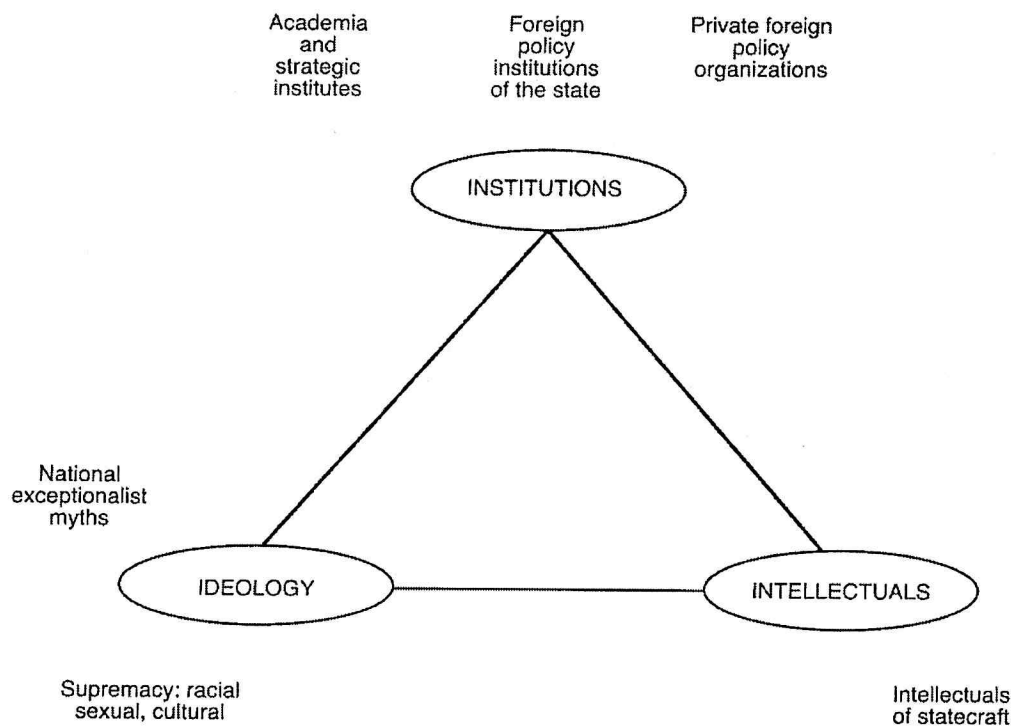


Figure 1 Geopolitics as power/knowledge

Over the years, the literature produced by aspiring, established and retired intellectuals of statecraft has become a publishing industry in its own right, with numerous books and journals each year devoted to debate on the conduct of statecraft. Within this community of “problem solvers” for the state, a few figures are usually promoted, represented and treated as “master strategists” or “gray eminences” by the publishing industry and mass media. One such figure is Henry Kissinger, another Kissinger’s boss, former President Richard Nixon. A politician who first came to prominence in the United States as an anti-communist crusader alongside Joseph McCarthy, Nixon craved acceptance as a “senior statesman” from US political society and the media, especially given the disgrace of his resignation of the presidency. To achieve this end, Nixon regularly produced geopolitical books and articles in which he pontificated on international politics and what the current president needed to do. Despite his crimes (both domestic and international), Nixon achieved a considerable measure of success, becoming an occasional advisor for President Bush and even President Clinton. His books also were widely read by influential diplomats and journalists.

Geopolitics and geopoliticians need to be understood within the context of the long tradition of “advice to the prince” literature. Historically, geopoliticians were intellectuals of statecraft who emphasized the role of geographical constraints and opportunities on the conduct of foreign policy. While many early geopoliticians liked to think of themselves as “scientific” and “objective,” they were far from being detached and apolitical. In fact, the opposite was most often the case. Geopoliticians craved power. Some academics, like Halford Mackinder, sought it out by entering the political system while others, like Karl Haushofer, contented themselves with being professors and occasional advisors to political leaders. Other geopoliticians as practicing diplomats and foreign policy decision makers were already within positions of power. Even when not in direct positions of power, key intellectuals of statecraft can influence foreign policy debates and agenda from their position within civil society as

prominent professors, journalists and media commentators.

Intellectuals, of course, are not free-floating thinkers in society but thinkers embedded within certain institutional structures and social networks of power, privilege and access. In thinking critically about geopolitics, we must consider not simply intellectuals alone but the institutions and social networks that enabled them to become intellectuals and “experts” on geopolitics. In many cases, there are layers of interlocking institutions involved: universities, private foreign policy research institutes, think-tanks, the media establishment and government agencies. For the early imperialist geopoliticians, the key institutional structures were usually universities and learned societies. Halford Mackinder, for example, earned his living as one of the first professors in the discipline of geography in the United Kingdom. His career within geography was made possible by his association with the Royal Geographical Society (RGS), an all-male explorers and travelers club established in London in 1830 that served as a social gathering place and network for the ruling establishment of the British Empire.

During the Cold War, prominent geopoliticians were usually associated with and circulated between a variety of different institutions. George Kennan, for example, came to prominence as a career foreign service officer, went on to direct the US state’s new post-war Policy Planning agency and subsequently became an academic historian and professional writer. Like many members of the American foreign policy establishment, he became a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a private meeting club of New York bankers established at the beginning of the twentieth century that subsequently developed into the quintessential foreign policy establishment institution in US civil society (Schulzinger, 1984). In more recent years, many other private foreign policy think-tanks and strategic studies institutes have been established like the Rand Corporation in Santa Monica, the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia or the Heritage Foundation in Stanford, each with their own journals and publishing operations (Crampton and Ó Tuathail, 1996). In nearly all cases, these private institutions are

the creation of powerful conservative individuals, interest groups and foundations, some with quite extremist views and ambitions. As one might expect, these institutions represent only the interests of the powerful and privileged and not that of the poor and weak. The foreign policy perspective of bankers and defense contractors will be articulated by the intellectuals of statecraft they hire; the foreign policy perspective of peasants or social workers will not.

This process of selecting certain intellectuals as “expert” is, as one might suspect, highly political and politicized. As a general rule, the most powerful institutions in any state or society will tend to sponsor those intellectuals who hold the same ideological viewpoint as they do. Ideologies are important, for states are governed and held together by certain widely shared systems of belief. At their most elemental, these ideological systems of belief include adherence to the common “national exceptionalist” myths of a state and support for the existing structures of power within a state and society (Agnew, 1983). In general, geopoliticians are usually strong national chauvinists and also entrenched conservatives. Historically at least, they have operated within and given voice to multiple Western ethnocentric discourses of power, articulating national and personal variations of racial, sexual and cultural supremacy in the name of “common sense,” “reason” and an “objective perspective” (Haraway, 1991). The specific nature of their ideological worldview, of course, can be quite nuanced. Halford Mackinder, Karl Haushofer and George Kennan were very different types of “nationalist” intellectuals yet they also shared a general revulsion towards industrial modernity, though their attitudes and arguments on this were quite distinctive. Nevertheless, general support for the prevailing economic and cultural establishments of one’s own state and society is common to most geopoliticians. Challenging the ethnocentrism, racism and sexism of geopoliticians both historically and today, is hazardous, however, for many groups seek to freeze intellectual inquiry by labeling it “politically correct.” Ironically, it is those who use this label who are working in a politically correct way in the interests of the powerful for they seek to safeguard discourses

of power—from national exceptionalist myths to implicit racial hierarchies, civilizational ethnocentrism, unreflective universalism, and patriarchy—from any kind of challenge and scrutiny.

Not all of the readings collected in this volume are those of conservative and nationalist geopoliticians. An alternative figure to the intellectual of statecraft is the *dissident intellectual*, the critically minded intellectual who is less interested in obtaining and exercising power than in challenging the prevailing “truths” of geopolitics and the structures of power, political economy and militarism they justify. Whereas the intellectual of statecraft or geopolitician is an insider who wants to be even more inside, the dissident intellectual is an outsider, one who usually challenges the ruling nationalist orthodoxy, in particular states and societies. In some cases, these intellectuals gain a certain media celebrity or, perhaps more accurately, a notoriety because of their questioning ways. The English historian E.P. Thompson, a leader in the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in the early 1980s, was vilified by both his own government and by the Soviet Union for his attempt to think beyond the Cold War logic of mutual antagonism and militarism that dominated politics in the post-World War II period and divided the continent of Europe in two. The Cold War, Thompson argued in 1982:

has become a habit, an addiction. But it is a habit supported by very powerful material interests in each bloc: the military-industrial and research establishments of both sides, the security services and intelligence operations, and the political servants of these interests. These interests command a large (and growing) allocation of the skills and resources of each society; they influence the direction of each society’s economic and social development; and it is in the interest of these interests to increase that allocation and to influence this direction even more (1982:169).

Amongst the intellectual servants of the military-industrial complex at this time in the West were Cold War geopoliticians like Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, General Alexander Haig and others. Thompson’s arguments echo those of other dissident

figures like the physicist Andrei Sakharov in Russia—a scientist in the Soviet military-industrial complex who later became its leading critic—and the linguistic scholar Noam Chomsky in the United States. During the Vietnam War, Chomsky was a fierce critic of those he dubbed the “new mandarins” in the US national security state, the military-bureaucratic intellectuals who justified and prosecuted the US war against radical nationalism in Vietnam and elsewhere in the Third World (Chomsky, 1969).

Throughout this volume, we have deliberately tried to illustrate the essentially contested nature of geopolitical knowledge by presenting readings that directly comment and critique each other. Our overall aim is to provoke debate and reflection on the politics of geopolitical knowledge in the twentieth century. Geopolitics, as this volume makes clear, is not an objective, scientific form of knowledge. It is about the operation of discourse and power/ knowledge, and it is also about how intellectuals, institutions and ideology create structures of power within states. Too often in the past, geopolitics has been treated not as discourse but as detached and objective description of how the world “really is.” In challenging this approach in this book, we are seeking to render the relations of power embedded in geopolitical discourses visible and manifest. For Foucault, wherever there is power, there is also resistance. *It is within discourses of resistance that the power effects of geopolitical discourses are problematized.* Since this intellectual and political aim is central to this volume, it is imperative that we consider not only the discourses forged by the powerful, the hegemonic and the privileged but also the counter-hegemonic discourses of those who are marginalized, ignored and silenced by dominant discourses. We all live within ensembles of power, knowledge and expertise. Gaining an appreciation of this is the first step on the path towards a critical understanding of the discourses of geopolitics that currently enframe our own locations, identities and worlds.

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