

COLIN FLINT

INTRODUCTION TO GEOPOLITICS

3rd EDITION



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This new updated edition of *Introduction to Geopolitics* presents the overarching themes of geopolitical structures and agents in an engaging and accessible manner, which requires no previous knowledge of theory or current affairs.

Using new pertinent case studies and guided exercises, the title explains the contemporary global power of the United States and the challenges it is facing, the persistence of nationalist conflicts, migration, cyberwar, terrorism, and environmental geopolitics. Case studies of the rise of the so-called Islamic State, the South China Sea disputes, the Syrian civil war, the Korean conflict, and Israel–Palestine emphasize the multi-faceted nature of conflict. The book raises questions by incorporating international and long-term historical perspectives and introduces readers to different theoretical viewpoints, including feminist contributions. The new edition features expanded sections on network geopolitics and non-state actors, a new section on geopolitics of transnational business, cyberwar, an interpretation of ISIS within historical geopolitical trends, as well as expanded discussion of the relevance of Boserup and neo-Malthusians to environmental geopolitics.

Introduction to Geopolitics will provide its readers with a set of critical analytical tools for understanding the actions of states as well as non-state actors operating in competition over resources and power. Both students and general readers will find this book an essential stepping stone to a deeper and critical understanding of contemporary conflicts.

Colin Flint is a Professor in the Department of Political Science, Utah State University, USA. He is author of *Geopolitical Constructs*, a co-author, with

Peter Taylor, of *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality*, and a co-editor of the journal *Geopolitics*.

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Third Edition

Colin Flint

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACLJ	American Center for Law and Justice
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCA	Budget Control Act
BSPP	Burmese Socialist Program Party
CENTCOM	Central Command (US military)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CPB	Communist Party of Burma
DARPA	Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency
DDOS	distributed denial of service
DOS	denial of service
DSG	Defense Strategic Guidance
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEOINT	Geospatial Intelligence
GIS	geographic information system
HUM	Hizbul Mujahideen
IGO	inter-governmental organization
IIGCC	Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change
IMET	International Military Education and Training Program
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ISI	Islamic State of Iraq
ISI	Inter-services Intelligence
ISIS/ISIL	Islamic State

ISL	Islamic Students League
JEI	Jamaat-e-Islami
JKJEI	Jammu and Kashmir Jamaat-e-Islami
JKLF	Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front
JKPC	Jammu and Kashmir People's Conference
KDP	Korean Democratic Party
KNU	Karen National Union
LORCs	Law and Order Restoration Councils
MAD	mutually assured destruction
MOOTWA	military operations other than war
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGA	National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
NGO	non-governmental organization
NLD	National League for Democracy
NPT	Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty
NSC	National Security Council
NSG	National System for Geospatial-Intelligence
NSS	National Security Strategy
OPT	occupied Palestinian territory
PCCP	From Potential Conflict to Co-operation Potential
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PMC	private military contractor
POTB	Prevention of Terrorism Bill
RDJTF	Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
RFID	radio frequency identification
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SSA	Shan State Army
SSA-S	Shan State Army – South
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	UN Conference on Law of the Sea
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency

USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
USGS	United States Geological Survey
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WRI	World Resources Institute
WSF	World Social Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization

PROLOGUE

So what brings you to geopolitics? Do you see it as a way to explain the world? That would seem reasonable: yet for most of the past sixty years or so scholars, geographers in particular, distanced themselves from the topic. The attitude of geographers is in contrast to the desire of governments and the public for geopolitical explanations and knowledge. Why this difference between supply and demand, and how can it be addressed so that the discipline of geography is able to provide an effective framework for students, the public, and governments to understand the dynamics of world politics, or something we can call geopolitics?

What has brought many people to geopolitics, at least since the late 1800s, and continues to do so is its apparent ability to explain in simple terms a complex and, for some, threatening and uncertain world. In offering simple explanations geopolitics can be reassuring, providing one-dimensional explanations and solutions. Such explanations are reassuring because they create the illusion of being able to know and hence to understand the world: and if we understand something it implies a relationship of control. The reassuring promises of understanding and control are reinforced by another promise of geopolitics, prediction. Geopolitical theories have always claimed an ability to tell us how the world is going to be – what and where future threats will be – and hence offers prescriptions, or policy implications (Ó Tuathail, 2006, pp. 1–2).

The primary intention of the book is to offer geopolitics as a framework to understand the world in its complexity, or as a pathway to try and explore and empathize with the diversity of political contexts and actors across the world. The emphasis is upon investigation and continual learning, knowing that we can only partially understand the situation and goals of others, rather than defining a simplified geopolitical model that is used as a tool by the powerful to proclaim what is right. The book will also shatter the illusions offered by government spokespersons and political commentators of global understanding, prediction, control, and actionable implications by showing them to be false, dangerous, and politically motivated.

Beginning with the question “What brought you to geopolitics?” implies a new and purposeful engagement with an academic topic, probably as part of a university class that you have chosen, with varying degrees of freedom, to take. By the end of the book you will have learned that you have been surrounded by

geopolitics continually and are always participating in it, one way or the other. The hope is that you will have learned to be critical of simple geopolitical explanations that are provided by governments, politically motivated commentators, the media, and popular culture. Also, the hope is that you will have a toolkit of your own to explore the fascinating and important topic of geopolitics. In other words, the book aims to provide you with the ability to think critically and develop your own understanding of geopolitics.

So what is geopolitics? To tease you: it is about the exercise of power. It is about geography. It is about actions. It is about how we portray, or represent, those actions. It is about how the powerful have created worlds. It is about how the weaker have resisted such efforts and, in some contexts, partially constructed their own worlds. It is about a multitude of connected actions and actors and the geographies they make, change, destroy, and maintain.

The book will explain these component parts of geopolitics and connect them. To start, the connection between geopolitics and geography will be explained, and a brief history of geopolitics offered to give you a framework for understanding the troubled history of geopolitics and the recent changes that have allowed it to reappear as an essential topic of study, but one that tries to move forward while avoiding past pitfalls. By then, we will be ready to offer our own definition of geopolitics to guide you through the rest of the book. The prologue ends with an outline of the purpose and framework for the book.

Geopolitics: a component of human geography

Geopolitics is a component of human geography. To understand geopolitics we must first understand what human geography is. This is easier said than done, precisely because geography is a diverse and contested discipline – in fact, the easiest, and increasingly accurate, definition is human geography is what human geographers do: accurate, but not very helpful.

Geography is a peculiar discipline in that it does not lay intellectual claim to any particular subject matter. Political scientists study politics, sociologists study society, etc. However, a university geography department is likely to house an eclectic bunch of academics studying anything from glaciers, global climate change, to globalization, urbanization, or identity politics. The shared trait is the *perspective* used to analyze the topic, and not the topic itself. Geographers examine the world through a geographic or spatial perspective, offering new insight to “sister” disciplines. Human geography is divided into sub-disciplines – for example economic geographers look at economic issues, political geographers at political issues, etc. A political geographer may study elections or wars (as

would a political scientist or scholar of international relations) but argue that full understanding is only available from a geographic perspective.

So what is a geographic perspective? In the modern history of the discipline, dominant views of what the particular perspective should be have come and gone. In the middle of the twentieth century there was an emphasis upon geography as a description and synthesis of the physical and social aspects of a region. Later, many geographers adopted a mathematical understanding of spatial relationships, such as the geographic location of cities and their interaction. Today, human geography is not dominated by one particular vision but many theoretical perspectives, from neo-classical economics through Marxism, feminism, and into post-colonialism, and different forms of postmodernism. Furthermore, it would also be hard to think of a social or physical issue that is *not* being addressed by contemporary geography (see Hubbard et al., 2002 and Johnston and Sidaway, 2004 to understand the history of geography and the variety of its current content; and Cox et al., 2008 for a survey of contemporary political geography).

The common theme of the geographic perspective is that geography and society are *mutually constructed*. For political geographers this means that politics makes geographies, and that the geographies that are made are not politically neutral. For example, if demonstrators want to make a point they often take over a public space, such as a prominent square in the capital city. By their occupation the demonstrators politicize a particular geographical entity (the square) – the demonstration is given meaning and is empowered by the use of the square. The way the “Occupy movement” and different groups in different countries in the “Arab Spring” used public spaces is a good example of how those involved in politics need and use geography. Politics also makes geographies. For example, nationalist movements want to change the boundaries on the world political map by making a new geographic entity – a new nation-state. If the movement for Scottish national independence is successful, there will be a new international border between a new country (Scotland) and a geographically diminished Great Britain. In both of these examples, making politics requires changing existing geographic understandings and making new ones – that is what we mean by mutual construction.

If geopolitics is the mutual construction of politics, geography, and geographic entities, what do we mean by “geographies” and “geographic entity”? In this book I emphasize key concepts that are different geographic expressions that can be approached by different theoretical frameworks. The concepts of place, space, scale, region, territory, and network will be used to explore geopolitics and, as appropriate, connect the insights made by different theories. Despite the diversity of human geography, all of these concepts are used, to some degree, and provide

insights into the interaction between power relations and geography. It is this interaction that underlies different approaches to geopolitics.

So is political geography different from geopolitics? Good question, and one for which there is no easy or clear answer. Geopolitics is a form of political geography – they both consider the mutual construction of geography and politics. In what we refer to as “classical geopolitics” the type of politics was, and often still is, limited to international relations, or interactions between countries. Political geography was originally about domestic politics – such as elections or strikes. Geopolitics was about competition and conflict between states and could be seen as a subset of political geography. Contemporary approaches have made the picture much more complicated as geopolitics is recognized to involve more actors than just states. For example, in this book we see social movements and terrorist groups as performing geopolitics. The classic definition of geopolitics restricted the types of geographies being made to those involving states – such as wars between states, border conflicts, and the construction of empires. Now, we can talk of the geopolitics of making neighbourhoods (as certain factions control certain parts of cities in Syria or Iraq, for example), or a geopolitics of cyberspace as governments and hacker groups see national space as irrelevant as they spy on and cause damage to government and private computer servers. It would be silly not to include terrorism and cyberattacks in our contemporary understanding of geopolitics. But are we in a situation that if everything is “political,” and if neighbourhoods and computer networks are arenas for politics as well as states, then all forms of political geography are geopolitics? That may be the case. We could try and limit the definition of geopolitics to those interactions of geography and politics that have an international or global dimension. Let’s try that. Though with so many political, economic, and cultural ties across the globe it is hard to think of an act of politics anywhere in the world that does not have some linkage to another part of the world.

Is this too confusing? Remember how we started: geopolitics had an appeal because it simplified a complex world. Such simplifications were part of limited political agendas. They were acts of politics rather than ways to understand the world. So, in contrast, a definition of geopolitics that recognizes the complexity of the world is one that does not promote one political actor and their agenda over another – it is an attempt to be more objective and find a way to understand why there are so many diverse geopolitical actors and how and why they either cooperate or are in conflict.

A diversity of geopolitical approaches

A simplified three-fold classification of geopolitical approaches is used to help the reader through the history of geopolitics, the diversity of contemporary geopolitics, and the notion that what “is” geopolitics is continually contested, now more than ever. Geopolitical approaches can be classified as Classical, Critical, and Feminist.

Classical geopolitics should not be interpreted as historic, past, and hence redundant. It is alive and well. The foundations for classical geopolitics were established in the era of European exploration and the related desire and need to see the world as an interconnected whole, made up of parts that were given labels (such as “barbaric” or “empty”) in relation to the West, that was assumed to be “civilized” and “developed.” It viewed the arena of politics as one of competition for supremacy between states. Hence, it believed that the world could be explained and understood, and as a result controlled (see Agnew, 2003 for a rich discussion of these component parts of what he calls the modern geopolitical imagination). Such understanding was the foundation for the politics of empire and colonialism; it labelled parts of the world as “barbaric” or “savage” and therefore in need of colonial control to “develop” or “civilize” their populations. Such cultural politics went hand-in-hand with a mapping of the world that catalogued the world in terms of exploitable resources: gold, timber, ivory, arable land, coffee, rubber, and, not to be forgotten, cheap indigenous labour – or people.

At the end of the nineteenth century, colonial competition came to a head. The supremacy of the British Empire was challenged and other countries (notably Germany, Japan, and the United States) sought to expand their colonial presence across the globe. It was in this period that the “classical” theories of people such as Sir Halford Mackinder, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and General Karl Haushofer were developed. These are discussed in more detail shortly. However, the approach of classical geopolitics lived on in the global calculations of the Cold War. Furthermore, they are prevalent today. The very act of labelling the United States’ response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 the “War on Terror” was an act of classical geopolitics in that it identified a nebulous target that required a global military response. More precisely, the term “Axis of Evil,” employed by President George W. Bush in 2002, labelled North Korea, Iraq, and Iran outside the realms of international norms and, hence, liable to military action. This rhetoric has continued through the Obama administration’s adoption of the phrase “war on ISIS” as part of a fight against “evil in the world” (Obama, 2014). Labelling enemies and parts of the world in this way justifies action against them, such as military invasion, sanctions, or bombing attacks.

In sum, classical geopolitics is a way of thinking that claims to take an objective and global perspective, but in reality has been the endeavour of elite

white males in predominantly, but not exclusively, Western countries with an eye to promoting a particular political agenda. Classical geopolitics has put the ideas of geographers in the service of the state, usually willingly (see [Table P.1](#)).

Table P.1 Features of classical geopolitics

Privileged position of author	White, male, elite, and Western situated knowledge
Masculine perspective	“All seeing” and “all knowing”
Labelling/classification	Territories are given value and meaning
A call to “objective” theory or history	Universal “truths” used to justify foreign policy
Simplification	A catchphrase to foster public support
State-centric	Politics of territorial state sovereignty

In the 1990s, critical geopolitics grew out of the body of thought known as post-modernism and a specific reaction by geographers to reclaim geopolitics from the state. As discussed below, in the wake of World War II, geopolitics became tainted by a constructed association with the Nazi party. Geopolitics was largely practiced by government strategists rather than academics. Critical geopolitics used the tools of post-modernism to reclaim the study of geopolitics. Post-modernism is motivated by the desire to challenge statements of authority, especially those based upon science and government policy. Critical geopolitics critically engages the choice of words and the focus of policy statements, maps, essays, movies, or pretty much any media to identify what is known as the underlying discourse. Discourse is the fusion of power and authority into the content of language. For example, the common usage of “liberation” and “freedom” by US politicians and commentators through the Cold War and into the War on Terror paints pictures of moral authority and non-material gain as the basis for American foreign intervention.

Critical geopolitics used the tools of discourse analysis to re-engage the work of past classical geopoliticians and expose their biases and political agendas. In this way it allowed for a new generation of scholars to call themselves geopoliticians; albeit critical ones who defined themselves in opposition to the classical school. Critical geopoliticians engaged current political thinkers to highlight the role of language in creating taken-for-granted assumptions about terrorism, Islam, the Middle East, etc. and expose unquestioned narratives about parts of the world, and the people that populate them, that justify military action and other foreign policy agendas. The way these understandings exist in popular culture, such as “Captain America” cartoon strips (Dittmer, 2010) or James Bond movies (Dodds, 2003), illustrate a point from the beginning of this Prologue, that we cannot escape geopolitics: we are exposed to it on the TV and at the cinema as

well as during politicians' speeches. By consuming popular media we develop a "taken for granted" view of the world that, largely, allows us to see the actions of states, especially our own, as necessary and reasonable.

Though critical geopolitics was highly successful in bringing back the academic study of geopolitics and forcing us to think critically about what we are told about the way the world is, it too became the subject of critique. Building upon the increasing visibility and relevance of feminist thought, some pioneering scholars developed feminist geopolitics (Gilmartin and Kofman, 2004; Hyndman, 2004; Dowler and Sharp, 2001). Feminism is not simply a call to make sure that the conditions, roles, and contributions of women are given the attention they deserve, though many studies do focus on the conditions and acts of women in different geographic settings. Rather, feminism is a way of thinking that aims to counter the simple classifications that are the underpinnings of classical geopolitics. Rather than simple, and often binary, categories, feminist geopoliticians identify the complexity of people's positions and the connectivity between people and places, instead of claiming clear boundaries and differences between political spaces. The other key contribution that feminist geopoliticians make is the claim that we cannot understand the world in the top-down manner of classical geopoliticians or by simply critiquing such views, as done by critical geopolitics. What is required, feminist geopoliticians claim, is an embodied perspective; it is essential to understand what it means to be a particular individual in a particular context (e.g. a woman refugee from Darfur or a soldier on patrol in Afghanistan) to understand the way politics operates. Hence, reading and critiquing policy statements or interpreting movies is not enough; speaking to real people in real places is an empirical imperative of feminist geopolitics.

Box P.1 Geoeconomics

In the early twentieth century, the Bolshevik revolutionary Lenin claimed that imperialism was an inevitable form of geopolitics given the nature of capitalism. Also, in the 1800s contrarian geopoliticians such as Kropotkin and Reclus were linking geopolitics to capitalism and suggesting alternative forms of political organization. These were the first examples of what has become known as geoeconomics.

Geoeconomics is not one approach but a number of different ideas that share the Marxist belief that economic conditions cause political events – for example, the invasion of one country by another or a series of terrorist attacks. This idea is tied up in a critical view of capitalism; such as Lenin's view that war was caused by capitalists creating empires. An important part

of Marxist approaches is that countries (or “states” – we will go into more detail in [Chapter 4](#)) help capitalists – such as business owners and bankers – to make money; and that capitalism needs countries. Countries create the laws (such as tax collection and distribution of benefits and concessions, labour laws, and protecting private property) that make capitalism happen. But these countries are also competing against each other – for access to resources, for example – and that may result in conflict. Another view is that capitalism creates winners and losers, or the more powerful countries exploit the weaker. Hence, the weaker may react, which would be a geoeconomics explanation for terrorism. Geoeconomics is just one way of thinking about human geography; in this case how economic activity creates geographic changes, such as boundary conflicts.

In the 1980s, political geography engaged with a sociological theory called world systems analysis that focused on the dynamics of global capitalism to explain two forms of geopolitics. One is the persistent differences between a few rich and powerful countries and the majority of the world who are poor and subjugated. In some periods this domination was expressed as the construction of colonies and empires while at other times, such as now, the relationship is based on unequal terms of trade and debt relations. The other is the dynamics of competition between the most powerful states and how countries have risen to be the most dominant country in the world only to lose that power to competition. The rise of British power in the nineteenth century only for it to lose its pre-eminence in the first half of the twentieth century is the most relevant case. As Britain lost its position of dominance, Germany, Japan, and the United States competed to replace it. The result was the “superpower” role of the United States and contemporary debates as to whether it is losing that position in a similar process to Britain’s decline. For more on the world systems approach to geopolitics see Flint and Taylor (2011). In this interpretation, geoeconomics, or economic competition between states, is a driving force behind the rise and fall of great powers.

In the context of the United States’ invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, the question of whether the need to secure oil reserves was driving US foreign policy became prominent. Such concerns led to renewed attempts to connect economics and geopolitics (Mercille, 2008), including an analysis of the importance of oil (Morrissey, 2008), as well as how an economic policy that claims to be based on promoting free markets and open global trade relates to border policies and US military and political interventions (Cowen and Smith, 2009).

The connections between economics and geopolitics require prior theorization, usually from a Marxist perspective, to understand the political processes. The introductory nature of this book means that it is best to stick with geographical concepts to frame our initial exploration of what geopolitics is, allowing you to explore the geoeconomics approach subsequently.

The three approaches of classical, critical, and feminist geopolitics are all alive and well and interacting with each other. The stance I take in this book is to utilize the contributions of critical geopolitics to challenge dominant classical geopolitical understandings and their imperative to categorize and create threats. In this book I also recognize that a geopolitical approach must provide an understanding of the condition and actions of people in actual places, and hence engage the ideas of feminist geopoliticians. However, I take the word “Introduction” in the book’s title very seriously, and rather than go deeply into what can be confusing academic arguments I describe and use some key concepts to understand geopolitical actions (or practice) and the way they are represented. Before describing the organization of the book, the development of geopolitics that was briefly introduced in talking about the three geopolitical approaches will be expanded upon to give you a better sense of how and why we got here, and what the geopolitical approach of the here and now is.

A brief history of geopolitics

Geopolitics, as thought and practice, is linked to establishment of states and nation-states as the dominant political institutions. Especially, geopolitics is connected to the end of the nineteenth century – a period of increasing competition between the most powerful states – and it is the theories generated at this time that we will label “classic geopolitics.” Geopolitics was initially understood as the realm of interstate conflict, with the quiet assumption that the only states being discussed were the powerful Western countries. In other words, there was a theoretical attempt to separate geopolitics from imperialism, the dominance of powerful countries over weaker states.

Sir Halford Mackinder (1861–1947) is, perhaps, the most well-known and influential of the geopoliticians who emerged at the end of the nineteenth century (Kearns, 2009). The kernel of his idea was used in justifying the nuclear policy of President Reagan and academics and policymakers continue to discuss the merits of his “Heartland” theory. The political context from which Mackinder wrote was

multi-layered. Internationally, he was concerned about the relative decline in Great Britain's power as it faced the challenge of Germany. Within Britain, his conservatism was appalled by the destruction of traditional agricultural and aristocratic lifestyles in the wake of industrialization, especially the rise of an organized working class that made claims for social change. His goal was to maintain both Britain's power and its landed gentry through a strong imperial bloc that could resist challengers while maintaining wealth and the aristocratic social structure.

Influenced by the work of Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914), Mackinder saw global politics as a “closed system” – meaning that the actions of different countries were necessarily interconnected, and that the major axis of conflict was between land and sea powers. He examined the geography and history of land power by defining, in 1904, the core of Eurasia as the Pivot Area, which in 1919 he renamed the Heartland ([Figure P.1](#)). This area was called the Pivot Area because, in his Eurocentric gaze, the history of the world pivoted around the sequence of invasions out of this region into the surrounding areas that were more oriented to the sea. In the past, Mackinder believed, sea powers had maintained an advantage, but with the introduction of railways, he reasoned, the advantage had switched to land powers; especially if one country could dominate and organize the inaccessible Heartland zone. Hence Mackinder's famous dictum, or, in contemporary language, “tweet:”

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland
Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island
Who rules the World-Island commands the World.

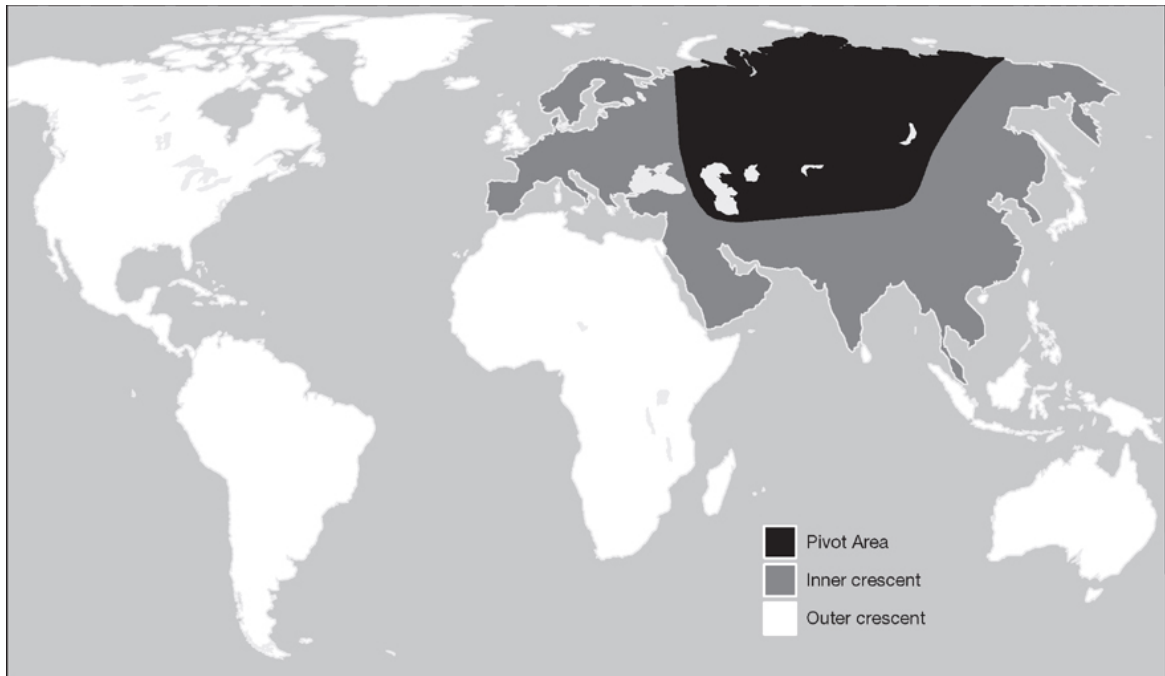


Figure P.1 Sir Halford Mackinder's "Heartland" theory.

The "World-Island" was Mackinder's term for the combined Eurasian and African land masses.

Mackinder had two separate but related goals: 1) To maintain British global preeminence in the face of challenge from Germany, the country most likely to "rule" eastern Europe, and 2) in the process, resist changes to British society. After initially discounting the role of the United States, in 1943 he proposed a Midland Ocean Alliance with the US to counter a possible alliance between Germany and the Soviet Union (USSR, or Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). Mackinder was the intellectual basis for Cold War strategists and proponents of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. His identification of the Heartland, roughly representing the territorial core of the Soviet Union, plus his emphasis on alliances, provided useful theoretical discussion for the Cold War policies of Western countries.

Mackinder's contribution is also a good illustration of two prevalent features of "classic" geopolitics. First, he used a limited and dubious Western-centric "theory" of history to claim an objective, neutral, and informed intellectual basis for what is, in fact, a very biased or "situated" view, with the aim of advocating and justifying the policy of one particular country. Plus, he disseminated a catchy phrase to influence policy. Second, Mackinder's career is one of many examples of the crossover between academic or "formal" geopolitics and state policy or "practical" geopolitics: he was a successful academic, founding the Oxford

School of Geography in 1899 and serving as director of the London School of Economics between 1903 and 1908, as well as being a Member of Parliament.

Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914) also walked in academic and policy circles. He rose to the rank of admiral in the US navy and was president, at different times, of both the Newport War College and the Naval War College. His two books *Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890) and *The Interest of America in Seapower* (1897) were important influences upon Presidents McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, as well as the German Kaiser Wilhelm II. Mahan made a historical distinction between land and sea powers that was to influence geopolitical thinkers throughout the Cold War. He believed that great powers were those countries whose insularity, coupled with an easily defensible coastline, provided a secure base from which, with the aid of a network of land bases, sea power could be developed and national and global power attained and enhanced. In addition, Mahan advocated an alliance with Britain to counterbalance Eurasian land powers. His influence upon Mackinder is clear, but Mahan's goal was to increase US global influence and projection of power, while avoiding conflict with the dominant British navy.

The United States was not the only country which was eyeing Great Britain's supremacy. In Germany, politicians and intellectuals viewed Britain as an arrogant nation that had no "divine right" to its global power. In the words of Chancellor Bismarck, Germany deserved its "place in the sun." "German" geopolitics was defined by the work of two key individuals: Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) and Rudolf Kjellen (1864–1922). Similar to his English counterpart Mackinder, Ratzel was instrumental in establishing geography as an academic discipline. Furthermore, his *Politische Geographie* (1897) and his paper "Laws of the Spatial Growth of States" laid the foundations for *geopolitik*. However, it was the Swedish academic and parliamentarian Kjellen who developed Ratzel's idea and refined an organic view of the state. Following Ratzel's zoological notions, Kjellen propagated the idea that states were dynamic entities that "naturally" grew with greater strength. The engine for growth was "culture." The more vigorous and "advanced" the culture, the more right it had to expand its "domain" or control more territory. Just as a strong pack of wolves could claim hunting grounds of a neighbouring but weaker pack, the organic theory of the state asserted that it was more efficient and "natural" for advanced cultures to expand into the territory of lesser cultures. Of course, given the existing idea that cultures were contained within countries or states, this meant that borders were moveable or expandable. The catchphrase for these ideas was Ratzel's *Lebensraum*, or living space: meaning that "superior" (in the eye of the beholder) cultures deserved more territory as they would use the land in a better way. In practice, the ideas of Ratzel and Kjellen were aimed at increasing the size of the German state

eastwards to create a large state that the “advanced” German culture warranted, in their minds, at the expense of the Slavs who were deemed culturally inferior.

The German example illustrates a key feature of classic geopolitics: the classification of the earth and its peoples into a hierarchy that then justifies political actions such as empire, war, alliance, or neglect. This process of social classification operates in parallel with a regionalization of the world into good/bad, safe/dangerous, valuable/unimportant, peaceful/conflictual zones. Dubious “theories” of the history of the world and how it changes are used to “see” the dynamics of geopolitics as if from an objective position “above” the fray: Haraway’s (1998) “God’s-eye view.” Of course, we should note the influential positions of these geopoliticians. Geopolitical theorists are far from being neutral, objective and uninterested.

Before we move on to the Cold War period, we should briefly return to the German school of geopolitics to make a couple more points about classic geopolitics in general. As Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party began to rise to power in the 1920s, General Karl Haushofer (1869–1946) began to disseminate geopolitical ideas to the German public through the means of a magazine/journal entitled *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* (Journal of Geopolitics) and a weekly radio show. Haushofer was skilful in creating a geopolitical vision that unified two competing political camps in inter-war Germany: the landed aristocrats, who wanted to expand the borders of Germany eastwards towards Russia, and the owners of new industries such as chemicals and engineering who desired the establishment of German colonies outside of Europe to gain access to raw materials and markets. This idea came together in his definition of pan-regions (large multi-latitude regions that were dominated by a particular “core” power). In this scenario, the US dominated the Americas and Germany dominated Eurasia while Britain controlled Africa. Haushofer’s vision allowed for both territorial growth and colonial acquisition by Germany, without initiating conflict with Britain.

Haushofer blended a policy, and made the German public aware of foreign policy debates, that ran parallel with Hitler’s surge in popularity and his vision of a “strong” Germany. However, Haushofer was not Hitler’s “philosopher of Nazism” as *Life* magazine famously declared in 1939 (Ó Tuathail, 1996, p. 115). In fact, there was a significant difference between the views of Haushofer – with his emphasis on geographic or spatial relationships – and Hitler, whose racist view of the world shaped his geopolitical strategy. But the point is that Haushofer did use Hitler’s surge to power as a means of advancing his own career. Haushofer’s tragic tale (he ultimately committed suicide following questioning by the US after the war regarding his role as a war criminal) has resonated throughout the community of political geographers ever since. Equating

“geopolitics” with the Nazis tainted the sub-discipline of political geography and it practically disappeared as a field of academic inquiry immediately after World War II.

Box P.2 Geodeterminism

Geopolitics is the science of the conditioning of political processes by the earth. It is based on the broad foundation of geography, especially political geography, as the science of political space organisms and their structure. The essence of regions as comprehended from the geographical point of view provides the framework for geopolitics within which the course of political processes must proceed if they are to succeed in the long term. Though political leadership will occasionally reach beyond this frame, the earth dependency will always eventually exert its determining influence.

(Haushofer et al., 1928, p. 27, quoted in O’Loughlin, 1994, pp. 112–113)

The quote from General Haushofer offers an example of the “geodeterminism” of classic geopolitics, or the way in which political actions are determined, as if inevitably, by geographic location or the environment. Such an approach can be used to justify foreign policy as it removes blame from decision-makers and places the onus on the geographic situation. In other words, if states are organisms then Germany’s twentieth-century conflicts with its neighbours are represented as the outcome of “natural laws” and not decisions made by its rulers.

However, there is another lesson to take from Nazi geopolitics too – and that is how it continues to be portrayed by academics. Many recent studies have contextualized and examined the content of Nazi geopolitics in depth. Not to apologize for their connection to Hitler but to place the development of their theories within the contexts of global politics and the development of academic thought. The research shows there were indeed differences between their theories and Hitler’s vision. Also, another outcome of this work is to show that Mackinder shared some of the academic baggage of the German geopoliticians. The predominance of biological analogies in social science at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries meant that Mackinder and the

German school were influenced by ideas that equated society with a dynamic organism. The key difference was that Mackinder was writing from, and for, a position of British naval strength, while the Germans were trying to challenge that power through continental alliances and conflicts with a wary and envious eye on British sea power.

Post-World War II there existed an interesting irony: the vilification of “geopolitics” as a Nazi enterprise resulted in its virtual disappearance from the academic scene. On the other hand, as the United States began to develop its role as post-war world power it generated geopolitical strategic views that guided and justified its actions. Prior to World War II, Isaiah Bowman (1878–1956), onetime president of the Association of American Geographers, offered a pragmatic approach to the US’s global role, and was a key consultant to the government, most notably at the Treaty of Versailles negotiations at the end of World War I. Nicholas Spykman (1893–1943), a professor of International Relations at Yale University, noted the US’s rise to power and argued that it now needed to practice balance of power diplomacy, as the European powers had traditionally done. Similar to previous geopoliticians, Spykman offered a grandiose division of the world: the Old World consisting of the Eurasian continent, Africa and Australia; and the New World of the Americas. The US dominated the latter sphere, while the Old World, traditionally fragmented between powers, could, if united, challenge the United States. Spykman proposed an active, non-isolationist US foreign policy to construct and maintain a balance of power in the “Old World” in order to prevent a challenge to the United States. Spykman identified the “Rimland,” following Mackinder’s “inner crescent,” as the key geopolitical arena. In contrast to the calls for greater global intervention, Major Alexander P. de Seversky (1894–1974) proposed a more isolationist and defensive stance. His theory is notable for its emphasis upon the polar regions as a new zone of conflict, using maps with a polar projection to show the geographical proximity of the US and Soviet Union, and the importance of air power.

Increasingly, US geopolitical views took the form of government policy statements that, in the absence of academic endeavours, assumed the status of “theories,” and hence gained an authority as if they were objective “truths.” First came George Kennan’s (1904–2005) call for containment, then NSC-68’s call for a global conflict against communism, supported by the dubious “domino theory.” These geostrategic policy statements will be discussed in greater depth in [Chapter 2](#). In the relative absence of academic engagement with the topic, geopolitical theories were constructed within policy circles, and, despite the global role of the US, a limited perspective remained. George Kennan, for example, is identified as a “man of the North [of the globe]” who identified the Third World as “a foreign space, wholly lacking in allure and best left to its own, no doubt, tragic fate.”

Kennan, in the tradition of his academic predecessors, was also eager to classify the world into regions with political meaning; defining a maritime trading world [the West] and a despotic xenophobic East.

Perhaps, in hindsight, the lack of policy-oriented geopolitical work in the academic world provided room for the critical understandings of geopolitics that now dominate the field. With the exception of Saul Cohen's (1963) attempt to provide an informed regionalization of the world to counter the blanket and ageographical claims of NSC-68, geographers were largely silent about the grand strategy of interstate politics. However, with the publication of György Konrád's *Antipolitics* (1984), in accordance with other theoretical developments in social science thinking and public dissent over the nuclear policies of Ronald Reagan, geographers found a voice that produced the field of "critical geopolitics" as well as broader systemic theories about international politics (see [Box P.1](#)). Both of these approaches, though very different in their content and theoretical frameworks, offered critical analysis of policy, rather than being a support for government policy.

Box P.3 Western-centrism and “geopolitical traditions”

Critical engagement with the history of geopolitics has focused on the scholars and practitioners in European countries and the United States. This is unsurprising and, to some extent, justifiable given the role of Mackinder, Ratzel, and Haushofer in creating and promoting modern geopolitics. However, the form of geopolitics these writers created, along with Mahan, was deemed not only applicable but a strategic necessity in many other countries. Notably, Japan, as part of the construction of an Asian empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, created its own geopolitical framework. Specifically, the way Manchuria was constructed as a geopolitical region to justify Japanese imperial expansion was theorized (Narangoa, 2004).

The key features of classical geopolitics framed the content of theories created in non-Western contexts, but the particular circumstances of those contexts produced nuances and different emphases. The idea of “geopolitical traditions” (Dodds and Atkinson, 2000) is a useful way to explore the combination of consistent dominant themes and specifics of a historical-geographical context in geopolitical thinking. A collection of essays by Dodds and Atkinson (2000) was a significant contribution in forcing recognition of non-Western forms of geopolitics. The second edition of the

Geopolitical Reader highlighted a more diverse range of statements made from within the Soviet Union. The particular forms of Brazilian and South African geopolitics have also been noted.

Increasingly, researchers are investigating non-Western geopolitics, both contemporary and historic. Though the “founding fathers” of modern geopolitics may always give a Western-centric bias to the study of the history of geopolitics, this bias is being diluted to some degree. Furthermore, the importance of ongoing geopolitics in South and East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa will mean that contemporary analysis will, to some degree, ensure a more global coverage.

Though it is hard to summarize the diversity of these approaches, there is one important commonality: the study of geopolitics is no longer state-centric. Geopolitical knowledge is now understood and critiqued as being “situated knowledge.” Though this observation has been used to claim the relevance of the perspectives and actions of contemporary marginalized groups, it may still be used to consider the thoughts of the theoreticians we have just discussed, whose concern was geopolitical statesmanship. In other words, geopolitical theoreticians constructed their frameworks within particular political contexts and within particular academic debates that were influential at the time, the latter sometimes called paradigms.

Current geographical analysis aims to contextualize the actions of particular countries or states within their historical and geographical settings. For example, the decisions made by a particular government are understood through the current situation in the world as a whole. It is this approach that guides most of the content of this book. Critical geopolitics “unpacked” the state by illustrating that it is impossible to separate “domestic” and “foreign” spheres, that non-state actors – such as multinational companies, non-governmental organizations (and a variety of protest groups and movements for the rights of indigenous peoples, minorities, women, and calling for fair trade, the protection of the environment, etc.) play a key role in global politics.

The bottom line: geopolitics is no longer exclusively the preserve of a privileged male elite who used the authority of their academic position to frame policy for a particular country. Though these publications still exist, most academics who say they study geopolitics are describing the situation of those who are marginalized, and advocating a change in their situation. Study of the state is often critical, but is just one component of a complicated world – rather than a political unit with the freedom to act as the theory suggests it should in a simplified and understandable world.

Box P.4 The return of classic geopolitics

There appears to be a constant supply of classic geopolitical ideas, and a strong demand from the public for their consumption. In the United States, today's constant stream of books defining China as a threat, for example Robert Haddick's (2014) *Fire on the Water*, are an echo of publications about twenty-five years ago foreseeing *The Coming War with Japan* (Friedman and Lebard, 1991) – note that there is no question mark in the title, which is evidence of the certainty in classic geopolitical claims. Doesn't the idea of an imminent war with Japan sound silly now? And yet, new threats to the existence of countries are continually identified and simple prescriptions offered. For example, Robert Kaplan has been prolific in finding dangers across the world that must be addressed – from *The Coming Anarchy* (Kaplan, 2001) emerging from the “Third World” in general, to the specific threat of China and the existence of a geopolitical risk called *Asia's Cauldron* (Kaplan, 2014). Fears of radical Islam are also grounds for fear and calls to action, apparently – for example see *Rise of ISIS: A Threat We Can't Ignore* (Sekulow, 2014).

These contemporary works reflect the features of classic geopolitics identified in [Table P.1](#). They are written by authors in positions of privilege in terms of race, gender, and membership of the political-cultural elite. They are written from a Western perspective and are driven by particular national and political agendas. They label and simplify the world and provide straightforward policy prescriptions as if they are “common sense.” Contemporary classic geopolitics promotes an understanding of a competitive and dangerous world that requires a strong military and a global politics of “us” versus “them.” This was the same purpose of the European theorists promoting their own national agendas in the years leading up to World Wars I and II. Hence, it is not surprising that critical geopolitics scholars say we should be critical of contemporary classic geopolitics and find new ways of understanding the world and, hopefully, a more peaceful engagement with humanity.

This brief history of geopolitics is intended to introduce you to the role and content of “classic” geopolitics and the growth of alternative geopolitical frameworks. Two words of caution. First, and as noted, this history is Eurocentric. I urge the reader to use the *Dictionary of Geopolitics* (O'Loughlin, 1994) to see how thought in countries such as Japan and Brazil reflect and differ

from those discussed above. Japan, for example, had its own debate about the merits of the German school of geopolitics, with the ideas of Ratzel and Kjellen being popular amongst Tokyo journalists but less so within academic circles. Second, do not be fooled by the prevalence of “critical geopolitics” in the academy. Bookshops are continually replenished by volumes purporting to “know” everything about “Islam,” “terrorists,” and a variety of imminent or “coming wars.” Some of these volumes are quite academic, and others more popular. They all share the arrogance of claiming to be able to predict the future and, hence, are assured about what policies should be adopted. “Classic” geopolitics lives, but now it must contend with an increasingly vigorous and confident “critical geopolitics.” In other words, geopolitics is itself a venue and practice of politics (Mamadouh, 1998).

An initial definition of geopolitics

Geopolitics, for the purposes of this book, can be defined as the *struggle over the control of geographical entities with an international and global dimension, and the use of such geographical entities for political advantage*. I offer this definition to keep this book focused on particular forms of geopolitical conflicts and particular geographies. We will focus on the international and global aspects of geopolitics. Though this is necessarily exclusive, I also encourage you to explore other forms of geopolitics. Specifically, we will look at:

- the way countries (we will later call them states) interact with each other,
- the way countries are made through the politics of nationalism,
- how the geographical extent of countries is defined and contested through boundary politics,
- the geopolitics of actors other than countries (such as social movements and terrorist groups) who operate in the world through a geography of networks,
- how state and non-state geopolitical actors operate through territorial and network strategies,
- how state and non-state actors make decisions in a global context of environmental change, and
- how we can interpret the choices of geopolitical actors within an overarching geopolitical structure.

Organization of the book

The book begins with the introduction of a simplified model of global geopolitics. The book ends with a discussion of the complexity, or “messiness,” of geopolitical conflicts given the multiplicity of structures and the multiple identities and roles of agents. The text assumes no familiarity with geopolitical terms and no prior knowledge of conflicts, past or present. As you progress through the book, try to make your own understanding of geopolitics more sophisticated by exploring how the different structures and agents introduced in successive chapters interact with one another. Also, be engaged with quality newspaper and other media reports of current events. Use the text and the current events to i) identify the separate structures and agents and then, ii) see how they are related to each other. In other words, allow yourself to explore the complexity of geopolitics as you work through the book and become familiar with a growing number of structures and agents.

Within the overarching idea of structure and agency, the book is organized in the following way. [Chapter 2](#) focuses attention upon the scale of countries, especially the choices and constraints they face as geopolitical agents. The foreign policy that negotiates these choices and constraints is called a geopolitical code. [Chapter 3](#) remains with the topic of geopolitical codes, but shows the importance of how they are justified or represented. The representation of geopolitical codes is important for a country, in order for its actions or agency to be supported rather than contested.

[Chapter 4](#) addresses geopolitical agents that construct and contest the state scale, as we formalize our understanding of countries by introducing them as states, and discuss the related concepts of nation, nationalism, and nation-states. The ideology of nationalism and the geopolitics of separatism are topics discussed in this chapter. Nationalism is a collective identity creating the assumption of community at the national scale and the correspondence of that identity with the spatial organization of society into nation-states. The ideological maintenance of states through nationalism is complemented through their territorial expression. [Chapter 5](#) addresses the geopolitics of territory, boundaries and boundary disputes as the means of defining the geographic expression of states.

From focusing upon the geopolitical agency and structural context of states, [Chapter 6](#) introduces another geographical expression of power – networks. The expressions “global terrorism” and “globalization” are common contemporary understandings that politics involves the movement or flow of things across boundaries and into the jurisdiction of states. These flows are both legal and illegal. The flows are facilitated by networks, whether a terrorist or criminal network, on the one hand, or the network of global finance that switches huge

amounts of money from financial market to financial market across the globe. In [Chapter 6](#) we will focus upon the topics of terrorism and social movements.

[Chapter 7](#) concentrates upon the global scale, and provides a way of thinking of a dynamic global geopolitical context, the structure within which state and non-state actors must operate. We do this through a critical engagement with a historical model of the rise and fall of great powers, more specifically George Modelski's cycles of world leadership. [Chapter 8](#) brings together the concepts of geopolitical codes, structure and agency, nation-states, networks, and state and non-state actors through a focus upon the increasingly important topic of environmental geopolitics. The two issues of global climate change and resource conflicts are used as examples.

[Chapter 9](#), the final chapter, summarizes the identification of geopolitical structures and agents, but complicates the picture by showing how contemporary conflicts are usually a combination of the structures and agents that have been treated separately in the preceding chapters. The book concludes by challenging you to continue to explore the role of geography on causing, facilitating, and concluding geopolitical conflicts: both those ongoing and those yet to come.



Having read this prologue you will be able to:

- Define geopolitics
- Understand the connection between geopolitics and human geography
- Consider the history of geopolitics
- Distinguish between classical, critical, and feminist geopolitics

Further reading

The website Exploring Geopolitics (<http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org>) hosts discussions about geopolitics and world conflicts through postings by geographers, geopoliticians, and other scholars from across the globe. Specifically, see http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org/publication_efferink_van_leonhardt_the_definition_of_geopolitics_classical_french_critical/ for a discussion of the definition of geopolitics.

Mamadouh, V. (2005) "Geography and War, Geographers and Peace," in C. Flint (ed.) *The Geography of War and Peace*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 26–60.

Outlines the uneasy historic relationship between geographers and state governments as the meaning and practice of geopolitics have changed.

Mamadouh, V. (1998) "Geopolitics in the nineties: one flag, many meanings," *Geojournal* 46: 237–253.

Discusses the many contemporary academic definitions of geopolitics.

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1

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING GEOPOLITICS



In this chapter we will:

- **Define the key geographical entities of place, scale, region, territory and network**
- **Define geopolitics**
- **Introduce the concept of structure and agency**
- **Show how place, scale, region, territory, network, and structure and agency will be used to understand geopolitics**
- **Consider what “power” is**
- **Provide examples of these concepts**
- **Use our own experiences and knowledge to understand and investigate these concepts**

Geopolitics is part of human geography. We can use the perspective of human geography to understand how politics, especially international politics, and geography are related. This chapter introduces some fundamental concepts of human geography that will be used throughout the book to explain what geopolitics is and to understand contemporary conflicts and issues. The geographical entities of place, space, scale, region, network, and territory will be introduced and used to define geopolitics. The final part of the chapter introduces two other important concepts we will use to understand geopolitics: the interaction between structure and agency, and power.

By the end of the chapter you will not only have a better sense of the human geography perspective but also how it can be used as a framework for understanding and explaining geopolitics. You should also come away with two important overarching ideas. The first is contestation: geopolitics is a continual process of defining the meaning of places, regions, and territory in a politics of inclusion and exclusion (who does and does not “belong”). In other words, geography is always political and in some instances the politics is violent. The second idea is context: the political events that are reported in the media happen within different geographical and historical settings, which partially define what happens and what possibilities for peace and resolution exist.

Geography and politics

Human geography may be defined as: *systematic study of what makes places unique and the connections and interactions between places* (Knox and Marston, 1998, p. 3). In this definition human geographers are seen to focus upon the study of particular neighbourhoods, towns, cities, or countries (the meaning of place being broad here). In other words, geographers are viewed as people who study the specifics of the world, not just where Pyongyang is – but what its characteristics are. “Characteristics” may include weather patterns, physical setting, the shape of a city, the pattern of housing, or the transport system. Political geographers are especially interested, amongst other things, in topics such as how the city of Pyongyang, for example, is organized to allow for political control in a totalitarian country.

However, places (whether neighbourhoods or countries) are not viewed as isolated units that can only be understood through what happens within them. The first definition also highlights the need to understand places in relation to the rest of the world. Are they magnets of in-migration or sources of out-migration? Are investors of global capital seeking to put their money in a particular place, or are jobs being relocated to other parts of the world? Is a place a site for drug production, such as areas of Afghanistan, or the venue for illegal drug use, such as suburban areas of the United States or Europe? Understanding a place requires analyzing how its uniqueness is produced through a combination of physical, social, economic, and political attributes – and how those attributes are partially a product of connections to other places, near and far.

A further and complementary definition of human geography is: the *examination of the spatial organization of human activity* (Knox and Marston, 1998, p. 2). In this definition space is emphasized rather than place. The term space is more abstract than place. It gives greater weight to functional issues such as the control of territory, an inventory of objects (towns or nuclear power stations for example) within particular areas, or hierarchies and distances between objects. For example, a spatial analysis of drug production and consumption would concentrate on quantifying and mapping the flows of the drug trade, while an emphasis of place would integrate many influences to understand why drugs are grown in some places and consumed in others.

The economic, political, and social relationships that we enjoy and suffer are mediated by different roles for different spaces. Two banal examples: if you are going to throw a huge and rowdy party, don't do it in the library; as a student, when entering a university lecture hall, sit in one of the rows of seats rather than stand behind the lecturer's podium. The banality of these examples only goes to show that our understanding of how society is spatially organized is so embedded within our perceptions that we act within sub-conscious geographical imaginations. In addition, these two examples also show that the spatial organization of a society reflects its politics, or relationships of power. Standing behind the lecturer's podium would be more than an invasion of her "personal space" but a challenge to her authority: it would challenge the status quo of student-lecturer power relationships by disrupting the established spatial organization of the classroom.

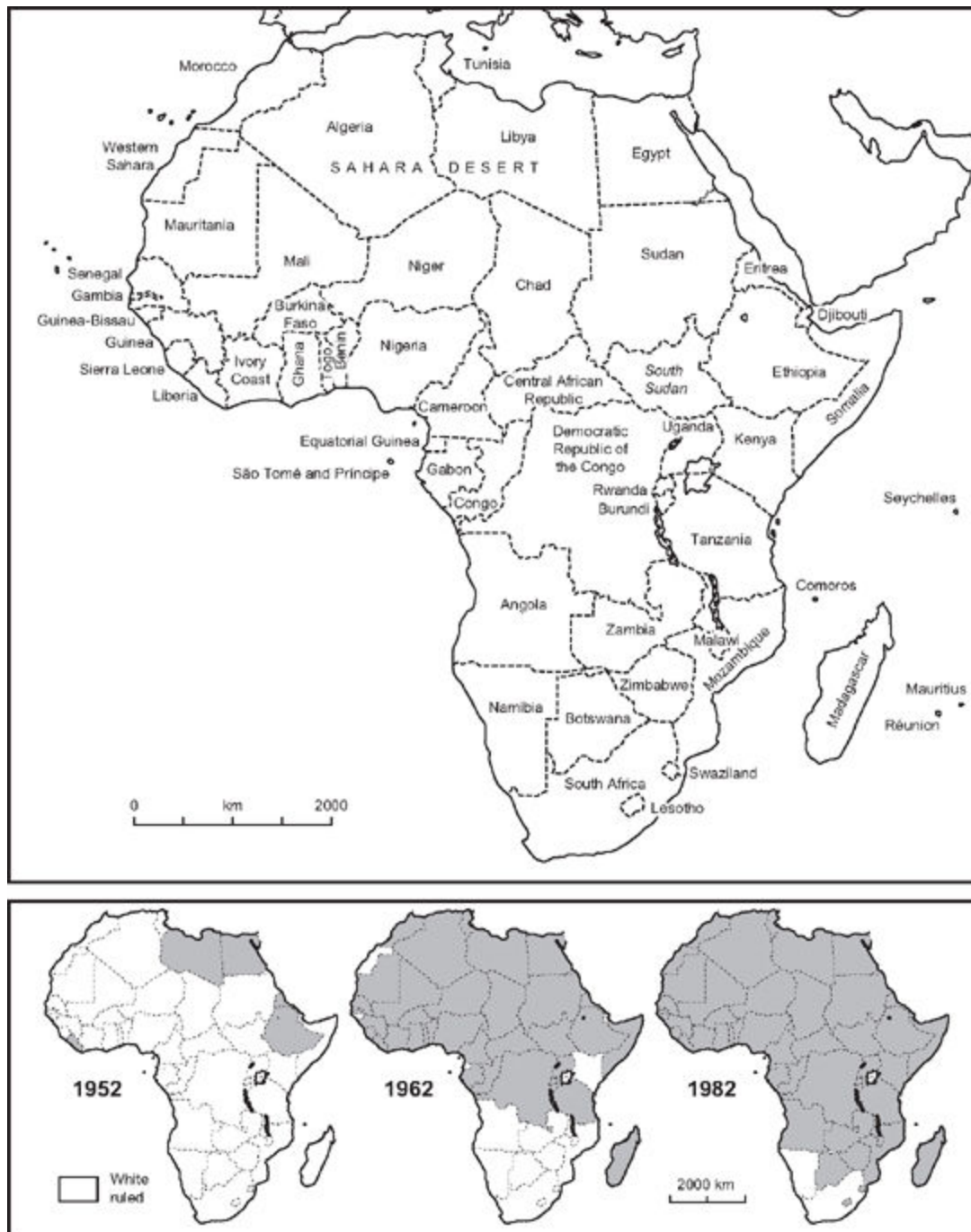


Figure 1.1 Africa: independent countries and the decline of white-rule.

Compare the maps of Africa in [Figure 1.1](#). The maps display two spatial organizations of power relations. The large map illustrates the spaces of independent countries (or states) that were created after the decline of the colonial control imposed by European powers in the nineteenth century. External powers defined parts of Africa as “theirs,” and this allowed them

to subjugate the native populations for perceived economic benefit free of violent and costly competition with other European countries. These spaces were a product of two sets of power relations: the ability of European countries to dominate African nations and the relatively equal power of European countries. The map of countries is a different spatial organization of power in Africa, the post-colonial establishment of independent African countries. This new spatial organization of power reflects a relative decrease in the power of the European countries to dominate Africa, though a hierarchy of power remains. However, focusing on the spaces of independent countries across the continent obscures other power relations, especially those of gender, race, and class relations *within* the countries. As we shall see, the scale at which we make our observations highlights some political relations and obscures others. The three smaller maps depict the struggle of Africans to end white-rule of their countries after the end of the colonial period. It shows the racialized spaces of political control, the areas of Africa in which the descendants of European settlers were able to maintain control, and how these spaces of white control have shrunk to nothing now, given the end of apartheid in South Africa.

Places and politics

First, let's focus more closely on defining what we mean by place. From our earlier definition of human geography we know that places are unique and interdependent. In addition, *places are the settings of people's everyday lives* (Knox and Marston, 1998, p. 3). In other words, people's daily experiences, whether it be dodging mortar rounds in Baghdad or enjoying the wealthy trappings of upscale housing in the gentrified London docklands, are a reflection of where they live. Life chances are still very much determined by where one is born and grows up. [Table 1.1](#) shows infant mortality rates across the globe, but also how this varies within countries – the United States is used as an example. The infant mortality rate in the state of Michigan, for example, is similar to Chile. What we may do, what we are aware of, what we think and “know” are a function of where we live. Places are the sites of employment, education, and conversation. Since places are unique they will produce a mosaic of experiences and understandings.

Table 1.1 The geography of infant mortality rates (per 1,000 live births)

<i>Variation across countries, 2015</i>		<i>Variation within the United States, 2015</i>	
United States	6	Massachusetts	4.2
Austria	3	California	4.6
Greece	4	Utah	5
Chile	7	Texas	5.8
Romania	10	Wisconsin	6
Colombia	14	Michigan	7
Singapore	2	Ohio	7.4
China	9	Louisiana	8.4
Vietnam	17	Alabama	8.7
Pakistan	66	Mississippi	9.3
Angola	96		

Activity

Stop reading for a minute and write down four or five features of your home town that make it distinctive. We will be referring back to these features and developing them as we go through this chapter.

My example: I grew up near Dover, Great Britain. It is a major ferry port connecting the British Isles to the European continent. Surrounding the town was a scattering of coal mines that were closed down after the miners' strike of 1984. The landscape of Dover is dominated by Dover Castle situated on the cliffs; the castle keep dates from Norman times, and within the grounds are the ruins of a Roman lighthouse. The opening of the Channel Tunnel has threatened the profitability of the cross-channel ferries. In the past few years the town has experienced the presence of refugees from eastern and south-eastern Europe. Though I am emotionally connected to Dover, I do find it a bit drab.

To better understand how geographers think about place, we will use two different authors. First, John Agnew's (1987) definition suggests that places

are the combination of three related aspects: location, locale, and sense of place.

Location is the role a place plays in the world, or its function. The key industries and sources of employment within a place are a good measure of location – whether it is a steel mill, coal mine, military base, or tourist resort. Of course, these are simplistic examples, and usually places will be a combination of different functions – perhaps complementing each other or existing together uneasily. Dover, Great Britain is an example where its function as a ferry port promoted another function, the point of entry for refugees.

Locale refers to the institutions that organize activity, politics, and identity in a place. People operate as parts of groups; families, schools, workplaces, communities of worship, labour unions, political parties, militias, parent-teacher organizations, sports clubs, etc. In combination, these institutions form the social life of a particular place. Recently, my home town of Dover has witnessed violent clashes between right-wing anti-immigrant groups and anti-fascist groups; an example of how the political institutions of a place are related to its location (in this case a ferry port that is the entry point for immigrants). Another example is the wave of social protest in Arab countries in 2011 (known as the Arab Spring). This was a battle over locale, or the types of political institutions within the countries. The protestors wanted to overthrow non-democratic and despotic forms of government and replace them with something more democratic. Interestingly, the army was often seen as an institution that could help in a progressive move towards democracy. Within the context of Arab politics the army has a different relationship with democracy than in established Western democracies. Underlying the protests in some of the countries were claims that political institutions favoured the majority Sunni population and marginalized Shi'ite communities. Hence the politics of locale must be related to the politics of identity, and the final component of Agnew's definition of place.

The third aspect of place is *sense of place*. People's identity is a function of membership of a number of collective identities; gender, race, social class, profession, nationality, and, last but not least, place. Sense of place is a collective identity tied to a particular place, perhaps best thought of as the unique "character" of a place. People are guided in their actions by particular identities that say who they are and what they can and cannot,

should and should not, do. Belonging to a particular ethnic group socializes people into particular expectations and life chances. Part of one's sense of "belonging" is attachment to place, which can translate into visions of what a place should be "like:" notably, who "belongs" and who doesn't. A harmless example is the urban myth underlying the self-proclaimed moniker of the "Dover Sharks." The name is dubiously derived from stories of piracy from centuries ago when the locals would set lights to confuse the channel shipping and induce wrecks. They would then wait for and loot the cargo that washed ashore. The name "Dover Sharks" is claimed to derive from the habit of freeing rings from the bloated corpses by biting off their fingers!

To relate place identity to contemporary conflict, the quote in [Box 1.1](#) is an observation of a Palestinian man whose political beliefs are clearly tied to his attachment to place.

Box 1.1 Place and Palestinian identity

The man who entered the room was visibly distraught. Wasting no time on pleasantries, he threw himself down in a chair and announced that the soldiers had gone berserk. This was in early 1994, before the Israeli pullback. Just before midnight, the man said, 20 or 30 people in the al-Boureij refugee camp had been forced out of their homes. Some of them hadn't even had a chance to put on their shoes; others complained that the soldiers had kicked and hit them. They were led to the UNRWA school (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) and ordered to pick up some garbage and rocks that had been strewn in the yard. Furious, the man said that someone was made to write slogans in Arabic on the wall. "Life is like a cucumber," was the worst of them. "One day in your hand, the next day up your ass."

During the four years of the intifada, Kafarna [the man who entered the room] had witnessed countless violent clashes and far greater indignities than those he recounted

that day, but he never managed to come to terms with any of it; he was simply unable to swallow the insult.

Amira Hass, *Drinking the Sea at Gaza*,
Owl Books, New York, 2000, p. 31.

In this quote, note not only the evocation of the Gaza Strip as a place, but how Kafarna's individual identity and politics are inseparable from his place-specific experiences.

Sense of place may be used to construct an identity politics of insiders and outsiders (Cresswell, 1996). For example, the language of hate politics in the US labels individuals as groups who do not "belong," and tries to prevent them entering places with dominant or established "identities" and "traditions." Such politics are frequently racial, but homosexuals are regularly targeted too. Gentrified neighbourhoods that are known to have large gay populations are often associated with anti-gay hate crimes that are spurred not solely by homophobia, but also by indignation over how the place has changed from an understanding of its "traditional" form. For example, particular visions of place are evident in anti-gay hate crimes in the Victorian Village neighbourhood of Columbus, Ohio:

When you have somebody who, say, has a rainbow flag on their house and then you drive by and you see that it's been torched, it's not just a crime against the people living in that house. That is sending a message to the entire community the same way that having somebody put a cross on somebody else's front lawn sends a message to the entire community.

Executive Director, Buckeye Region Anti-Violence
Organization,
29 May 2001. Quoted in Sumartojo, 2004, p. 100.

In another example, the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by Islamic radicals in the Netherlands in November 2004 sparked a debate about the political future of a country proud of its record of tolerance. One Amsterdam newspaper, *Algemeen Dagblad*, claimed that anti-Muslim graffiti suddenly appeared everywhere, and attacks on mosques and other Islamic buildings erupted. However, the Amsterdam newspaper *Trouw*

argued that such reports were overblown and reported Prime Minister Jan-Peter Balkenende as saying “We must not allow ourselves to be swept away in a maelstrom of violence. Free expression of opinion, freedom of religion and other basic rights are the foundation stones of our state and our democracy. They are valid for everybody, always.” (Castle and Conway, 2004).

Politics of inclusion and exclusion are dominated by issues of immigration as well as the ethnic and religious character of a nation (see [Chapter 4](#)). For example, some extremist groups claimed that President Obama was a Muslim, despite his constant and public affirmation of his Christian faith, to portray him as alien and somehow dangerous to what is implicitly proclaimed to be a white Christian United States. As a general conclusion, the function of a place, which social groups have control of the institutions within a place, and the identity of a place, are contested. Racist and homophobic groups are extreme examples of the politics of place.

Activity

Refer back to the features of your home town you identified previously. Classify these features using Agnew’s three aspects of place. If one of the aspects is not included think of a feature of your home town that would fit.

Can you find examples in your local and national newspapers of how the location, locale and sense of place of your home town have been or still are contested?

An alternative view of society emphasizes cosmopolitanism – attachment to no particular place. Globalization is seen by some to have created a class of “global citizens” who travel across the globe on business and political trips, or even for leisure. Focusing upon this relatively small group of people should not detract from the fact that it is the socially privileged (in terms of wealth, race, and gender) who have the status and ability to travel easily from place to place and feel at “home” wherever they are (Massey, 1994, p. 149).

Perhaps more worthy of our attention is the role of diasporas – networks of migrants who establish connections between places across the globe. A good example is the Chinese community in Vancouver, Canada that has facilitated massive amounts of investment by Chinese capitalists (large and small) in the real-estate economy of British Columbia. Diasporas illustrate how a person can be attached to a number of places, though this geography may mean they are not completely “at home” anywhere.

The second author we will discuss is Doreen Massey. Her definition of place complements John Agnew’s. For Massey:

Places are networks of social relations “which have over time been constructed, laid down, interacted with one another, decayed and renewed. Some of these relations will be, as it were, contained within the place; others will stretch beyond it, tying any particular locality into wider relations and processes in which other places are implicated too.”

(Massey, 1994, p. 120)

Massey’s definition gives us three extra points to consider about places. First, they are the products of human activity, or in social science parlance they are “socially constructed.” The functions of a place, the institutions within it, and its character stem from what people do. The Arab democratization protests of 2011 were a product of individual actions, the groups they formed, and the construction of a progressive resistance identity within national and religious histories. When referring to “social relations,” Massey identifies social hierarchies formed within the workplace, between racial and religious groups, and also the pervasive influence of gender upon normative expectations.

Second, places are dynamic or they change over time. What people, do, want, and think changes over time and such aspirations are translated into projects that make and remake places. The Arab countries are now different from the time I wrote these words. Social movements and political groups that support different options for change, or oppose any change, are continually interacting to make the places and politics fluid. The identity of the Arab protestors and their goals changed over the course of the protests. In another example, the landscape of contemporary Moscow is made up of layers from the Soviet past and its celebration of Communism, and

contemporary signs of consumer capitalism. See [Figure 1.2](#) for an image of the city's urban landscape in which the presence of Soviet-era icons is juxtaposed with contemporary capitalist business activities. The old Communist Party regime displayed its power through statues of Lenin and other figures to legitimize its rule. Many of these statues still exist, and are a physical expression of that era of Russian history. They now stand amongst newer “layers” of history that are seen in the signs advertising global companies.



Figure 1.2 Lenin Statue, Moscow.

Third, and related to our first definition of human geography, places can only be understood fully through their interactions with other places. Returning once more to the 2011 Arab democratization movements, the role of the United States and other “outside” countries was very influential in defining support, or lack of it, for rulers trying to cling to power. Outside countries also tried to define what the process of change would look like. In February 2011 British Prime Minister David Cameron visited Egypt, declaring his country was a “candid friend,” and urged the then interim

military rulers to stand by their promise of organizing free and fair elections quickly. Also, the very social movements themselves were connected by social media and influenced each other's actions: the initial act of self-immolation in Tunisia was a single event in one place that catalysed protest and political action in many others.

Activity

How have the location, locale, and sense of place of your home town changed over time?

How is your home town connected to other places?

How does your home town's past history influence its present and future?

Massey's emphasis upon the dynamism of place and Agnew's recognition of institutional politics and sense of place illustrate the central role that contest or conflict plays in defining places. Let's go back to our earlier banal examples of the interaction between space and politics. Partying in the library would be an act that challenged the norms and rules of a particular place; a political act to change the function, meaning and ambience of the library.

In a more significant example, Okinawa, Japan has been dominated by US military bases since the end of World War II. In Agnew's terminology, Okinawa's location is defined by its geostrategic military role for the US. An article in the *New York Times* of 13 September 2004 highlighted the aftermath of a military helicopter crash in which the Japanese police were not allowed to investigate the crash site (Brooke, 2004). Through Agnew's lens, different institutions were in a jurisdictional contest over the territory of Okinawa; who is in control – the US military or the Japanese police? Such contestation led to local protest, and expressions of self-identity reflected in a local high school teacher's sentiments: "At that time I felt Okinawa is really occupied by the US, that it is not part of Japan."

The role of Okinawa, the power of the local police in relation to the US military, and the identity of the place are contested, especially inflamed by

incidents such as the helicopter crash. Places contain many different institutions and collective identity is usually multidimensional. So, places are sites of multiple conflicts. In the case of Okinawa, the conflict over the US presence is connected to the situation of the island within Japan. The *New York Times* article went on to quote the female teacher claiming “Tokyo doesn’t care . . . I feel a gap between Tokyo and here.” In other words, the contestation of what Okinawa is and will become is a combination of a regional identity rejecting the authority of the Japanese government and an assertion of local authority over the American presence.

What other forms of politics are probably in play here but not mentioned in this article? Some hints include the gender of the teacher and the mention in the article of demonstrations a decade earlier after the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl by three American servicemen. You may want to refer back to the Prologue and the section on “A diversity of geopolitical approaches” to help you.

The protests in Okinawa illustrate many points we have covered: Agnew’s three aspects of place should be understood as connected rather than separate entities; the nature of a place is a function of its connections to the outside world; places are contested; and the contestation produces dynamism – places change. The Okinawa example also introduces us to another important geographic concept – scale. It is impossible to interpret the actions of the Okinawan high school teacher without taking into consideration the island, its position within Japan, and the US’s global military presence. It is to geographic scale that we now turn.

Activity

Now is the time for you to begin using the concepts introduced in the text to interpret media reports of current affairs. Look through current newspaper reports and find one that addresses the politics of a particular place. What components of the definitions of place provided by Agnew and Massey can you find in the article? What contests are in play? How do collective identities such as race, gender, age, class, and nationality interact with the concepts identified by Agnew and Massey?

The politics of scale

The actions of individuals and groups of individuals range in their geographic scope or reach. It is this scope or reach that is known as geographic scale. Place is one geographic scale, defined as the setting of our everyday lives. But place is just one scale in a hierarchy that stretches from the individual to the global (Flint and Taylor, 2011, pp. 32–37). (Perhaps even these boundaries are too narrow; genetic material and outer space could arguably be seen as the geographical limits upon human behaviour.) As a simple example, let's talk about economics. Well, do you mean one's own personal financial situation, the "family fortune" or lack of it, the local economy, national economic growth or recession, the economic health of the European Union (EU) or the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) region, or the global economy? Each of these scales represents a different level of economic activity, or transactions that define local economic health or the trade and investment that spans the globe.

Now that we have introduced scales as a form of hierarchy we need to show that they should not be thought of as separate or discrete but connected (Herb and Kaplan, 1999; Herod and Wright, 2002). To illustrate the point, if all businesses were thriving, then all local economies would be booming, every national economy growing, and the global economy healthy. But, of course, this is never the case; the viability of a business is partially defined by the opportunities within its scope. The family-owned hardware shop or photocopying franchise is dependent upon enough wealthy customers nearby. A global company, such as Honda or Nike, negotiates the differential opportunities for sales in different countries. In turn, the relative prosperity of individuals is related to the economic health of the businesses they work in and those businesses' national and global markets.

Political acts also take place at more than one scale. Protest can be enacted at the individual scale, by breaking laws seen by the individual as unjust or wearing clothes or tattoos that make a political statement. An action such as not singing a national anthem when it is demanded or expected is another example of political action at the individual scale. But protest can also involve vigils outside, say, abortion clinics or protests at animal hunts or laboratories conducting tests on animals. These "localized" acts require individual commitment and are also often motivated by

national campaigns aimed at influencing the national legislative process. Increasingly, protest politics does not stop at the national scale; abortion politics, for example, are a component of discussions over the form of US foreign aid as well as a component of the missionary activity of many churches.

The examples show that geographic scales, like places, are socially constructed or made by human activity. We wear certain clothes and act in certain ways to create our own persona. Political parties and social movements are formed and maintained by individual activity, whether it be the highly public and visible speeches of the leader or the “bake sales” and envelope-stuffing activities of committed members. As the scope of the geographic scale increases it is harder to envision how they are socially constructed; but the everyday practices of paying taxes, maintaining national armed forces, politicking for the “national interest,” and cheering on national teams in the Olympic Games or World Cup implicitly support the existence of a country, and the sense of national identity. In the workplace, we act to produce and consume products that are the outcome of economic activities from across the globe; unconsciously, we create and maintain the economic and social situation of the tea-leaf pickers in Sri Lanka, as well as the brokers who trade the picked leaves, the bankers who finance the plantations, and the advertisers who suggest the merits of having a “cuppa” on a regular basis. Though scales are made by human activity, the larger their scope the less aware we are of the implications of our actions, and their importance in sustaining operations at that scale.

Participating in elections is another example of how scales are constructed by people. By choosing to vote or not to vote, an individual chooses to become involved in a particular way with the political system, either validating it or not. The aggregate of individual votes in a particular constituency creates a political jurisdiction as a particular political locality; either a “safe” or “contested” seat. In addition, the outcome of individual votes creates a national political system; either maintaining established democratic practices or forcing a change in the political system. For example, in 2011 the regional elections in Hamburg were interpreted as having meaning for the sitting national Chancellor Angela Merkel as her party lost heavily, which in turn had implications for the role Germany would play in emphasizing particular policies for the EU. Finally, the example of elections shows that scales, just like places, are contested. The

individual may well compromise their own beliefs by voting for a party; for example voting for a British party because of their views on membership in the EU despite being uncomfortable about, say, their social or educational policies. Furthermore, the constituency scale and national scale are the very product of competing political parties.

Activity

Consider how your actions occur within a hierarchy of scales. If you are a member of a political organization (a party, or pressure group) or a church, a member of the military services, or the employee of a business think about how you are connected to a small group, which is part of a bigger organization. Think about the influences upon you and the smaller group that stem from national and global events. Also, think about how your actions work up this hierarchy of scales to construct the organization, as well as the national and global scales.

The contested nature of scales requires us to think more closely about how scales are made by political actions. In so doing we need to move further away from the idea of a clear and distinct hierarchy of scales. Though the idea of a hierarchy is useful in introducing scales, it quickly breaks down when looking at actual politics. Instead we see that many scales are implicated in any one event or action. For example, an act of terrorism, such as a suicide bombing, is something that can only be understood by combining the psychology and motivations of the perpetrator, and the local, national, and global contexts. When suicide bombers target hotels in Kabul, Afghanistan that host Western governmental and aid organization workers they are not simply attempting to kill the individuals in the building. They are also challenging the foreign presence in the country related to the military and civil politics of US-led global anti-terrorism. Many scales are implicated simultaneously to understand the causes and implications of what is often mistakenly reported as a “local” event.

Regions and politics

The region has been a staple ingredient for geographers since it became an academic discipline. The idea that areas of the world can be thought of as homogenous in such a way that they are different from other parts of the world is intuitive and useful. In terms of the physical world we readily make sense of the world by thinking of the desert region of Africa or the mountainous region of South America, for example. We can also think of regions at a number of scales. Within a country we often talk of the urbanized and rural regions. Within the Eurasian continental land mass the “post-Communist region” is often spoken of as an area that faces or produces different political, economic, and security issues from the region of “Western Europe.” When speaking of inequality at the global scale, the regions of “Global North” and “Global South” have become the favoured way to talk of regions that were once known as “the developed world” and “the developing world.” As you can probably tell through all this use of quotation marks, defining regions is not as simple as it first appears. In fact, defining parts of the world as being within one region, and hence not in another, has always been a significant part of geopolitics.

Mapping regions is a component of “imagining” or representing the world in a way that creates differences. Such classification began in earnest with European exploration and the idea of a “New World” just waiting to be “discovered.” Along with that came a categorization of the globe into “civilized” and “settled” regions (i.e. Europe) and other parts of the world that were “barbaric” or “open” and ripe for colonial control. In the twentieth century, the Cold War conflict was framed within a regionalization of the globe into First (the West), Second (Communist) and Third (the remainder) Worlds. The War on Terror has provoked regional categories such as the “Axis of Evil,” a particularly incoherent region, as well as “rogue states” and “safe havens” that imply regions at the scale of the state or parts of states that can be classified by lack of government control and, hence, insecurity.

Regions should not only be seen as a form of labelling or classification but also the result of the construction of political institutions. This process creates what are known as functional regions. For example, the EU is a functional region defined by the spatial extent of membership and the reach of EU law and regulation. The construction of free trade zones, such as NAFTA or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Asia, are other examples of functional regions. The institutional creation of

functional regions is not separate from the classification of formal regions. The EU is a very good example: as its functional extent has expanded eastwards to include countries such as Poland and the Baltic states, Turkey has not been granted membership as some commentators debate its “Europeanness;” a polite way of saying that some do not want a Muslim country to be a member. As we shall see in [Chapter 5](#), the result is a geopolitics of boundary definition and control that is a combination of delineating EU citizenship and defining a variety of outsiders as security threats.

Territory as political space

Just like region, the concept of territory is applicable and relevant at a variety of scales. Most definitions identify territory as a bounded space that is under some sort of political control. The most obvious example in geopolitics is a country, or, more formally, a state. Hence, territory is related to the political geography of sovereignty, or the idea of absolute power or control over an expanse of territory. Just as we may declare a room in a house as “our space” that is off limits to others, as opposed to communal spaces such as the kitchen or living room. We also define territory through property rights. A piece of real estate is a demarcated territory over which the owner has control and authority, and others may be guilty of trespass. These examples illustrate that territory requires two related ideas that are essential to understanding geopolitics. First, territory requires some sort of political control. Second, politics, or the exercise of power, often requires territory. The necessary connection between these two points has been called territoriality – that power is exercised through the construction and management of territory (Sack, 1986).

For example, the ability of a government to exert power over its citizens requires the territorial demarcation of the country and an understanding that those within it are subject to the authority of a geographically defined government. Thus sovereignty, or the right to rule, is necessarily territorially defined; sovereignty is the right to rule within a specific and demarcated territory.

However, the territorial extent of sovereignty is never as clear as the definitions would like. On the one hand, we can think of areas of countries

where government rule is weak or non-existent. For example, the ability for pirates to base themselves in Somalia is due to the non-existence of government control in the coastal region of Puntland. On the other hand, governments are often only partially sovereign within their own territory. The member states of the EU must behave in accordance with European laws enacted at a supra-state scale. Signatories to international conventions on torture or nuclear proliferation are, at least to some extent, restricted in their actions. We have also witnessed recently how the governments of Greece and Ireland have been forced to change their economic policy because of the poor evaluation of their debt commitment by financial institutions. Territory is both a fundamental building block of geopolitics and something that is fluid over time and varies across space. We will explore the geopolitics of territory more fully in [Chapters 4 and 5](#) when we investigate nations and states.

Activity

Think of a number of “territories” that you live in. In what ways do different spaces within your home have different rules of access or behaviour for different members of your family or household? Ask yourself the same question for your home town. Finally, think of how the world is regionalized in a way that explains or justifies different forms of behaviour in different regions. Perhaps you can ask who is “included” and who is “excluded” to help you think about these questions.

Politics of networks

The final geographic concept we will introduce differs fundamentally from the others. The study of networks has risen dramatically recently, not just in geography, but across all the social sciences. While space, place, region, and (to some extent) scale can be seen as territorial, networks are seen as means to transcend territory. Networks are collections of nodes that are linked together. The nodes could be many things: terrorist cells, political activists, or businesses, for example. The nodes in a network can vary in

their attributes – what they are and what they do; for example the headquarters of a multi-national company compared to a branch office. Nodes are also distinguished by their centrality in the network; whether they are at the centre of the network and linked to many other nodes or they are on the margins of the network and connected minimally. Some nodes are not even connected at all. For example, some terrorist cells may be completely isolated (a “lone wolf”) while others are connected to many others, or just a few. Linkages can also take many different forms (such as flows of migrants between cities, the movement of weapons from one terrorist cell to another, or a loose collective of social movements spreading political ideas). Linkages are of different strengths, such as the varying volume of information between the bureau of an international news agency (Reuters, for example) and outlets in different countries; the flow would be larger to an outlet in, say, France than one in North Korea.

On the one hand, networks are seen to transcend the geographies of places and spaces because they connect geographically separated nodes and, often, through linkages that do not travel through or cannot be controlled by the governments of countries. For example, movements of currency initiated by traders in offices in different parts of the globe are to some degree beyond the regulation of governments. In this way the geopolitics of networks can often be seen as threatening to states if they are unable to control unwanted flows between nodes, especially from another country into their own: drug smuggling networks would be a prime example. At the same time, countries welcome and need certain flows; capital investment for example. On the other hand, all nodes are situated in some place or other. If we are thinking about terrorist networks the cells are physically located, even if temporarily, in some geographic location. The existence of “sanctuaries” for terrorist groups within particular states, such as parts of Afghanistan or Pakistan, are a good example. Currency traders operate in business offices that are, usually, situated in a major city such as London, New York, or Beijing. Mayors of these cities, and the rulers of the countries in which they are located, make use of their control of territorial entities to make a home for nodes in a way that facilitates flows in the network. Terrorist networks and currency trading are two different examples of the geopolitics of networks.

Networks are interesting because they simultaneously transcend territorial geographic entities while being made up of cells that are within

places and spaces. For centuries geopolitics has been a matter of the co-existence of networks and territories. There has always been movement of peoples and trade networks. Currently, the identification of globalization has been based on the belief that the number of networks, and the intensity of movement through them, is greater than ever before. This situation has, it is argued, weakened the relative power of countries to limit flows. Hence they have trouble managing their economies as currency traders buy and sell across global financial networks. The refugee crisis facing the European Union as thousands move from the war zones of Syria, Iraq, and other countries is another example of the stress put on countries to accommodate flows, in this case of people. We discuss the geopolitics of networks and globalization fully in [Chapter 6](#) in an examination of terrorism and transnational social movements.

Activity

What networks are you part of? (Perhaps you don't need to put down your laptop or mobile phone to consider this question!) How is your home town situated within networks? Are some of these networks more visible than others, and are some old and no longer relevant while new ones are being established?

The concepts described so far are all components of human geography that can be used to look at many different topics. We will use them to explore geopolitics, and so it is probably about time we defined what we mean by that word.

What is geopolitics? Expanding the definition

In the Prologue we defined geopolitics as the *struggle over the control of geographical entities with an international and global dimension, and the use of such geographical entities for political advantage*. We have now introduced a set of geographical entities that are the goals and arenas of geopolitical struggle. In this section we will expand the definition of geopolitics in two ways. The first step is to emphasize that *geopolitics is*

both practice and representation: in everyday language, geopolitics involves actions and decisions (the declaration of war by a state for example) and the way that the action is explained or justified in the media and political statements (such as a US president's State of the Union address).

Box 1.2 Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech

The Cold War is a phrase used to describe the post-World War II era in which geopolitics was defined by competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, and their respective ideologies of free-market capitalism and communism. In World War II the Soviet Union was a crucial ally of the United States and Great Britain in their fight against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. However, as the war was reaching its conclusion the US and Britain became increasingly concerned that the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Josef Stalin, was going to use the post-war situation to extend its territorial control over parts of Eastern and Central Europe and impose its system of one-party Communist rule in countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. The result was a divided Europe (see [Figure 1.3](#)) in which an "Iron Curtain" – in practice a giant fence – separated countries under the influence of the Soviet Union from those that became, largely, junior allies of the United States. Germany was split in two with the Federal Republic of Germany in the west and the German Democratic Republic in the east. The situation in Europe remained like this until the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 and the expansion of western institutions, such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to include former Soviet satellite states such as Poland and the Baltic states. The legacy of the Cold War remains as President Putin of Russia decries Western expansion eastwards and Western leaders, in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine, argue that NATO must defend against the potential of similar actions in the Baltic states.



Figure 1.3 The Iron Curtain.

Europe was not the only regional arena of the Cold War. Asia was part of the geopolitical contest as China came under the control of Chairman Mao's Communist Party, and the Korean War and the Vietnam War were seen, in the West, as part of a global struggle that was necessary to limit Communist expansion. This became known as the policy of "containment," as first introduced by US diplomat George Kennan. The conflict was used to justify the expansion of the US military presence across the globe, as represented in President Truman's 1947 declaration to defend "free peoples" across the globe. The Cold War included the geopolitical practice of a nuclear arms race and moments when the world stood on the brink of nuclear war, especially the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. In practice, it was a

struggle between two powerful countries, the US and the Soviet Union, each trying to expand their economic, political, and military power across the globe. The geopolitical practices changed over the course of the conflict, as the reality of the madness of potential nuclear war resulted in numerous “proxy wars” in Central America, Africa, and parts of Asia (Halliday, 1983).

The Cold War involved many geopolitical practices by both the US and the Soviet Union (and other countries), such as creating a system of allies and satellite states in the regionalization of Europe, and establishing global networks of military bases. It also involved related geopolitical representations: both of the major protagonists declared the other to be “imperial” and both claimed that their respective historical revolutions (the American and the Bolshevik) were a model for disseminating “freedom” to the rest of the world. In the West, statements such as President Truman’s became important phrases to justify practices such as high military expenditures and interventions in foreign countries. Arguably, Winston Churchill (who had been prime minister of Britain during World War II) made the defining representation in his famous *Sinews of Peace* speech. Given in 1946, in a small college town in Missouri, he identified the “iron curtain” that would divide Europe throughout the Cold War. Coming just after the allied victory in World War II, in which Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union fought on the same side, this was a rhetorical watershed in the public’s awareness of the Cold War, and the identification of the Soviets and Communism as a threat to peace. The following short excerpt includes phrases that refer to i) the control of territory by particular countries, and ii) the rhetoric or language used to either justify such control or identify it as a threat.

A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organization intends to do in the immediate future, or what are the limits, if any, to their expansive and proselytizing tendencies. I have a strong admiration and regard for the valiant Russian people and for my wartime comrade, Marshall Stalin. There is deep sympathy and goodwill in Britain – and I doubt not here also – towards the peoples of all the Russias and a resolve to persevere through many differences and rebuffs in establishing lasting

friendships. We understand the Russian need to be secure on her western frontiers by the removal of all possibility of German aggression. We welcome Russia to her rightful place among the leading nations of the world. We welcome her flag upon the seas. Above all, we welcome, or should welcome, constant, frequent and growing contacts between the Russian people and our own people on both sides of the Atlantic. It is my duty, however, for I am sure you would wish me to state the facts as I see them to you. It is my duty to place before you certain facts about the present position in Europe.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an *iron curtain* has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe.

First, the practice of geopolitics is the tangible and real actions of individuals and groups of individuals in their attempt to wield power through their presence in the geographical entities we have identified. For example, the control of a social media network is a form of geopolitical practice when a Twitter account is created to send messages challenging the dictator of an authoritarian state. Another example is Russia's presence in Ukraine to control territory in the eastern part of its neighbour. Both examples require individuals or groups of individuals to survey an existing situation and make a decision to act in a certain way to change or maintain the arrangement of politics and geography. In the case of Russia and Ukraine, the practices of geopolitics have altered the meaning and function of the boundary between the two countries, and the way everyday life is experienced in the towns and villages of the eastern part of Ukraine.

Second, geopolitics is a word that conjures up images – it creates different representations of the geographical entities that are the arenas of geopolitical action. The construction of representations is an essential part of geopolitics. For example, politicians and the media in the United States work to create and maintain an image of the country based on the idea of “freedom:” the word is used to define the essence of the identity of the country and its geopolitical role in the world, i.e. the promotion of democracy. This representation is challenged by critics pointing out the many times the US has supported dictators and suppressed political groups

it does not agree with. Nonetheless, the representation dominates the way the US justifies, or represents, its geopolitical actions.

The other side of the representation coin is the way countries represent other countries. For example, in 2015 the debate within the US regarding whether to support an agreement with Iran regarding its ability to produce nuclear material was dominated by two competing representations of Iran. Supporters of the agreement represented Iran as a country like others, one that could be trusted to act within the norms and rules of international diplomacy. Critics of the agreement represented Iran as an untrustworthy and “evil” country run by religious extremists, which would use the terms of the agreement to secretly build a nuclear weapons programme while simultaneously supporting terrorist groups across the Middle East. This is just one example of the way geopolitics, in theory, language, and practice, classifies swathes of territory and masses of people.

Acts of representation cannot be separated from the practices of geopolitics (Müller, 2008). It was impossible for US supporters of the agreement with Iran to conclude the deal without portraying it as normal diplomacy with a trustworthy country. On the other hand, acts of hostility and violence require a negative portrayal of a geopolitical adversary. In September 2015 Great Britain’s actions of committing drone attacks in Syria that killed its own citizens who had joined ISIS was represented by the British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon as necessary action against “jihadis” that “have a kill list, they have plans to mount a series of attacks on Britain and our job is to identify those attacks, the terrorists, and where we can forestall them” (*Guardian*, 2015). The controversial geopolitical practice of killing one’s own citizens, in a foreign country and without explicit Parliamentary approval, was only possible if accompanied by representations that created images of “terrorists,” “jihadis,” and the immediate threat of attacks on the British mainland. Geopolitical practice and representation go hand in hand.

The second way we will expand our understanding of geopolitics is by considering how it has become part of contemporary academic study – or how and why it is studied and taught in universities. Geopolitics is more than the competition over territory and the means of justifying such actions: *geopolitics is a way of “seeing” the world*. From a feminist perspective, geopolitics is a masculine practice. The practices and representations of geopolitics have relied upon “a view from nowhere” (Haraway, 1998).

Classical geopolitical theoreticians, past and present, make claims that they can view or understand the whole globe. In other words, they operate under the belief that the whole world is a “transparent space” that is “seeable” and “knowable” from the vantage point of the white, male, and higher class viewpoint of the theoretician (Staeheli and Kofman, 2004, p. 4, referring to Haraway (1998) and Rose (1997)). Geopolitical theoreticians classify the world into particular regions while also defining historical trends. Halford Mackinder did this, and Robert Kaplan continues the tradition. The feminist critique rests on the idea that all knowledge is “situated” and, hence, “partial.” The very fact that the classical geopoliticians are from privileged class, race, and gender backgrounds in Western countries mean that they absorb particular understandings of the world; they are unable to know the *whole* world. In stark contradiction, their policy prescriptions rest upon the assumption and arrogance of being able to see and know the whole world and the essence of its historical development. Scholars who focus on the way geopolitics sees and represents are undertaking *critical geopolitics* (Ó Tuathail, 1996), introduced in the Prologue.

Moving from our initial definition of geopolitics through its expansions provides us with an understanding of contemporary geopolitics as the identification of the sources, practices, and representations that allow for the control of geographical entities for political purposes, including the control of resources. Countries still practice statesmanship; in that sense we are still offered “all-seeing” interpretations of the world by political leaders and opinion makers. But their “situated knowledge” has been increasingly challenged by others in “situations” different from the clubs and meeting rooms of politicians and business leaders. As a result, geopolitical knowledge is seen as part of the struggle as marginalized people in different situations aim to resist the domination of the views of the powerful. Feminist geopolitics has invoked the need for a “populated” geopolitics, one that identifies the complexity of the world, and the particular situations of people across the world, as opposed to the simplistic models of classic geopolitics and their simple explanations (Gilmartin and Kofman, 2004, p. 115).

Geography and geopolitics

A theme we have been dealing with since the Prologue and the initial introduction of classic geopolitical theories is that geopolitical ideas are examples of “situated knowledge” that construct images of the world in order to advocate particular foreign policies. The “situation” of the knowledge is both social and geographical. All the classic theorists of the past, and largely in the present, were white Eurocentric males with conservative outlooks and a degree of social privilege. The benefit of using geographic concepts to investigate geopolitics is that we can gain an understanding of the why and what of situated knowledge.

“Situation” can be analyzed through Agnew’s geographic framework of location, locale, and sense of place. The geopolitical theories at the end of the nineteenth century were created in a location (in Agnew’s sense of the word) of the relative economic strength of Britain, Germany and the US that drove the theorists’ respective perceived foreign policy needs. The institutional settings of universities, governments, and policy circles nurtured and spread the knowledge the theorists created. For example, both Mackinder’s Eurocentrism and Kaplan’s derisive views of the Third World were generated through their socialization in particular family, social, educational, and professional settings that, in combination, made up a geographic locale. In sum, the classic geopoliticians carried a definite sense of place regarding their own country and other parts of the world, which was instrumental in formulating their geopolitical outlooks.

The theorists’ classification of the globe into particular regions also reflected Agnew’s framework. The strategic importance of a country or region was evaluated in terms of its location, both resource potential and strategic role. Despotism, colonial administration, and “free institutions” were the types of locale attributed to countries to define policies. Finally, in order to justify the policies, a sense of place had to be disseminated to the public, both the “goodness” and morality of one’s own country, but also the threat and depravity of other countries. In other words, the classic geopolitical theorists constructed geographical images of the world (or maps of locations and locales) within their own place-specific settings. The practices and representations of geopolitics are generated within specific geographical contexts – part of the “situation” of “situated knowledge.” Geopolitical actions create the nature of geographical entities that, in turn, provide the contexts and settings of future geopolitical actions. But who does the doing?

Geopolitical agents: making and doing geopolitics

Up to now, I have referred to the actions of individuals and “groups of individuals.” It is time to tighten up the language and answer the question who or what conducts geopolitics? In social science parlance, we will identify geopolitical agents. By agency we simply mean the act of trying to achieve a particular goal. A student is an agent; their agency is aimed at completing their degree. A political party is an agent; their agency is aimed at seeking power through control of political institutions. A separatist movement is an agent; their agency is targeted towards achieving political independence. A country may also be seen as an agent; their agency is seen in their trade negotiations, for example.

In the nineteenth and throughout most of the twentieth centuries, geopolitics was viewed as the preserve of the state (or country) and statesmen (Parker, 1985; Agnew, 2002, pp. 51–84). Geopolitics was the study, some claimed science, of explaining and predicting the strategic behaviour of states. States were the exclusive agents of geopolitics. And deciding state actions was seen as a form of politics almost exclusively dominated by men, hence the term *statesmen*. But, the contemporary understanding of geopolitics is very different; indeed, one set of definitions would classify all politics as geopolitics, in a broad understanding that no conflict is separate from its spatial setting.

Hence we can talk of corporations involved in the geopolitics of resource extraction as they negotiate with governments for mineral rights, and maintain security areas within sovereign countries, or the geopolitics of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) seeking refugee rights, or the geopolitics of nationalism, as a separatist group uses electoral politics and/or terrorism to push for an independent nation-state. A provisional list of geopolitical agents could include: individuals, households, protest groups, countries, corporations, NGOs, political parties, rebel groups, and organized labour, though this list is far from complete. Similar to our discussion of geographic scale, it follows that these agents are not separate but entwined: an individual is a member of a household, a citizen of a particular country and may be affiliated with a number of political organizations, as well as being employed within a firm. Thus, not only does an individual act out a variety of geopolitics, but the geopolitics may be competing.

Geopolitical agents work towards their goals, but their chances of success and the form of their strategy is partially dependent upon their context. They do have some freedom of choice, but it is not complete. Their choices are limited. They also do not act within a geopolitical vacuum; they make calculations based upon other agents. The degree of freedom of choice of an agent depends on the relative power of other agents.

Let us look at two examples. First, Iran's decisions regarding whether to pursue nuclear weaponry are made in a calculation of the power of other countries, two of which are nuclear powers, Israel and the United States. In this example, the geopolitical agent is identified as a nation-state or country (Iran), and its calculations involve awareness of other countries, or agents of the same geographic scale. Second, South Korea's President Lee Myung-bak's decision to limit any military response to North Korean cross-border shelling that killed four people in November 2010 was made after calculating the response of members of his political party, the parliament, and the South Korean electorate. In this example the actions of the leader of a nation-state (President Lee) required recognition of actions, or future actions, of agents at lower geographic scales, the political party and individuals.

Geopolitical agents can be thought of as geographic scales. Moreover, the way that geographic scales are connected to each other, and no event can be seen to be confined to one discrete scale, allows us to think of geopolitical agents as consisting of other agents and acting "below" or within yet more geopolitical agents. Our next conceptual task in this chapter is to explore what we mean by the use of the words "consisting of" and "within" in the previous sentence. We will do so through the terms structure and agency.

Structure and agency: possibilities, constraints and geopolitical choices

The ideas of structure and agency are part of an intellectual debate within social science that can get us into some very complex philosophy. My goal here is to provide enough material for you to interpret contemporary geopolitics, rather than negotiating the philosophical debate. Provided below are some key rules to initially aid our discussion:

- Agents cannot act freely, but they are able to make choices.
- Agents act within structures.
- Structures limit, or constrain, the possible actions of the agent.
- Structures also facilitate agents, in other words they provide opportunities for agents to attain their goals.
- An agent can also be a structure and vice versa.

See Johnston and Sidaway (2004, pp. 219–264) and Peet (1998, pp. 112–193) for more on the theory of structures and agents and structuration theory.

What is a structure? A structure is a set of rules (formal as in legally enforceable laws) and norms (culturally accepted practices) that partially determine what can and cannot, could and should not, be done. In this sense, structures are expressions of power as they define what is permissible and expected. Agents are those entities attempting to act. In other words, a woman homemaker may be viewed as an agent, and the patriarchal household a structure. In another view, the very same household can be seen as an agent negotiating the laws and culture of a country, which is interpreted as the structure. And to take this further, that selfsame country may be seen as an agent operating within the structure of the international state system with its international laws and diplomatic customs.

Why is this theoretical framework useful? First, it shows that agents are given both opportunities to act but also constraints to their possible actions given the structures they operate within. For example, a labour union may have the ability to strike given the laws of the country, but the same laws may prevent blockading roads and other forms of civil disobedience. Second, agents will be able to use, and be frustrated by, a number of structures simultaneously, given the multiplicity of spheres they operate within. The labour union must also use friendly political parties and combat those that are critical, too. Third, we can see that a particular structure is not monolithic but made up of a number of agents. For example, the union consists of individuals who must take into consideration the needs of their own household. Hence, strikes can crumble as some union members vote for a return to work as financial pressures mount. No structure can be seen to be monolithic. Fourth, by knowing that agents are simultaneously structures and vice versa, we can think of the opportunities of agents and the barriers they face, within a hierarchy of geographic scale.

Thinking of the structures within which agents are operating as a hierarchy of scales allows us to think geographically about the politics of structure and agency. Different agents operate at different scales, and hence different types of politics can be interpreted as conflict over different scales. In other words, we can define both the politics and the geography and, hence, the geopolitics in question. The agency of pro-democracy protesters and insurgents in Egypt, for example, illustrates the importance of the national space of Egypt and the diffusion of pro-democracy movements across the Arab world as two related structures that gave the opportunity for protest. The inability of the ousted government of President Mubarak to constrain the agency of the insurgents was partially a function of the inadequacies of the national political structure.

Finally, it must be stressed that structures are the products of agents. A pro-democracy movement is made by the actions of its members and the actions of the pro-democracy movement plays a role in making the national space what it is. However, in addition the relationship is recursive. Or in other words, the national situation structures, to some extent, the actions of the pro-democracy movement while those actions construct the nature of national politics.

Activity

Reconsider how you located yourself within a hierarchy of scales in the previous exercise. In what way are you prevented from doing certain things because of norms and rules established at higher scales? In what way do norms, rules and capabilities at higher scales allow you to do what you want to do? Also, in what way do your actions construct the norms, rules and capabilities found at the higher scales?

Power, geopolitics, and geography

Geopolitics uses components of human geography to examine the use and implications of power. Contesting the nature of places and their relationship to the rest of the world is a power struggle between different interests and groups. The spatial organization of society, the establishment and extent

(both geographic and jurisdictional) of state sovereignty is a continuing geopolitical process. The political aspirations and projects of geopolitical agents are won and lost within a structure of geographic scales. The fortune of geopolitical agents is also a function of their component parts, which can also be seen as geographic scales.

Geographical entities are arenas, products, and goals of geopolitical activity undertaken by a variety of geopolitical agents. In sum, it can be seen that conflicts over geographical entities are pervasive and multifaceted. To keep this book focused and manageable, particular forms of geopolitical conflicts and particular geographies will be emphasized. Though this is necessarily exclusive, I also encourage you to explore other forms of geopolitics.

Geopolitics, as the struggle over the control of geographical entities, focuses upon power, or the ability to achieve particular goals in the face of opposition or alternatives. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century geopolitical practices, power was seen simply as the relative power of countries in foreign affairs. For example, in the early 1900s US naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan's categorization of power was based upon the size of a country, the racial "character" of its population, as well as its economic and military capacity. In the late twentieth century, as the geopolitical study of power became increasingly academic, scholars created numerous indices of power, which remained focused on country-specific capabilities of industrial strength, size and educational level of the population, as well as military might. Definitions of power were dominated by a focus on a country's ability to wage war on other countries. This traditional understanding sees power as a material capability or resource, something that is possessed, such as nuclear weapons, that allows one geopolitical actor to exercise power over another. In other words, power is forcing, or having the potential to force, another actor to do what you want them to do because of material capabilities, such as military strength.

However, recent discussions of power have become more sophisticated and are critical of seeing power as a "thing." Instead, a relational sense of power is seen as more useful (Allen, 2003). Material capabilities only have an effect when two actors form a power relation. In other words, strong requires weak, or dominant requires controlled. Hence social relations, and the abilities of actors to force, cajole, or convince another actor to do what is wanted, or for that "acted-upon" actor to resist, to varying degrees. For

example, the power relations of nuclear proliferation lie not solely in the technical capacity to build a bomb but in the power relations inherent within some states being members of the United Nations Security Council and others, such as Iran and North Korea, being labelled rogue or outlaw states.



Figure 1.4 Woman and child in Iraqi bomb site.

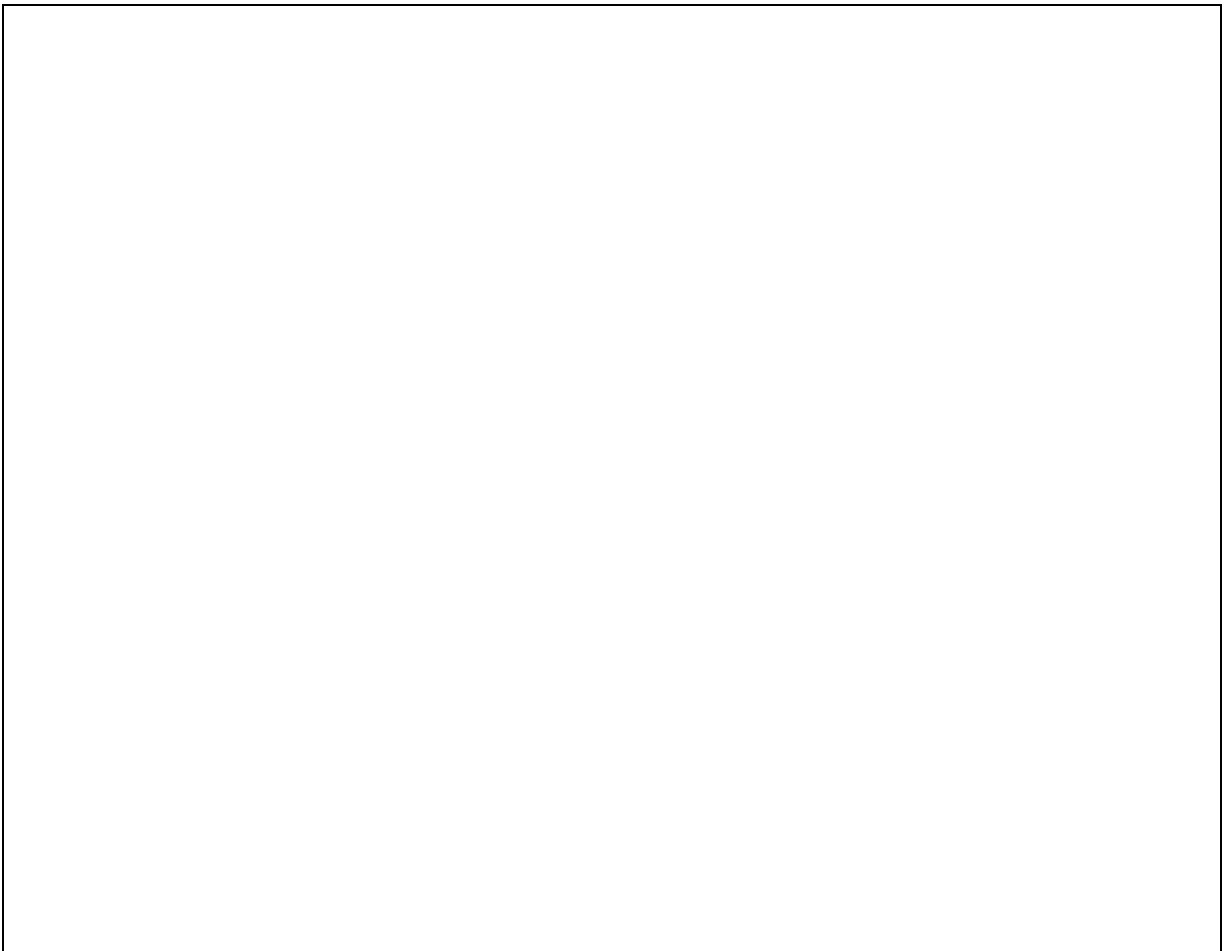
The growing emphasis on relational power was reinforced by feminist geopoliticians emphasizing that the focus on government capabilities ignores other forms of power, such as gender and racial relationships within and between countries that are, over time, assumed to be “normal” or of secondary importance to the male-dominated practices of foreign policy. Feminist insistence on the integral role of gender relations in geopolitics leads to connections between the competitive nature of power relations between countries and the way patriarchal relations within countries normalize a masculine and militarized conception of foreign policy (Enloe, 1983, 1990, 2004). Feminism forces us to think about the gender and racial make-up of geopolitical agents and structures, so promoting the study of geopolitics as the combination of multiple power relations. The result is that any understanding of a current event must come from a variety of perspectives and not just the calculations of male-dominated elites.

One of the other contributions of feminist and critical geopolitics analysis is the focus upon how power relations become taken for granted or viewed as “common sense.” Power in this sense is not the ability or need to force others to do what you want, but is to make them follow your agenda willingly without considering alternatives. These ideas, which we can call ideological power, stem from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971) who noted how a ruling class in a country needs to exert force to control the working classes only rarely. On the whole, subordinated groups “follow” political goals that are of greater benefit to the more powerful; alternatives are seen as “radical” or “unrealistic,” while the dominant ideology is seen as “unpolitical” or “natural.” For example, in the arena of international economics, policies for “economic development” created by the rich and powerful countries are adopted by the poorest countries of the world under the label of “progress” despite the growing global inequality levels after decades of such policies. The Gramscian notion of power requires us to consider how geopolitical practices and ideas are disseminated and portrayed to wide audiences in order to justify them and make them appear “normal” while belittling alternative views. In other words, the representation of geopolitics is another manifestation of power (Ó Tuathail, 1996).

Material, relational, and ideological power can be understood through considering the geographic entities we have introduced. From Agnew’s three aspects of place, location helps us understand material capabilities, institutions reflect and enforce dominant power relations, and sense of place would promote a “common sense” of what sorts of political behaviour are the norm. Massey’s definition of place would also encourage us to think how power relations construct places, especially power relations that use networks to transcend places and spaces. In another example, some geopolitical actors have the capacity to operate at different scales; for example some politicians use local offices (such as being mayor or provincial governor) to develop political relations that allow them to become national political figures.

In this book, I will use the geographic entities described in this chapter to understand how a variety of geopolitical actors use material, relational, and ideological power. The classic geopoliticians of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries expressed confidence in knowing “how the world works” and used a historical-theoretical perspective to suggest or justify the

foreign policy actions, mainly aggressive, of their own countries (Agnew, 2002). My goal is not to explain away the acts of any country or other type of geopolitical actor as the inevitable consequence of a deterministic world history. Instead, geopolitical agents and their actions are understood through examining the competition with other agents at a variety of scales, from local to global. Countries are an example of just one geopolitical agent, comprised of others, and interacting with other countries, non-state organizations, and multiple-state organizations (such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations (UN)) within a geopolitical structure. The complex interaction of agents and structures can be conceptualized as operating within fused or interlocked geographic scales. All structures and agents are dynamic, their form and purpose contested. Such contestation requires us to think about different expressions of power, such as military capability and patriarchal relations, and their connections, in addition to the manner in which they are made to appear “normal.”



Having read this chapter you will be able to:

- **Understand the geographic entities of place, scale, territory, regions, and networks**
- **Be able to think about places in the world as being unique and interconnected**
- **Be able to think of current events occurring within a set of interconnected scales**
- **Be able to think of geopolitics as involving interaction between territorial entities and networks**
- **Consider an expanded definition of geopolitics that includes control of geographical entities, practice and representation, and scholarly approaches**
- **Understand the concepts of structure and agency**
- **Be able to think of current events as being performed by geopolitical agents**
- **Begin to consider how the actions of geopolitical agents happen within structures**
- **Consider the multiple forms of power that underlie geopolitics**

Further reading

Agnew, J. (2003) *Geopolitics*, London: Routledge.

A more in-depth and theoretically sophisticated discussion of geopolitical practice and the way it has changed.

Cresswell, T. (1996) *In place/Out of place*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Develops and exemplifies the politics of place and identity, or the political geography of inclusion and exclusion.

O'Loughlin, J. (ed.) (1994) *Dictionary of Geopolitics*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

An excellent resource for clarifying geopolitical terminology and also provides brief discussions of many geopolitical thinkers.

Dittmer, J. and Sharp, J. (2014) *Geopolitics: An Introductory Reader*, London and New York: Routledge.

A collection of short essays providing easy access to many of the authors and documents introduced in this text.

Staeheli, L.A., Kofman, E. and Peake, L.J. (eds) *Mapping Women, Making Politics*, New York and Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

An excellent collection of essays describing the feminist approach to the topics of geopolitics and political geography.

Flint, C. and Taylor, P.J. (2011) *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality*, 6th edn, Harlow: Prentice Hall.

An introduction to world-systems analysis (discussed in the Prologue) as well as the broad content of contemporary political geography.

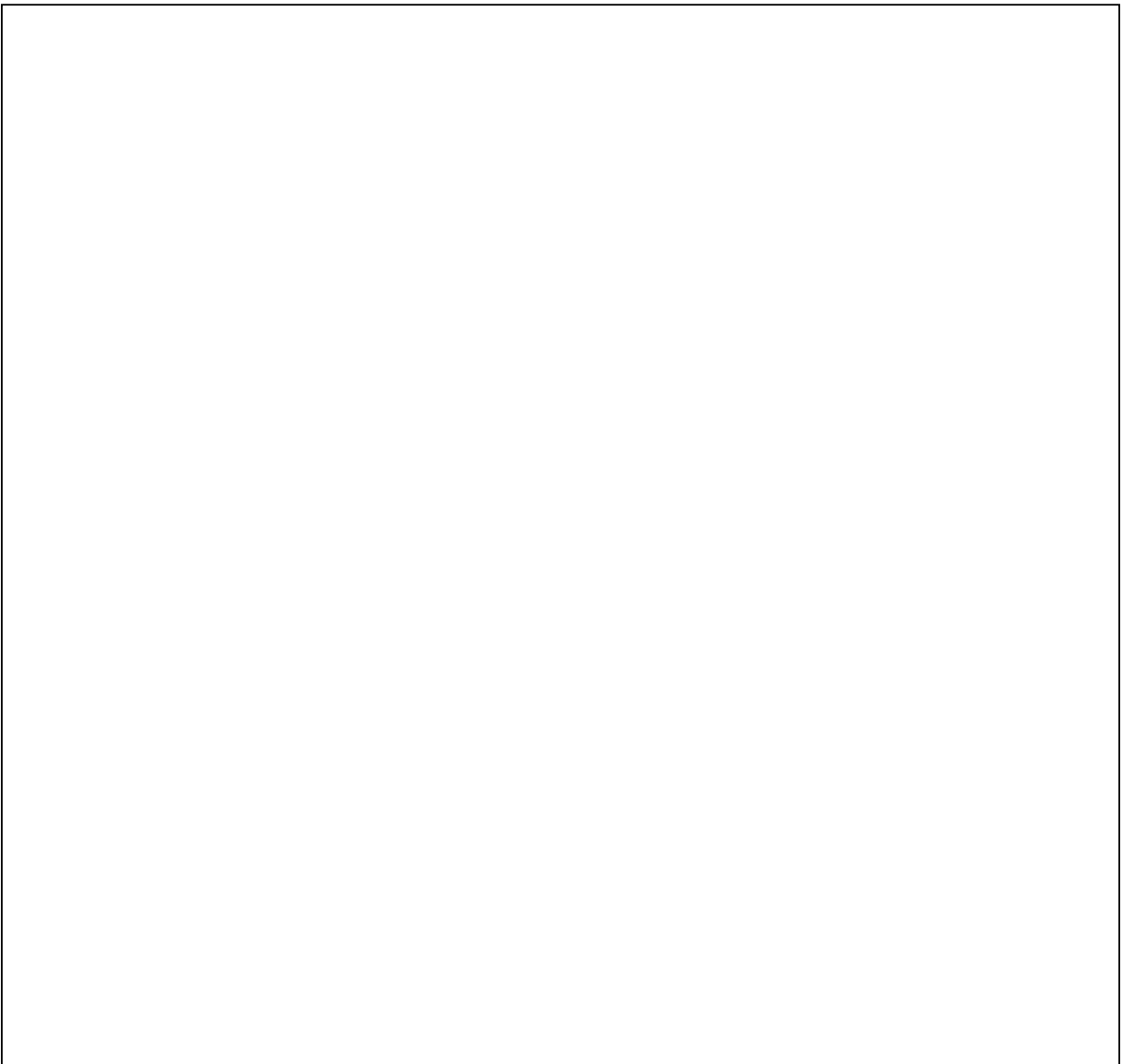
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2

GEOPOLITICAL AGENCY: THE CONCEPT OF GEOPOLITICAL CODES



In this chapter we will:

- **Introduce the concept of geopolitical codes**
- **Define the component parts of geopolitical codes**
- **Provide examples of the geopolitical codes of countries**
- **Outline how geopolitical codes operate at different geographic scales**
- **Show that geopolitical actors other than countries also construct geopolitical codes by using the example of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL)**

When President Obama proclaimed that the United States' national security policy would undertake a "pivot to Asia," eyebrows were raised in capitals across the world (Lieberthal, 2011). Since the entry of the US into World War II, the US engagement with Europe had become taken for granted. Despite significant US interventions in Asia – notably the Korean and Vietnam Wars as well as a consistent military presence in bases such as those in Okinawa, Japan – the geopolitics of a trans-atlantic alliance was seemingly a given, and set the stage for the foreign policy decisions of most other countries in the world. The dramatic geographical shift in US policy that Obama proposed was a reaction to the actions and perceived intentions of China, and required other countries to rethink their own national security agendas. The US "pivot to Asia" illustrates the features of the geopolitical actions of countries that we will discuss in this chapter: a country may choose to make particular foreign policy decisions, these choices are limited to some degree through their relation with the decisions of other countries, and a partial influence on the choices made is the history of allegiances and conflicts.

In the previous chapter we introduced the concept of structure and agency. The goal of this chapter is to focus upon countries as geopolitical agents: the manner in which they make decisions within the global geopolitical map. We continue the themes of geographic scale and structure and agency to interpret how countries make foreign policy decisions within regional and global contexts.

Geopolitical codes

The manner in which a country orientates itself towards the world is called a geopolitical code. Each country in the world defines its geopolitical code, consisting of five main calculations:

- (a) Who are our current and potential allies?

- (b) Who are our current and potential enemies?
- (c) How can we maintain our allies and nurture potential allies?
- (d) How can we counter our current enemies and emerging threats?
- (e) How do we justify the four calculations above to our public, and to the global community?

(Flint and Taylor, 2011, pp. 49–50)

For example, Great Britain has defined its primary allies within the transatlantic and trans-European institutions of NATO and, until 2016, the EU. Furthermore, it has tried to retain influence across the globe through the establishment of the Commonwealth, made up of ex-British colonies. The latter has had mixed success: for example, the expulsion of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth for its brutal campaign against white farmers in the face of strong criticism from Britain. The identification of enemies is also dynamic. Almost overnight, as the Soviet Union became Russia, it quickly changed from intractable enemy to ally. Recently, the military involvement of Russia in the Ukraine and Syria has reawakened Cold War era tensions. Another example is the actions of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam in establishing ASEAN in a move to foster interstate connections and counterbalance the regional power of China.

Attempts to maintain allies take a number of forms. Economic ties are one chief plank. The EU evolved out of relatively modest beginnings to integrate the economies of France and Germany and so cultivate a peaceful Europe after the brutality of the two World Wars. Cultural exchange is also another vehicle for maintaining or nurturing peace. Educational scholarships such as the Rhodes, Fulbright, and Goethe fellowships encourage international understanding and long-term ties. Business organizations such as the Rotary Club are also aimed at establishing linkages. The choice of “goodwill” visits for incoming presidents and prime ministers is indicative of which international relationships are deemed most worthy of attention (Henrikson, 2005). For example, it is a tradition that the incoming US president meets with his Mexican counterpart at an early date.

Military connections are also seen as a means to maintain international cooperation. NATO is perhaps the strongest case, in which it is determined that an attack upon one member is considered an attack upon all. Another means of connecting with allies is the sale of military equipment that is expected to tie the (normally) weaker buyer to the more powerful seller. However, there is no guarantee of subservience. Weapons supplied to Iraq during its war with Iran were subsequently seen as threats by the sellers (the United States and Great

Britain). Less overt are the relationships fostered by military training (see [Box 2.1](#)).

Box 2.1 Power and US Army relationships across the world

US Army Regulation 614–10 is the “United States Army Military Personnel Exchange Program with Military Services of Other Nations.” It is a long, dry, bureaucratic document filled with awkward phraseology. It describes a policy and the rationale behind it. The objectives of the Program are listed as:

- (a) Establish on a mutually agreeable basis, relationships between US Army personnel and the personnel of armies of other nations by which experience, professional knowledge, and doctrine of the respective armies are shared to the maximum extent permissible within existing policies.
- (b) Foster in the personnel exchanged and in their co-workers a mutual appreciation and understanding of the policies and doctrines of their respective armies through the sharing of professional knowledge and experience.
- (c) Encourage the mutual confidence, understanding, and respect necessary to enable harmonious relationships to exist between the US Army/Government and the armies/governments of other nations.

“Harmonious relationships” is the desired outcome, not just at the scale of individual officers but between countries. There is an obvious military benefit in having officers of allies being able to work closely together, especially as the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have been prosecuted by a coalition of armed forces. However, the Program is more than that. It is a component of the US’s geopolitical code, one of the means by which allies are made and maintained.

The full document can be found at www.apd.army.mil/pdffiles/r614_10.pdf. What form of power can you discern from the text? Think especially of the Gramscian and feminist definitions of power from [Chapter 1](#). To answer this question, think about what norms and values the document promotes.

Means to counter enemies are also varied. A once dominant but now, seemingly, outdated ingredient of the United States', the Soviet Union's, and Great Britain's geopolitical codes during the Cold War was appropriately named MAD, for mutually assured destruction. Nuclear capability was strong enough to annihilate enemies many times over. Of course, most of this weaponry remains. The belief was that, as destruction was assured, no one would dare start a nuclear war and "peace" would reign. At the other end of the spectrum is diplomacy: negotiations between governments to, at the least, prevent hostilities and, at best, nurture more friendly relations.

Sanctions are a common non-military means to force enemies to comply with one's wishes. In March 2014 President Obama signed a series of executive orders imposing economic sanctions against Russian "individuals and entities" – or businesses and business people integral to the economy – for Russia's role in "violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine" (US Department of State, 2014). Another example is the international campaign of sanctions and boycotts in the 1980s that put pressure upon the South African government to end its apartheid policies. Sanctions are often criticized for making the population suffer through lack of food or medical supplies rather than the politicians who formulate the policies in question. Countries can also change their opinion on the efficacy of sanctions: the British government under Margaret Thatcher disparaged the use of sanctions against apartheid South Africa; the governments of John Major and Tony Blair were strong advocates of sanctions against Iraq a decade or so later.



Figure 2.1 US troops in Kosovo.

The fifth element of a country's geopolitical code should not be underestimated. The definition of an enemy, especially when it entails a call to arms, is something that can destabilize a government and lead to its fall. Political leaders have always had to make the claim that the wars they ask their citizens to fight are necessary, and even provide for a better future (see [Figure 2.2](#)). For example, intensifying the EU in the name of European peace and prosperity has proved similarly exhausting for British governments. In another example, South Korean governments are constantly calculating how their actions and attitude toward North Korea will affect their popularity in future elections. In the wake of the November 2010 cross-border shelling by North Korea that killed four South Koreans, the opposition Liberal Democratic Party labelled President Lee Myung-bak as weak and ineffective. In 2016, to show she was a strong leader, President Park Guen-hye reacted to North Korea's test of a nuclear weapon by talking about the possibility of deploying an anti-missile defence system and defying China's concerns.

Representational geopolitics is the essence of the fifth element of a geopolitical code. If enemies are to be fought, the basis of the animosity must be clear, and the necessity of the horrors of warfare must be justified. Enemies are portrayed as "barbaric" or "evil," their politics "irrational" in the sense that they do not see the value of one's own political position, and their stance "intractable," meaning that war is the only recourse. As we will see in the next chapter, these representations are tailored for the immediate situation, but are based upon stories deposited in national myths that are easily accessible to the general public.

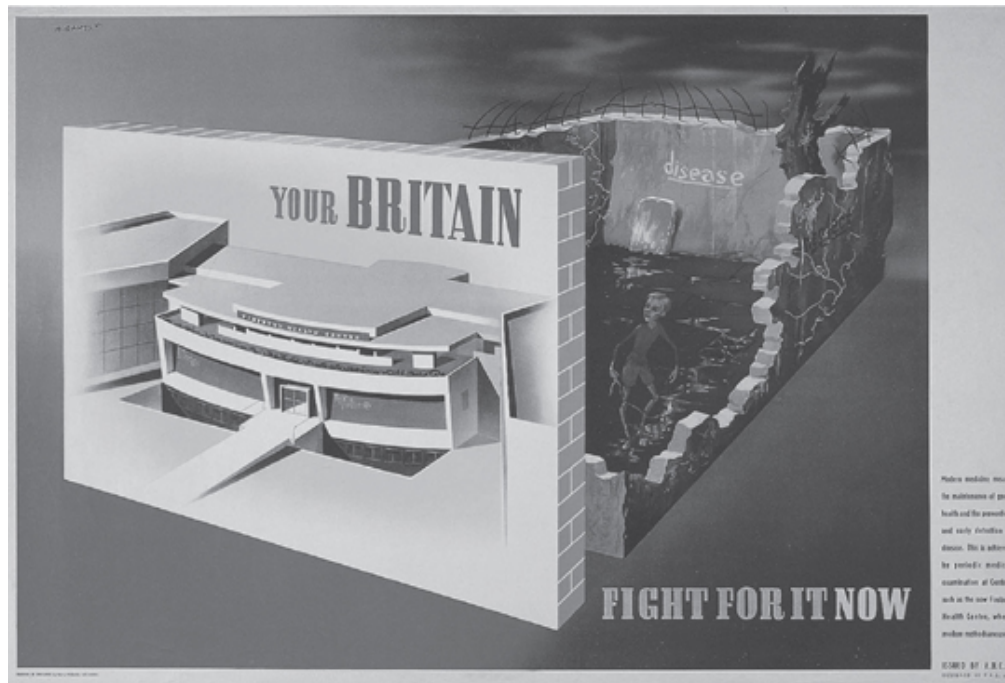


Figure 2.2 British World War II propaganda poster.

Scales of geopolitical codes

Every country has a geopolitical code. For many countries, the main, if not sole, concern is with their immediate neighbours: are they friends or enemies? Is increased trade or imminent invasion the issue? But some countries profess to develop a regional geopolitical code in which they have influence beyond their immediate neighbours. China's calculations towards expanding influence in Southeast Asia are a good example, as are Iran's attempts to further its influence in the Middle East and the Arab world (Flint and Taylor, 2011, pp. 49–50).

Finally, some countries purport to have global geopolitical codes. In the twentieth century the United States made geopolitical calculations based on a sense of national interest that required presence and action in all the regions of the world. In [Chapter 7](#) we will talk more about states with global geopolitical codes by labelling them as “world leaders” (Modelske, 1987). At the moment it is sufficient to note that such a global geopolitical code is based upon the assumption that the majority of countries in the world want the world leader to assume a global presence. A challenge to their authority anywhere on the globe requires a response, for their legitimacy is based upon their global reach (Flint and Falah, 2004). On the other hand, world leadership requires world “follow-ship.” Much diplomatic energy is spent to make sure countries are “on board” the

world leader's agenda. Any attempt by another country to create a global geopolitical code is interpreted as a challenge to the world leader. The growing influence of China within Africa and Iran's role in the Middle East are examples of how challenges within particular parts of the world are seen as challenges to the global calculations of the United States.

Though we can distinguish the power and influence of a country through designating its geopolitical code as local, regional, or global, it is false to separate local geopolitical codes from the global geopolitical context. Though the range of geopolitical calculations may be local, the influence of the global geopolitical context remains. For example, Hungary's decision to join NATO involved calculations about ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries, and a future threat from Russia, but was still framed within the global authority and agenda of the United States (Oas, 2005). Hungary saw the changes in the global geopolitical context, as the world leader exercised its authority in Europe with the collapse of the Soviet Union, as an opportunity to advance its own security. The same idea can be applied to the way "the stans," the republics of Central Asia, utilized the War on Terror to obtain military aid from the US.

Box 2.2 Constructing threats: the CIA's view of the future

In December 2012, the National Intelligence Council, a group of "senior experts" who synthesize advice and report to the Director of National Intelligence, released the latest in a series of reports entitled "Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds." This report is not a geopolitical code in itself, as it provides scenarios based on "intelligence" rather than actual policy. However, it provides a basis of authority, the type of power that is viewed critically from Gramscian and feminist perspectives, which will likely underlie the revision of the US's existing code.

The report is notable for its emphasis upon "megatrends" of economic and demographic change, especially the apparent rise of "individual empowerment," population growth pressures on access to food, water, and energy, and a "diffusion of power" in a multipolar world. The result, we are told, is a set of "game-changers:" including a crisis-prone global economy, potential for increased conflict, and an attempt by the US and "new partners to reinvent the international system." Climate change and solar storms are also identified amongst the list of global risks, along with unsurprising staples such as terrorism inspired by Islamic fundamentalism. The report is interesting for how its view of the role of the US has changed from previous

editions. Rather than seeing the US as remaining as the dominant superpower, but with its influence partially diminished, the future is now more uncertain: “The degree to which the United States continues to dominate the international system could vary widely” depending upon the strength of domestic economic growth.

Perhaps as interesting as the predictions the report contained was the manner in which they were presented – or what we have called geopolitical representation. The bulk of the report’s arguments are supported by sober statistical analysis in the form of graphs, charts, and tables, which send a message that the future trends are believable because they are backed up by numbers. In contrast, the last section, called “Alternative Worlds,” resorts to fiction – or “four archetypal futures.” The report embellishes these futures with letters written in the future by characters such as a fake CEO of the fake company WORLDCORP: Strategic Vision Group. Though the scenarios created are within the realms of possibility, their representation blurs the boundaries between fiction, entertainment, and objective analysis. The scenarios may drive policy; hence the form and content of the representation should be taken seriously.

The report is accessible at <https://globaltrends2030.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/global-trends-2030-november2012.pdf>. Reading the report allows for the consideration of many of the concepts we have discussed so far. In what way does the report construct particular regions of the world? Does it focus upon particular scales to the relative exclusion of others? In what way does this report exemplify a focus on particular power relations and agents that feminists would criticize (especially the report’s section on “Megatrend 1: Individual Empowerment”)? From a Gramscian perspective, what is “taken for granted” in this report and what are the implications? Is the representation of the report’s findings successful in justifying its content?

Activity

Many countries post key foreign policy documents on the web. Choose a country that interests you and see to what extent their code is aimed at the local, regional, and global scales and how they are connected. Also, identify how both force and diplomacy are combined in the statements.

The global geopolitical codes of the US

Tracing the story of the United States from the latter half of the nineteenth century shows how a country went from having a local code to a regional and then global code. As it recovered from a bloody civil war, becoming impressively urbanized and industrialized in some parts, while remaining “undeveloped” in others, the notion of expansion became a key issue in American geopolitics at the end of the 1800s. Despite much political debate, control of the Caribbean and the Pacific became the focus of the United States’ geopolitical code. Rear-Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan was the theoretical light behind the US’s move to globalism. Especially, he noted that sea power was the basis for world power, but he was also careful to caution that any expansion of US influence would have to be done in a way that did not interfere with Great Britain’s agenda and provoke war.

US national ideology was, and still is, based upon the rhetoric of anti-colonialism and national self-determination from British rule. Hence, especially at the beginning of the process of expanding the geographic scope of its influence, there was much domestic accusation that the country was embarking upon a policy of European-style imperialism unsuitable for the United States. But expansion did follow, and key geopolitical achievements were the defeat of Spain, control of Cuba, Hawaii, and the Philippines, and the construction of the Panama Canal. Related was reinforcement of the Monroe Doctrine that defined the US’s sphere of influence across Central and South America, but also delineated, in an attempt to avoid conflict, that Great Britain and the United States each had distinct and exclusive realms of control across the globe (Smith, 2003).

Such geographic limitations were inadequate after World War II and the global role that the United States defined for itself in the face of the ideological and territorial challenge of the Soviet Union. As a result, the US created an unabashedly global geopolitical code. [Table 2.1](#) illustrates how in 1947 the United States was including countries across the globe in its geopolitical calculations. In addition, policy toward particular countries was a function of “national security” and the US’s “mission” to counter communism.

NSC-68, written under the administration of President Harry S. Truman in 1950, is the key document outlining the new global geopolitical code of the United States (NSC stands for the National Security Council, established by President Truman to serve as a forum to advise the president on foreign policy). It is useful in demonstrating the geographic imperatives of a global geopolitical code, as well as showing the similarities with the foreign policy of the US since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the War on Terror.

NSC-68 outlined the goals of a global geopolitical code, but it had to do so in the face of the geopolitical challenge of the Soviet Union and the ideological alternative of communism. The document is often quoted for its claim that “The assault on free institutions is world-wide now, and in the context of the present polarization of power a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere” (Section IV, A). The geopolitical implication of this statement is that all parts of the globe held equal strategic importance – the US believed it had to assert its authority in all countries. The Soviet system was a value system “wholly irreconcilable with ours” (IV, A), and its influence was preventing the establishment of “order” in the international system. Foreshadowing [Chapter 7](#), NSC-68 claims that the conflict with the Soviet Union “imposes on us, in our own interests, the responsibility of world leadership” (IV, B).

The justification of the global geopolitical role of the United States was made clear: “Our overall policy at the present time may be described as one designed to foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish. It therefore rejects the concept of isolation and affirms the necessity of our positive participation in the world community” (VI, A). In other words, the simultaneous needs of defending a national “American system” but also diffusing it across the world were the basis for the US’s global geopolitical code. The enemy was identified as the Soviet Union. Allies were countries and people advocating “free institutions.”

Table 2.1 *Constructing a global geopolitical code*

<i>Identifying the global mission</i>		<i>Adding the national interest</i>	<i>Ranking the world</i>
<i>Threat from Communism</i>		<i>US security</i>	<i>Prioritizing countries</i>
9	Great Britain	1	1
6	France	2	2
U	Germany	3	3
3	Italy	7	4
1	Greece	10	5
2	Turkey	9	6
7	Austria	6	7
U	Japan	13	8
10	Belgium	4	9
12	Netherlands	5	10
17	Latin America	11	11
U	Spain	12	12
5	Korea	15	13
U	China	14	14

13	Philippines	16	15
18	Canada	8	16
4	Iran	U	U
8	Hungary	U	U
11	Luxembourg	U	U
14	Portugal	U	U
15	Czechoslovakia	U	U
16	Poland	U	U

Source: The data is from a Joint Chiefs of Staff document reproduced in Etzold and Gaddis (1978, p. 79 and pp. 82–83), and the table is slightly modified from Taylor (1990, p. 16).

Note: U = unranked.

Activity

Compare the language of NSC-68 with the contemporary document Global Trends 2030 we discussed earlier in the chapter ([Box 2.2](#)). How do the enemies and allies identified vary? Do the means of engaging allies and enemies differ or remain the same? In what way do they differ in how they refer to the global role of the US?

The means of the geopolitical code were twofold. First, NSC-68 claimed a “policy to develop a healthy international community” (VI, A) – a global geopolitical agenda in other words. Second, the document outlined a “policy of ‘containing’ the Soviet system” (VI, A), or negating the ideological and geopolitical challenger. Containment was a policy

which seeks by all means short of war to (1) block further expansion of Soviet power, (2) expose the falsities of Soviet pretensions, (3) induce a retraction of the Kremlin’s control and influence, and (4) in general, so foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system that the Kremlin is brought at least to the point of modifying its behavior to conform to generally accepted international standards.

(VI, A)

The US would be the influential investigator, judge, and jury when it came to breaches of “international standards,” but this policy manifested itself in realms of activity from nuclear deterrence, to the Vietnam War, and espionage. There is a contradiction within NSC-68. On the one hand, it calls for the global role and

presence of the United States, while, on the other hand, its call for “containment” acknowledges the challenge of the Soviet Union. In other words, the rhetoric of leading the whole world was maintained within the practical constraints of a bipolar world.

But how was the global geopolitical code of the US represented to domestic and international audiences? For domestic consumption, NSC-68 was based upon the ideals and content of the US Constitution. Section II was entitled “Fundamental Purpose of the United States” in which the “three realities” of individual freedom, democracy, and determination to fight to defend the American way of life were established and deemed to be under the protection of “Divine Providence.” It was these “realities” that formed the basis of US world leadership; they were to be diffused to the world to maintain order. Section III, “Fundamental Design of the Kremlin” (“Design” having an evil, even sexual, implication rather than the valiant “Purpose”), argued that the United States was the Soviet Union’s “principal enemy.” Both the domestic security and the global mission of the US were justified by rhetoric within NSC-68. The justification was also evident in the popular media. Hollywood produced a spate of movies based on biblical epics that portrayed the Middle East in a manner that was accessible while subtly justifying US foreign policy in the region (McAlister, 2001).

Geopolitical codes are dynamic. To illustrate this point we skip to the US geopolitical code in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. The code remains global but the enemies and means are very different.

The War on Terror as a geopolitical code

How did the US respond to the attack on its global agenda and presence that was clearly manifested in September 2001? As in NSC-68, the United States focused on two separate but related geopolitical agendas: protection of its sovereign territory and the construction of a global order. The defining document was the National Security Strategy of 2002, the foundation of what became known as the “Bush Doctrine.”

The National Security Strategy (NSS) is an annual exercise that updates the United States’ geopolitical code. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11 the understandable focus was upon anti-American terrorism. By making the claim that the “struggle against global terrorism is different from any other war in history” (NSS, 2002, p. 5), the document was able to make the case that the established means to counter allies was ripe for change. The geopolitical threat identified by the NSS contained an apparent vagueness, but was able to become fixed on particular countries quite easily. The strategy formalized the geopolitical

code of the War on Terror, a war against “terrorists of a global reach” (NSS, 2002, p. 5). Simultaneously, this threat justified the global role of the United States while also laying the foundation for action against specific countries: the “enemy is not a single political regime or person or religion or ideology. The enemy is terrorism” (NSS, 2002, p. 15). The clever use of “not a single” allows the code to be nebulously global and also, at times, geographically specific.

The vague and the specific were combined in the identification of the threat posed by “rogue states,” countries that “brutalize their own people and squander national resources” ((NSS, 2002, p. 9). Such acts are deemed a violation of the “basic principles” and goals of a US global agenda that had been set in NSC-68. But rogue states are identified as a more specific threat too, being linked with the sponsorship of terrorism and the procurement of weapons of mass destruction. In this way, the notion of “rogue states” is able to give specific geographic definition, or targeting, to the global practices of the US (Klare, 1996).

With terrorism defined as the geopolitical threat facing the US, the “pre-emptive attack” was introduced as the legitimate means of countering the threat. The NSS evoked the United States’ “right to self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists” ((NSS, 2002, p. 6); simply to strike before “our enemies strike first” ((NSS, 2002, p. 15).

In language that echoed NSC-68, the War on Terror was global in scope and historic in its intentions: “a global enterprise of uncertain duration” ((NSS, 2002, opening statement). In another similarity with NSC-68, allies were to be maintained through “lasting institutions” ((NSS, 2002, opening statement) that would provide the basis for “a truly global consensus about basic principles [that] is slowly taking shape” ((NSS, 2002, p. 26). The intention was to secure the continuation of the global role of the US; “these are the practices that will sustain the supremacy of our common principles and keep open the path of progress” ((NSS, 2002, p. 28).

However, such institution and agenda building was not deemed sufficient. The NSS includes means other than institutions and “principles” to secure allies. Indeed, now “is the time to reaffirm the essential role of American military strength” ((NSS, 2002, p. 29). But notably, the geography of this military strength was a global mission rather than the securing of the United States’ borders: “The presence of American forces is one of the most profound symbols of the US commitment to allies and friends” ((NSS, 2002, p. 29). Similar to NSC-68, the language of NSS balanced an identification of a threat to the US society and people, in terms of continued terrorist attacks, with a global commitment to promoting a particular vision of order. On the one hand, such order was deemed to be globally beneficial. On the other hand, it was “a distinctly American

internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests” ((NSS, 2002, p. 1).

Box 2.3 The geopolitics of the “Washington Consensus”

The geopolitical agenda and power of the US is as economic as it is militaristic. Its influence in the key global economic institutions of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO) is a reflection of its material interests and power to disseminate an ideological agenda. Indeed, since the 1990s the term “Washington Consensus” has developed as a summary of the economic policies that the US has pushed other countries to adopt, with much success. Under the umbrella of the term are policies of trade and investment liberalization, privatization, deregulation, fiscal and tax policy, and changes in the direction of public spending. Over time, those critical of such policies have also added issues of corporate governance, corruption, labor policy, and social safety nets into the argument.

“Washington Consensus,” Global Trade Negotiations Home Page. April 2003.

www.cid.harvard.edu/cidtrade/issues/washington.html.

Accessed January 17, 2005.

In combination, these policies, whether they are seen positively or negatively, fall under the phrase “Washington Consensus;” the economic side of the US’s global geopolitical code. Recently, a challenge has emerged in the form of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), led by China.

In what way can the Washington Consensus be seen as separate or directly connected to the military actions of the United States? Is the formation of the AIIB an act of geopolitics? If so, what does the eagerness to join the AIIB of countries such as Britain and Australia say about their geopolitical codes?

The justification for the geopolitical code invoked language that was similar to that used in NSC-68: personal freedom was the goal, and free-market economics the means. The justification targeted domestic and global audiences: “A strong

world economy enhances our national security by advancing prosperity and freedom in the rest of the world” ((NSS, 2002, p. 17). The strategy promoted free trade as the economic vehicle, a policy that was portrayed as having benefits for everyone across the globe: “This is real freedom, the freedom for a person – or a nation – to make a living” ((NSS, 2002, p. 18).

In a related statement, made at a time of confidence after the “victory” in Afghanistan that led to the removal of the Taliban regime by an American invasion as punishment for their support of al-Qaeda bases, President George W. Bush used his annual State of the Union address to define focused geopolitical goals, within the framework of the War on Terror’s global order. An “Axis of Evil,” comprising Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, was identified. The geopolitical threat posed by these states was not just their alleged ties to terrorism, but also the identification of programmes to build nuclear, chemical, and biological military capacity – weapons of mass destruction.



Figure 2.3 “Freedom Walk.”

President Obama came to power vowing to reduce the military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. This was done through an identification of the governments of both countries as allies with which the US could cooperate. Such optimism has not been warranted. There are strong doubts about the loyalty and efficiency of the Afghan army, resulting in fears of renewed Taliban and warlord influence. In Iraq, the security situation has steadily deteriorated as Iraqi governments sharpened internal tensions between Sunni and Shi'ite sections of the population. Al-Qaeda in Iraq (a Sunni-based group) turned its attention to perceived Sunni apostates as well as US targets. The killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, in 2006 by a US airstrike created an opportunity for the emergence of a new geopolitical actor, what has become known as the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL).

With the focus of US military action upon ISIS, the question is whether this part of the War on Terror is targeting terrorists. In September 2014 President Obama identified ISIS as an enemy that the US military would “degrade and ultimately destroy.” The identification of an enemy and the means to tackle it were made clear. Thousands of drone and air sorties testify to that. But what about the representation? In that same September speech President Obama identified ISIS as “a terrorist organization, pure and simple.” To some commentators this is a geopolitical misrepresentation with important and detrimental implications for future actions. “If ISIS is purely and simply anything, it is a pseudo-state led by a conventional army. And that is why counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategies that greatly diminished the threat from al Qaeda will not work against ISIS” (Cronin, 2015, p. 1). Geopolitical representations are necessary to justify geopolitical actions. But as the contexts for action change, maintaining old representations may lead to retaining policies that are no longer effective.

The War on Terror morphed from combating a global terrorist network (al-Qaeda and its various affiliates) into a struggle against a regional actor that has been able to control key cities in Iraq and Syria. At the same time, Russia and China presented different geopolitical challenges in other parts of the world. Not only has the segment of the US geopolitical code known as the War on Terror been adapted as circumstances have changed, but it has also been balanced with other perceived threats and commitments.

Activity

To keep this chapter at a reasonable length I have had to limit the analysis of US foreign policy documents. The statements of Presidents Carter and

Reagan may be especially useful for you to investigate, or even President Theodore Roosevelt at the beginning of the US's rise to power.

The contemporary codes of other increasingly important countries (such as Turkey, Russia, or China) would also be intriguing to explore, given that the domestic politics of each one is fluid at a time when the country is increasing the geographic scope of its influence.

“At night we hear them screaming:” a feminist geopolitics of the US geopolitical code

How should the value and success of a geopolitical code be measured? Using the metrics of material and relational power the evaluation of a geopolitical code becomes a cost-benefit calculation based upon the amount of diplomatic and military resources applied and whether a given outcome has been achieved. In the case of the US invasion of Afghanistan, the cost of loss of life of military personnel as well as the billions of dollars financing the invasion and post-war reconstruction, plus the diplomatic efforts to establish friendly governments, could be said to be worthwhile if the country is no longer a safe haven for al-Qaeda. This approach to geopolitical codes is similar to classical geopolitics – a grand strategy of global threats and solutions.

But what if the focus is upon the body? The body is a scale of geopolitical codes that feminist scholars direct our attention to. It refers to an individual's physical person as well, especially when under threat of violence, in addition to the way a person uses their body, and clothing, to perform a particular political role. Focusing on the physical harm done to the body brings into focus the human costs of war, and its aftermath, and disturbing questions have to be faced. In September 2015, the US media began to publish stories about the pervasiveness of sexual assaults by the Afghan security forces upon young boys. US military personnel knew of these acts, and were told to keep quiet. Lance Corporal Gregory Buckley Jr. called his father and spoke of the abuse by Afghan police officers at his base: “At night we hear them screaming, but we're not allowed to do anything about it.” The soldier was told it was merely a matter of Afghani culture – *bacha bazi*, or “boy play.” Buckley was later killed by one of a group of boys brought to the base to be sex slaves.

This was not an isolated event. Afghani culture is rife with the sexual abuse of young boys: being surrounded by boys and teenagers is a sign of social status. If a

geopolitical code is understood in terms of calculations about defeating enemies and the means to do so, the sexual abuse of young boys becomes invisible and irrelevant. The *New York Times* (Goldstein, 2015) reported one former marine Lance Corporal saying, “The bigger picture was fighting the Taliban. It wasn’t to stop molestation.” The defeat of the Taliban and denial of Afghanistan as a safe haven for terrorists suggests success for one part of the US’s geopolitical code on the War on Terror. But what is “terror” if it is not fear of sexual abuse? Dan Quinn, a former Special Forces captain, said, “The reason we were here is because we heard the terrible things the Taliban were doing to people, how they were taking away human rights. But we were putting people into power who would do things worse than the Taliban did – that was something village elders voiced to me.” Captain Quinn beat up an American-backed militia leader for his sex acts with young boys, and was relieved of his command. The official statement of the military command in Afghanistan is that such things are a matter of civilian law, effectively denying the power relations and cultural norms of the US ally (Goldstein, 2015).

The case of sexual abuse in Afghanistan highlights the way the scale of the body is largely neglected in the calculations of geopolitical codes. For example, in the Vietnam War the policy to bomb North Vietnam “back into the stone age” was suggested with an eye only to military strategy rather than the costs to life and living conditions of the citizens of the country. Such geopolitical practices are certainly not just a matter of US actions. However, a country that represents its geopolitical practices in terms of “freedom” and promoting democracy against “barbarism” will be embarrassed when a feminist geopolitical eye is used to uncover the human costs of geopolitical codes. Evaluating the necessity and effectiveness of geopolitical codes by looking at the human suffering of the most marginalized results in the inclusion of very disturbing ingredients in a cost–benefit calculation. Citizens of the US and its allies have to recognize that the security benefits of putting al-Qaeda to flight in Afghanistan have involved promoting and protecting Afghani security officials that systematically conduct sexual abuse. Part of such human cost is the difficulty for US military personnel in deciding whether to act in a way that either challenges such practices or to be culpable through silence.

Geopolitical codes of global significance

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter every country in the world has a geopolitical code. Of course, it would be impractical to discuss even a handful of these geopolitical codes. Rather, the hope is that you will use your understanding

of the concept to explore the geopolitical codes of countries that interest you. Some countries of particular interest, though, are Russia, India, and China. Their codes will be introduced briefly.

Russia

Over the past ten years the geopolitical code of Russia has vacillated between cooperation and antagonism with regard to the West. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 2001, Russia cooperated with the United States in the War on Terror. One reason for this policy was a calculation that the new actions of the US would provide a free hand for Russia to act against insurgents, labelled as terrorists, within the troubled province of Chechnya. However, rising energy prices emboldened Russia and it changed its stance to one of reasserting its authority in neighbouring countries (which had either been part of the Soviet Union or within its sphere of influence during the Cold War). The key event was the brief war with Georgia in 2008. This war, and the antagonism it raised within the West, led to the recognition in Russia that economic cooperation with other countries was necessary for economic modernization, and without such development it would not have as much international influence as the US and EU.

Since the brief war with Georgia, Russia has increased its external antagonisms, while retaining a wary eye on the potential for domestic violence inspired by Islamic fundamentalism, all within a deteriorating economic situation. In March 2014, Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula and was heavily involved in fighting in the eastern part of Ukraine. Crimea is the site of a Russian naval base crucial to projecting power in the Black Sea. Though Russia denied involvement in the fighting in Ukraine, there was strong evidence of military support for pro-Russian militias and even the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine. The situation was further complicated by tragedy: in July 2014, Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17, en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, was shot down over eastern Ukraine, with all clues pointing to the pro-Russian militias. All 298 passengers and crew on the plane were killed. The result of the annexation, given weight by the loss of MH17, was international condemnation and a series of sanctions, drawn up by the US but supported by its European allies despite disruption to their own economies. The sanctions and the declining price of oil, a commodity upon which Russia is dependent, has led to severe economic hardships within Russia. These hardships have been accompanied by crackdowns on political opposition by President Putin's government. NATO responded through military exercises, and plans to deploy troops and equipment, designed to show support for allies who were once part of the Soviet empire, especially the Baltic countries, to deter further eastward aggression. In turn, Russia interprets

NATO actions, especially the expansion of the organization into Central and Eastern Europe, as a form of geopolitical aggression towards Russia (see [Figure 2.4](#)). Cold War practices, such as Russian bomber flights close to European airspace, have returned.

Russian military involvement in Syria further complicates the picture. Russia has traditionally supported the government of Assad, and increased its support in 2015 in the name of resisting the rise of ISIS. Russia has a genuine concern that the rise of ISIS and other fundamentalist groups could provoke related groups in Chechnya (only a twenty-hour drive from Syria). However, such action is also geopolitically mischievous, designed to make alliance building and military intervention in the Middle East more complicated for the US and its allies. The surprise decision in March 2016 to withdraw Russian troops and planes was interpreted as a move that demonstrated Russia's ability to set the geopolitical agenda on its own terms. As Russia makes bold and provocative geopolitical actions, there are also questions as to whether it can continue to support such policies with a fragile economy dependent on energy exports.

India

After World War II, and gaining its national independence, India defined and practiced a significant geopolitical code that professed non-alignment both either of the Cold War superpowers (the US and the Soviet Union) and aimed to be a catalyst for Third World solidarity. The end of the Cold War provided a different context for India, and it made drastic changes to its geopolitical code. India changed its economy from one that was largely centrally planned to a free-market model open to investment and trade. Also, India established itself as a nuclear power in light of its longstanding antagonism with two countries with nuclear arsenals, Pakistan and China. With nuclear weapons and staggering economic growth India no longer felt that it needed strength through a bloc of Third World countries but could act as a regional power in its own right. This ambition has been tempered by the ongoing territorial dispute in Kashmir, the continued rivalry with Pakistan, and two terrorist threats (one from extreme Muslim groups connected to Pakistan and the other from the internal Maoist Naxalite groups).

India's recent economic growth has been dramatic. Some analysts believe that India has overtaken Japan to become the world's third largest economy, driven by an expanding number of people being able to consume at high levels. Despite the continued issues of the Kashmir territorial dispute, India has become pivotal to geopolitical competition and has been courted as an ally by the US, China, and Japan. Even as border disputes with China remain, China has proposed investment projects to tie the two countries together. With a wary eye towards

China's growing influence, the US made moves to make India a strategic partner in a crucial region. India will play an important role, on its own and as a partner with other countries, with implications for the stability of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the ability of the US and China to act across South Asia and the Indian Ocean. India is being wooed as a strategic partner and is gaining the economic power to support a larger geopolitical role. An outstanding question is whether it has the political will and a developed strategic culture to adopt a greater regional, or even global, role (The Economist, 2013).

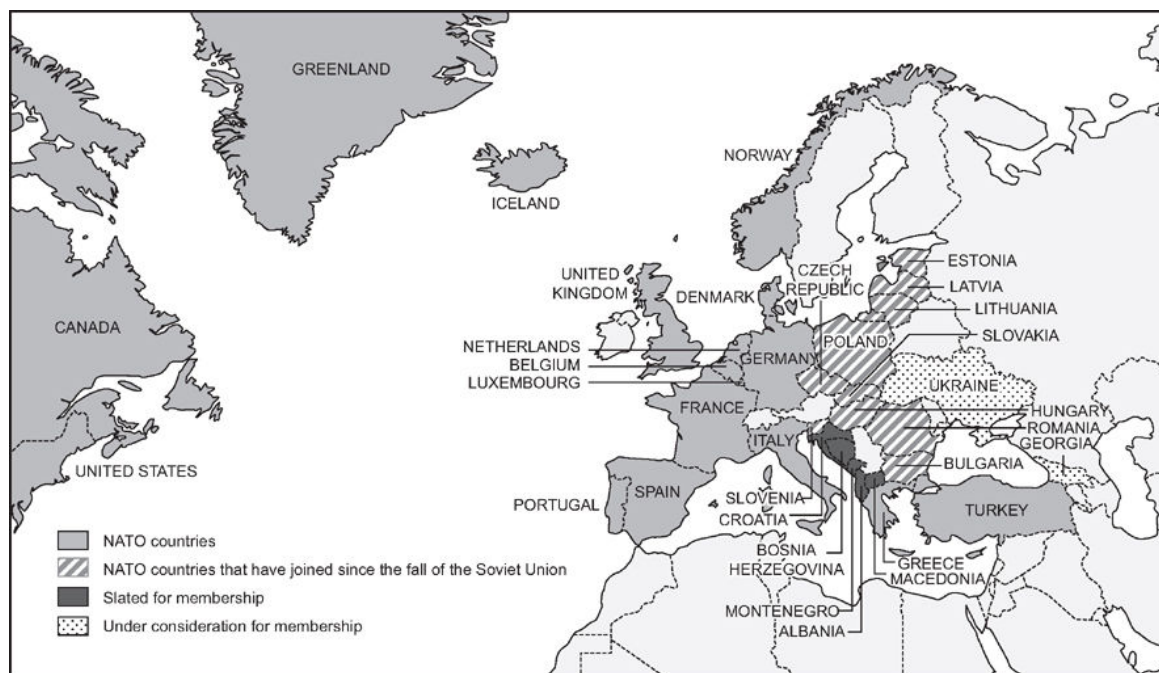


Figure 2.4 NATO expansion.

China

It is almost inevitable that changes in China's geopolitical code will dominate the next few decades. As with India, China's unprecedented economic growth has enabled a change in its geopolitical code. Its economic growth has made it a global investor, buying much of the US's national debt and gaining influence in Africa through financing development projects. It is in the process of developing its military to be modern and with greater geographic reach, through a nuclear arsenal and the development of a deep-sea navy. Though it still claims Taiwan to be a breakaway province of China, trade and investment readily flow between the island and the mainland. China and Russia have formalized a new security relationship (with Central Asian states), encoded in the Shanghai Cooperation

Organization (SCO). In 2015, the SCO meeting was hosted by President Putin of Russia and the event was used to showcase the growing role of the organization in South and Central Asia. Notably, a procedure for the accession of India and Pakistan was announced. China's key role in global trade, and the economy of the United States in particular, has meant that it is simultaneously treated as a partner and friend, while others, with a more hawkish eye, see the country as a potential military competitor.

China's growing role in the world is evident in two separate but related developments that can be seen as two sides of a coin labelled geopolitical optimism and geopolitical pessimism. On the optimistic side, China has developed a crucial role in global trade and investment that makes it the key engine in global economic growth – stock markets across the globe react to good or bad Chinese economic data. The Chinese vision is of a global trade network that stretches from East Asia, through Central Asia, and on to reach Europe. These so-called “Silk Road” projects – one over land and one by sea – are a bold geopolitical vision of trade interaction that is portrayed as peaceful and cooperative. However, elements of the project are creating geopolitical tensions. Despite the apparent warmth between President Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the 2015 SCO meeting, the Silk Road projects show China's growing influence and presence in Central Asia, a region that Russia has long identified as within its own sphere of influence. Furthermore, the US promoted its own “New Silk Road” project in 2011 as a clear attempt to insert its own alternative project in the geographic centre of China's project to connect one end of Eurasia with the other. Also, while the US seemingly welcomes and needs Chinese economic growth, it also sees it as a geopolitical challenge. In 2014 China established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a move seen by the US as a means to undercut its own influence in the region that had been gained through the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank; these two institutions have been in existence since 1944 and 1966 respectively. The new AIIB is a strong challenge to the post-war geopolitical influence of the US in the region. In response, the US has proposed a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) to foster trade in the Asia Pacific region, where the “rules of [the] road are up for grabs” (United States Trade Representative, 2016). China is not a party to the TPP. The underlying competition between the US and China in the arena of trade and investment shows that even the optimistic side of the coin shows signs of geopolitical tensions.

The pessimistic side of the coin rests on the steady growth of China's military strength and, especially, its growing geographical scope. In September 2015, China used the anniversary of the allies' victory in World War II, and its role in the defeat of Japan, to show the world its growing military strength. Though most

Western leaders declined to attend the parade, the images of new tanks, fighter planes, and bombers were broadcast across the world. Most notable were new missile systems, one with intercontinental nuclear capability and the other a so-called “carrier killer” – an obvious reference to the US naval taskforce presence in the Pacific that has been a taken-for-granted geopolitical reality since the end of World War II. China’s military growth has gone hand in hand with the making of new geographies, literally. The South China Sea is an area of strategic importance to China. It is a maritime region that China wants to secure to protect the maritime trade routes crucial to its success. It is also a region in which China can challenge the established presence of the US navy. The Chinese have undertaken bold engineering projects that have turned coral reefs into actual islands. The newly made islands can host airstrips, and change the geography of territorial claims. We will discuss these issues in greater depth in [Chapter 5](#). Is there a positive interpretation of the pessimistic geopolitical interpretation of China’s growth? Possibly. Secure maritime trade routes, and a shared responsibility to counter piracy, can help the global economy and reduce the burden on other states. However, other states with territorial claims in the South China Sea are wary of China’s attempts to redefine maritime boundaries, and it is a direct challenge to the US geopolitical code that has assumed naval superiority in the Pacific for the past seventy years.

Relational geopolitical codes

The short paragraphs discussing the world’s most powerful countries are just a glimpse into the complex calculations involved in the making of particular codes. I encourage you to explore them in more depth. One thing to bear in mind is that all geopolitical codes can only be understood relationally: in other words, the code of one country is made in relation to the codes of other countries, whether they are deemed allies or enemies. A collection of alliances between countries can create security regions, such as NATO, the EU, and the SCO. Networks of trade and diplomatic relations can also be used to secure peaceful regions. Making calculations about allies and the means to engage them involves many compromises and potential pitfalls. For example, Russia’s role in the SCO is dependent on China’s demand for its oil and gas, and is also seen as a way to counter the US’s ambitions in Central Asia. Another example is the way in which Russia’s announcement of troop withdrawal from Syria in March 2016 was interpreted as a way to clear the path for better cooperation with the US and European countries in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine: one aspect of Russia’s geopolitical code was being used to develop improvements in another sphere of

its foreign relations. Russia's geopolitical code is a sum of multiple relations, some positive and some negative, between the US, China, and the other member states of the SCO. A calculation regarding Russia's interaction with one state requires calculations of the impact upon relations with all other states. One other thing to consider is that the calculations between just one state and another are a matter of multiple forms of relations. The US is calculating a geopolitical code towards China that must balance economic codependency with military competition in the Pacific and the reality of cyberwarfare (see [Chapter 6](#)).

Finally, the geopolitical codes of specific countries are dynamic. Geopolitical codes are subject to change, and countries have dedicated bureaucracies that plan for such change. For example, the US has a series of Quadrennial Defense Reviews. As one review is being published, the next is being discussed and drafted. Some elements of a code can last for a long time; the NATO alliance has existed since 1949. On the other hand, changes in geopolitical codes can be dramatic. NATO acted in the post-Cold War context to create a dramatic growth of new members, beginning in the late 1990s, as countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, and the Baltic states, which had either been part of the Soviet Union or satellite states, joined the "western" alliance. Another example of dynamism is the September 2015 decision by the Japanese parliament to approve an overseas combat role, which was a dramatic change in policy and national sentiment that had been in place since Japan's defeat in World War II.

Although the actions of states, mediated by the geographies of regions and networks, may create peaceful relations, their geopolitical codes must increasingly recognize and incorporate non-state agents.

Box 2.4 Geopolitical codes of Iran and North Korea

Geopolitics has traditionally focused on the actions of "great powers." Doing so creates a false impression of powerful countries being able to do what they want. Instead, even countries such as the US, Russia, China, and those in the EU are often forced to react to the actions of other states. Understanding power as relational results in a consideration of how the actions of other countries cause ostensibly more powerful countries to adjust their own geopolitical codes. North Korea and Iran are good examples of countries that are able to set the geopolitical agenda and cause other countries to change their geopolitical codes.

Since 1979, Iran has been a thorn in the side of the US and its agenda for the Middle East. Iran has supported Hezbollah and Hamas in their separate

campaigns against Israel and US interests in the region. Identifying the US as the “Great Satan,” partly to rally support for the Iranian regime within the country, has been the geopolitical representation behind an increasing Iranian geopolitical role. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 removed Saddam Hussein from power and weakened a country that had, with US support for Hussein in the past, acted as a bulwark against Iranian influence in the region. Taking advantage of Iraq’s loss of power and its fragmentation into regions based on Sunni and Shi’ite antagonisms, Iran (a Shi’ite country) has gained military and political influence in eastern Iraq, and also inserted itself into the war in Yemen. The US has had to react, and has tried to reduce Iranian power through brokering a deal with Iran designed to prevent its ability to develop a nuclear weapon. This deal has provoked political divisions within the US, as well as threatening the close and long-established strategic relationship between the US and Israel. While the US has used Iran as a foil to justify its presence in the Middle East, increasingly it is finding itself reacting to Iran’s growing geopolitical confidence and influence.

Across the other side of the globe, North Korea (a member of President George W. Bush’s “Axis of Evil”) continues to make threats aimed to provoke reaction. Its status as a nuclear power adds a high-risk dimension to the situation. North Korea is a dynastic country, with Kim Jong Un, the son of the country’s first leader and national “father” Kim Il Sung, currently in power. Since the 1950s North Korea has adopted a geopolitical philosophy of *juche* – or self-reliance. In reality, it was supported by the Soviet Union and, subsequently, China. North Korea has undertaken “sabre-rattling” exercises – such as testing missiles that could reach Japan – as well as actual violent acts, such as firing artillery shells into South Korea that have resulted in loss of life. One interpretation of these actions is that they are performed to prevent internal challenges to the regime and keep the military in line. However, they also provoke responses in South Korea and Japan that often result in bellicose statements and arguments for further military expenditures. Recently, there is some evidence that China is growing increasingly frustrated with North Korea’s actions and that its diplomatic support is waning. Meanwhile, signs of conciliation between North and South Korea are still often followed by North Korean action that threatens progress. Both North and South Korea claim their official policy is reunification of the Korean peninsula, but the actual strength of such commitment may be questioned, and the practicalities are daunting.

The geopolitical codes of North Korea and Iran are, of course, much more complex than my brief description allows. They are also based on long and

rich histories. I engage them briefly to highlight that a relational sense of geopolitical power allows for consideration of the role of apparently weaker states in partially defining the geopolitical codes of more powerful ones. I encourage you to explore the geopolitical codes of North Korea, Iran, and any other country that interests you in greater depth.

Geopolitical codes of non-state agents

So far we have presumed that geopolitical codes are relevant for one type of geopolitical agent: states. But when we introduced the idea of geopolitical agency we saw that states are just one of many forms of geopolitical agent. Non-state geopolitical agents also have geopolitical codes. Terrorist and insurgency groups, revolutionary movements, social movements, and businesses can all be seen as geopolitical agents (see [Chapter 6](#)). The dramatic events of 2015, when the world's attention was finally drawn to the movements of thousands of refugees and migrants from Syria, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern and African countries into Europe, shows that even the actions of thousands of individuals only loosely organized can provoke geopolitical changes. Decisions by European Union member states to invoke boundary policies restricting movement, challenging the rules and spirit of the EU, show that the movement of refugees and migrants can force states and multi-state entities to change their geopolitical codes (see [Chapter 5](#) for more discussion).

In the next section we will discuss the geopolitics of non-state agents by looking at the rise of al-Qaeda and the subsequent growth of the group known as ISIS. The discussion will examine how a major challenge to the global geopolitical code of the US by another global geopolitical code (al-Qaeda's) was replaced by the regional code of ISIS.

From al-Qaeda to ISIS: non-state geopolitical codes to challenge the US

In February 1998, the London-based Arabic language newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi* published a statement signed by Osama bin Laden, and four other men prominent in radical Islamic politics. The statement opened with two quotes from the Koran before setting the geopolitical scene for its readers:

The Arabian peninsula has never – since God made it flat, created its desert, and encircled it with seas – been stormed by ant forces like the Crusader armies spreading in it like locusts, eating its riches and wiping out its plantations. All this is happening at a time in which nations are attacking Muslims like people fighting over a plate of food. In light of the grave situation and the lack of support, we and you are obliged to discuss current events, and we should all agree on how to settle the matter.

(Quoted in Ranstorp, 1998, p. 328)

This was bin Laden's *fatwa* that was the geopolitical representation behind the geopolitical practices of the terrorist group that changed the geopolitical calculations of the whole world with the attacks of 11 September 2001. The attacks provoked the US invasion of Afghanistan, and the overthrow of the Taliban regime. More controversially, links between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, partially retracted by President George W. Bush's administration, were used in the justification for the 2003 war on Iraq. The geopolitical code of al-Qaeda was based in the politics of the Middle East, but it was global in scope; based on the allegation that the United States was acting as an imperial power. For bin Laden, the US's presence in the Middle East was seen as evidence of "their eagerness to destroy Iraq, the strongest neighboring Arab state, and their endeavor to fragment all the states of the region such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan into paper statelets and through their disunion and weakness to guarantee Israel's survival and the continuation of the brutal Crusade occupation of the peninsula" (Ranstorp, 1998, p. 329).

Bin Laden's goal was to provoke a radical and violent response by Islamic groups across the globe against the US and its perceived violent and cultural attacks against Muslims. A loose affiliation of groups under the umbrella of "al-Qaeda" did emerge, and attacks were made against "western" targets, such as the bombing of Kuta beach in Bali, a tourist destination popular with young Australians, in October 2002 that killed more than 200 people. The following year a Marriott hotel in Jakarta was attacked and a year later the Australian embassy in the same city. In March 2004 eleven bombs were detonated in a matter of minutes upon commuter trains entering Madrid station, killing 191 people. On 7 July 2005 four coordinated attacks on commuters in London killed 56 people. It seemed like the west was under a systematic and global attack (Burke, 2011). But despite early concerns of a wave of al-Qaeda terrorist attacks across the globe, counterterrorism was largely successful, military action in Afghanistan and Pakistan disrupted al-Qaeda activities, and bin Laden was killed by the US military in May 2011. The reaction in Muslim countries to bin Laden's

death was rather muted and did not provoke a series of mass rallies, suggesting that the movement toward peaceful democratization was a greater force than extremism and terrorism. The new leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was increasingly isolated in Pakistan as US-led military operation of drone attacks limited his actions and the main arena of action developed miles away in Syria and Iraq.

Even as al-Qaeda was conducting terrorist attacks across the globe, the group's geopolitical code was being changed from below, and the leadership was unable to stop it. The chaos that ensued in Iraq in the wake of the US invasion and the successful overthrow of Saddam Hussein became a breeding ground for new grievances and new geopolitical agents. Hussein had ruled through establishing the Sunni Muslim minority as the ruling elite over the Shi'ite Muslim majority. He had used brutality to ensure minority control. The US administration that controlled the country after the war expelled Sunnis from positions of power, including military command. Soon, a Sunni-led insurgency against the US occupation force blended with Sunni versus Shi'ite conflict. Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) played a key role in this conflict, but soon its leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, changed the emphasis of the geopolitical code. Rather than seeing the US as the only enemy Muslim apostates became the target.

In June 2006, Zarqawi was killed by a US air strike just north of Baghdad. By 2010 the group that Zarqawi had led had completed a change to become the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The geopolitical code of ISI was an insurgent rather than a terrorist agenda – regional and territorial in its goals. Though challenged and greatly weakened by US and Iraqi forces, ISI was able to continue by taking advantage of the chaos in the neighbouring Syrian civil war. The result was the Nusra Front, a significant fighting force in the fractured lines of the civil war. Nusra Front's leader, Abu Muhammad al-Joulani, gained such prominence that he challenged Baghdadi's authority. In April 2013 Baghdadi acted by proclaiming that the Nusra Front and ISI were one organization, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria: ISIS was born.

Through military action, ISIS began to control cities and the transportation routes between them, as well as important infrastructure such as oil refineries and the water supply. In the cities it controlled ISIS established a rule of law based on a particularly rigid, and to many Islamic scholars distorted, interpretation of Islam. The central aim of ISIS's geopolitical code was to establish a new Islamic caliphate: a territorial and regional goal. What does the term caliphate mean? The term caliph refers to the successor of the prophet Muhammad. Hence the period of the caliphate began in 632 with the first successor, Abu Bakr. From the outset the caliphate was a combination of religious leadership of the community of Muslims (the *ummah*) and governance, or what could be called the Islamic state

(Held, 1994, p. 84). The period of the caliphate stretched across a series of successors to the prophet and is associated with a period of empire and vast territorial expansion until defeat by the Mongol army in 1258 (Esposito, 1998, pp. 35–67). The three key ingredients of the original caliphate were: 1) a belief that a ruler is a legitimate successor to the prophet, 2) a combination of spiritual authority and effective governance, and 3) the ability of the caliph to rule within a particular territorial reach. It could also be noted that all sorts of schisms within the caliphate were the norm, and particular winners and losers came to define particular periods of the caliphate.

The geopolitical code of ISIS is to re-establish a caliphate. This geopolitical goal of ISIS is given some legitimacy, in the eyes of supporters, by Baghdadi's claim to be a descendant of the prophet Muhammad. ISIS's ongoing conflict with states – such as the Shi'ite Iranian government and its ally Hezbollah – as well as the remaining leaders of al-Qaeda, are modern-day schisms. Their geopolitical success has been to control cities and assert their own version of Islam while providing a form of governance. As apostates and Westerners are beheaded, a degree of law and order and civic management has been imposed in place of post-war chaos (see [Chapter 3](#)). In Iraq and Syria, ISIS has robbed banks, sold oil, and extracted ransoms to fund its activities. Many in the world have been horrified by its actions, including the destruction of ancient and valuable archaeological sites (such as Palmyra in Syria). ISIS has become a challenger to moderate Arab leaders in the region, as well as a player in the war in Yemen.

Al-Qaeda's attention upon the geopolitics of the Middle East was the basis for a global geopolitical code using terrorist attacks to challenge the ideology and practices of the US and its allies. However, the leadership of al-Qaeda was unable to control some of its commanders who, in a changing geopolitical context, took advantage to form a new non-state geopolitical agent – ISIS. The appeal of ISIS echoes some of al-Qaeda's goals; challenging the presence of the US in the Middle East, and its support for Israel, and building a perception of US hostility toward Islam. But rather than just resistance and challenge, ISIS believes it can create a new geopolitical entity, a new caliphate. In turn, it has broadened the scope of its geopolitical appeal and actions. In May 2013, two British citizens acting in the name of ISIS beheaded an off-duty soldier in the streets of south London. European countries have become increasingly concerned as their citizens, including young girls, have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS (see [Chapter 3](#)). As a further sign of the growing geographical scope of ISIS, Abubakar Shekau, the leader of the Nigerian Islamist group Boko Haram, pledged his allegiance to al-Baghdadi in March 2015. Al-Qaeda began with a global geopolitical code that was focused on the geopolitics of the Middle East region. In turn, ISIS has established a territorial base in the Middle East and is

steadily expanding the scope of its influence. ISIS is a non-state geopolitical agent that has a regional geopolitical code, but one that increasingly challenges a range of states across the globe.

Other non-state agents and geopolitical codes

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 brought the relevance of non-state actors into discussions of foreign policy. Contemporary foreign policy documents are replete with talk of insurgents, failed states, rebel groups, organized criminal organizations, pirates, and their interactions with terrorist groups. These non-state actors are frequently portrayed as interacting and posing threats to states that must, therefore, be addressed in states' geopolitical codes. For example, in early 2011, senior officers in Britain's Royal Navy were complaining that proposed cuts to their budget would eliminate traditional patrols in the Caribbean aimed at the illegal narcotics trade. The Royal Navy now deploys to the Mediterranean targeting smugglers of refugees.

Though the example of ISIS easily identifies this particular group as displaying all the components of a geopolitical code, can the same be said for other non-state actors? Insurgents would seem to be a case where a geopolitical code is a useful tool to identify whom they are fighting and cooperating with, through what means, and for what reasons. However, are pirates and organized crime syndicates just out to make money and hence not in need of the strategy and representations that are the content of a geopolitical code? It would be easy to dismiss such groups as purely criminal, with no political agenda. Yet, pirates and criminals are often accused of cooperating with and supporting insurgents and terrorists, and the membership of such groups may be shared, and hence the distinction becomes blurred. The decision of ostensibly criminal groups to cooperate with politically motivated non-state actors suggests we can use the components of geopolitical codes to understand their actions.

Also, what about non-state actors that are not necessarily violent? Is it useful to think of actions of transnational social movements, such as anti-globalization or environmental groups, as being guided by their own geopolitical codes? They certainly identify targets (such as Japanese whaling fleets or meetings of international bankers); these movements are often coalitions of a number of groups (or allies); they develop increasingly sophisticated means of demonstration and disruption; and they are effective in telling the media of their motivations. If regions such as the contemporary Middle East, and the former Soviet Union and its sphere of influence in the 1990s, can be so dramatically

altered by pro-democracy social movements, then it seems that their geopolitical impact requires a consideration of their geopolitical calculations, or codes.

Activity

Am I correct in arguing that the concept of geopolitical codes is applicable to a non-state agent such as ISIS, or a social movement, or even a large-scale movement of refugees? To justify your answer, think about how the means of maintaining allies and engaging threats must differ for geopolitical agents other than countries. Must representation differ too?

Summary and segue

Understanding the concept of geopolitical codes allows for an analysis of the multiple agendas that countries face and the diversity of policy options that are available to address them. Moreover, geopolitical codes are contested within countries as different political interests within a country seek different policies. Geopolitical agents do not have complete freedom in defining their code; the context of what other, perhaps more powerful, countries are doing must be taken into account. The dynamism of geopolitical codes is a result of the interaction, perhaps inseparability, of domestic politics and the changing global context. The idea of a geopolitical code may also be relevant in explaining the actions of non-state geopolitical agents. In the next chapter, we will concentrate on the fifth element of geopolitical codes, the way they are represented to gain public support.

Having read this chapter you will be able to:

- Define geopolitical codes
- Interpret government foreign policy statements as the manifestation of geopolitical codes
- Consider the actions of geopolitical agents other than countries as the manifestations of their geopolitical codes

Further reading

The dynamism of geopolitical codes is covered in quality newspapers. *The Economist* is particularly good at providing global coverage. *Foreign Policy* provides a good discussion. The blog *Informed Comment* provides detailed coverage of the Middle East, while also promoting global climate change awareness and a liberal US political orientation. *The Diplomat* provides good coverage of the Asia-Pacific region.

Flint, C. and Falah, G.W. (2004) “How the United States Justified its War on Terrorism: Prime Morality and the Construction of a ‘Just War’,” *Third World Quarterly* 25: 1379–1399.

A discussion of how the United States, as world leader, has different needs, and uses different language, in justifying its geopolitical code compared to other countries.

Halliday, F. (1983) *The Making of the Second Cold War*, London: Verso.

An excellent discussion of the actions of the United States and Soviet Union in the Third World that provides background for the discussions of US geopolitical codes.

Klare, M.T. (1996) *Rogue States and Nuclear Outlaws: America’s Search for a New Foreign Policy*, New York: Hill and Wang.

Provides background to current geopolitical pronouncements regarding “rogue states” and the “Axis of Evil.”

Parmar, I., Miller, L.B. and Ledwidge, M. (eds) (2014) *Obama and the World: New Directions in US Foreign Policy*, London and New York: Routledge.

This edited volume provides a lively discussion of the issues and principles of recent US foreign policy, and the implications for different regions of the world.

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3

JUSTIFYING GEOPOLITICAL AGENCY: REPRESENTING GEOPOLITICAL CODES



In this chapter we will:

- **Introduce the cultural aspect of geopolitical codes**
- **Focus on the ways in which geopolitical codes are justified**
- **Identify the linkage between popular culture and foreign policy**
- **Discuss how the portrayal of gender roles is a feature of geopolitical representation**
- **Introduce the concept of Orientalism**
- **Discuss how issues of race and gender appear in the representation of geopolitics**
- **Exemplify the way non-state geopolitical actors represent their codes, using the example of ISIS**
- **Map the changing geography of US foreign policy representations in the State of the Union addresses**

The previous chapter concentrated upon understanding the practices of states and non-state agents by using the concept of geopolitical codes. An essential dimension of a geopolitical code is the way that a country's decisions and actions are justified. A convincing case for why a country is a "threat" or not, and what should be done about it must always be made, not only to a country's own citizens, but also to the international community. This chapter will explore how violent acts of geopolitics (such as the prosecution of wars) are portrayed as the defence of a country's material interests plus its values.

The examples in the chapter include Hollywood movies, videos posted by ISIS, and the changing content of the US Presidential State of the Union addresses. The overall conclusions are that geopolitics is pervasive (we participate in geopolitics by being part of popular culture), and that geopolitical representations are fluid and adaptable to changing contexts.

War! What is it good for... . ?

On the surface, the "Soccer War" between El Salvador and Honduras provides an illustration of how petty national concerns and hatreds can

explode into warfare. The value of “national pride” was marshalled to provoke and justify a war. However, just focusing on national differences, in this case, is a shallow and incomplete understanding, as we shall see. In 1969 El Salvador and Honduras played two games of football (soccer) in the qualifying stages for the 1970 World Cup finals (See Kapuscinski, 1992, pp. 157–184, for a full narrative of this conflict). The first game, in Honduras, resulted in a 1-0 victory for the home side. Back in El Salvador, 18-year-old Amelia Bolanios committed suicide in light of the national shame. Her funeral was a national event, the procession led by the President of El Salvador and his ministers. The return match in El Salvador was played in an extremely hostile atmosphere; El Salvador won 3-0. The Honduran team retreated to the airport under armed guard, their fans were left to their own devices and two were killed as they fled to the El Salvador–Honduras border. The border was closed in a matter of hours. The Honduran bombing of El Salvador and military invasion followed shortly afterward. The war lasted 100 hours; 6,000 people were killed and 12,000 wounded; the destruction of villages, homes and fields displaced approximately 50,000 people.

But are nationalist passions sparked by football matches enough to initiate the horrors of war? Underlying the tension between El Salvador and Honduras, a tension that easily aroused national hatred as footballs landed in goal nets, was a struggle for land and human dignity that crossed an international border (Kapuscinski, 1992, pp. 157–184). The land of tiny El Salvador, with a very high population density, was owned by just fourteen families. In a desperate attempt to obtain land, about 300,000 Salvadorans had emigrated, illegally, across the border and established villages. The Honduran peasants also wanted land reform, but, backed by the US, the Honduran government avoided redistributing land owned by its own rich families and the dominant United Fruit Company. To avoid an internal political struggle, the Honduran government proposed to redistribute the land that the Salvadorans had settled. The prospect of forced repatriation from Honduras not only unsettled the migrants, but also rattled the government of El Salvador who faced the prospect of a peasant revolt.

Landlessness, monopoly, human dignity, fear of popular rebellion; these mutual “domestic” issues were intertwined across the porous Honduras–El Salvador border. The government’s decision to go to war was made within a context of class inequality and the inequities of land ownership. National

humiliation on the football field was merely the fuse that lit the political tinderbox. International war was deemed a more obvious solution than altering the domestic status quo.

A contemporary example of the role of material “needs” and ideological messages is evident in the way China is represented by Western countries that are simultaneously seeking economic relations while also being wary of China’s projection of military power. In an October 2015 visit to Great Britain by Chinese President Xi Jinping, the two governments announced a deal in which China would build and control a new nuclear power plant in Britain. The deal was made despite the British security services expressing concern that China could insert untraceable devices into the building that would enable remote control. President Xi described the project as a “flagship project of cooperation,” one component of increasing British and Chinese economic ties (Farrell and Macalister, 2015). On the other hand, *The Times* published an anonymous source from the security services expressing grave concern, leading the Labour Party’s Shadow Energy Secretary, Lisa Nandy, to say “What these revelations have done is to underscore why people are so concerned not just about putting our energy security but actually putting our national security potentially at risk as well” (Mason and Perraudin, 2015). As in the Soccer War, contemporary discussions of Chinese investment in the British nuclear industry juxtapose two, equally political, interpretations of geopolitical relations: material gain (or the benefits of trade and investment links) and values (the idea of national security).

Answering the question headlining this section is clearly beyond my capabilities. But let me try and provoke an initial approach to the question in a way that provides some insights into particular conflicts while also placing war within our broader discussion of geopolitics. Our discussion will focus on two different reasons for fighting wars, specifically the reasons governments use to justify their involvement in conflicts: material interests and values. These two reasons should not be seen as competing or mutually exclusive. Instead, they are presented as the two most common themes used to justify participation in warfare.

A prime philosopher of the material motivations for war was V.I. Lenin (1939). For Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and first Premier of the Soviet Union, the upcoming wars were materialist in nature, an expression of the imperialism of the rich powers needing new markets

and sources of raw materials to feed the banks and finance groups within their borders. For Lenin, the two World Wars were the bloody component of the continuous struggle for profits. The Soccer War could be interpreted the same way, and many contemporary commentators are quick to portray China's increased presence in the world as some sort of threat.

Alternatively, sociologist Pitirim Sorokin (1937) argued that war is fought over competing values. The national humiliation fatally felt by Amelia Bolanios in El Salvador in 1969 was a sign of the power of values in warfare. Underlying the debate regarding Chinese investment in Britain is a sense of wounded British national pride as the need for Chinese funds is a reminder of how much has changed since the time of the British Empire. The challenge to British pride is reinforced by a sense of nationalism, and a belief that critical industries, such as nuclear energy, should not be controlled by foreign countries.

Rather than attempting to portray, and resolve, a simple debate between a “materialist” and a “values” perspective on war, the aim of this section is to initiate an exploration of the different geographies of representation that result from the material and value-based interpretations of war. Representations of war that are based upon material concerns or “interests” are territorially based, often reflecting concerns over control of territory or boundary location in order to access key resources. On the other hand, representations of war that resort to ideals are less bound to specific pieces of territory, and tend to speak to visions of what is best, or “common sense,” for humanity.

Activity

For any foreign policy event of your choice (a war, the imposition of sanctions, the establishment of alliances, etc.), look at policy documents, speeches, or media commentaries that portray the policy and evaluate the degree to which justification was made through material interests or values. Are the relationships between material justifications and territoriality, and value-based justifications and extra-territoriality that I posit evident?

Box 3.1 Dulce Et Decorum Est

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,

Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through
sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime ...
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

Wilfred Owen, 1917



Figure 3.1 World War II memorial, Stavropol, Russia.

Cultured war

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori (It is sweet and proper (or fitting) to die for one's country). It is only of late that Hollywood has begun to portray the horror, pain, loneliness, and indignity of dying in war. Movies such as *Platoon* told a story of the Vietnam War. Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* was technically brilliant in showing the terror, confusion, and slaughter of the Normandy landings of World War II, but its main purpose was an act of remembrance and national thanks for the World War II generation: supported by the book and film *Band of Brothers*. More "realistic" movies, such as Brad Pitt's *Fury* are still pregnant with the myths of war. None of these efforts come close to the cynicism of Wilfred Owen's poem; for Owen juxtaposes the brutality of individual death with the romantic mythology of nationalism. As the soldier Owen describes is feeling life slip away as his lungs are being corroded by gas, is he really going to reflect on the "sweetness" of his duty to give his life for his

country? In actuality, the common cry of the dying soldier, usually a young man, is for their mother (Fussell, 1990).

Yet, at the beginning of World War I, millions of people across the European continent and within Britain greeted the outbreak of war with unbridled joy (Eksteins, 1989; Tuchman, 1962). People lined up to join their respective military; it seemed like a great thing to be going off to war. Owen's cynicism came later, and was a product of experience at the front, and a reaction to what he saw as the inhumanity of nationalism driving young men to their death.

World War I is widely seen as the epitome of the modern war (Eksteins, 1989), but it also ushered in the rise of fascism, especially Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party. We may all be familiar with the term Nazi and Nazism, but it is important to reflect on the meaning of the name. "Nazi" stems from the full title of Hitler's party, the National Socialist German Workers' Party. The "national" and the "socialist," or the emotive and the material, combined powerfully in Hitler's ideology to give one of the clearest, and most reviled, expressions of nationalism in history. Nationalism is the belief in a common culture, or people, and its connection to a particular country. The term will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter. Hitler's rhetorical strength lay in his ability to link material grievance with an ideologically based future within a portrayal of the German national past and future glory. In the process, Hitler created a global geopolitical code that, through the ideology of Nazism, was meant to reflect the superiority of German culture and its "rightful" position in the world. Though Nazism is an extreme, the extreme simply serves to illuminate what is common in contemporary geopolitics. Representations of war and other forms of geopolitics are usually based within an understanding of an individual's membership in a national group, which has its particular values, traditions, and history.

The rhetoric of Japan prior to World War II paralleled the language being used in Nazi Germany. The country, through the political efforts of the military and the emperor, defined a "national defence state" that emulated the Nazis' complete commitment of society to the prosecution of war. The goal was to construct Japanese imperial control in China and other parts of Asia, and maintain colonial control of Korea. The calculation was to gain material resources to fuel Japan's economic modernization and growth, or material reasons. However, it was portrayed as a fight to prevent

the influence of Western values and morals in Asia, as a racial enterprise to unify Asia (under Japanese dominance), and as an expression of the Shinto state-religious will, or as a “holy war” (Bix, 2000).

Geopolitical actions are given meaning in order to justify their prosecution. Geopolitics is, then, a cultural as well as a political phenomenon, and usually a national one. Culture normalizes the continuous prosecution of geopolitics across the globe. More specifically, it paints “our boys” (and to a much lesser extent “our girls”) as heroes fighting a valiant and necessary fight, while portraying the enemy, or “them,” as evil and villainous (Fussell, 1990; Hedges, 2003). Increasingly, “they” are made invisible – deaths that we need not worry about as we prosecute war (Gregory, 2004).

Me, a geopolitician? Laughable!

First, let us explore what we know without knowing, or at least without thinking or questioning. **DO NOT LOOK AT Box 3.2** until you have read the next lines. First, make a column of numbers from 1–12. Second, get ready to look at the list of countries (and one non-state actor) in [Box 3.2](#). Don’t look yet. I want you to read the name of each country in turn and write the first word that comes into your head – no matter what it is. The key of this exercise is not to think too deeply, and not to worry about what you are writing. Tip: don’t write the name of the country, just move through the list quickly. GO!

Once you have written the list you can consider the following questions:

1. What are the sources of the images or ideas behind the word you wrote? Think of movies, news reports, books, lectures, magazines, songs ... which have created a picture of a country for you – one positive and one negative.
2. Do these images reflect particular groups in society? In other words, do you think the image comes from a male or female perspective, a white or other racial position, an elite or non-elite group?
3. What are the implications of these images to the foreign policy of your country? In other words, do these particular images and the response they generated in your mind facilitate particular policies?

4. Which terms or words that you came up with lead to justification of foreign policies that were either violent or required no action?

This simple exercise is trying to suggest that we all carry around “knowledge” of countries that we probably know very little about. This “knowledge” is gained from the most dubious sources, primarily Hollywood movies and television shows, and complemented by songs, jokes, and comedy routines, etc. It is nothing new. As a boy of about 7 or 8 years old I can remember my grandfather playing a recording to me by a comedy duo, Flanders and Swann. One of their songs was called something like “The English are best, I wouldn’t give tuppence for all of the rest.” It was a list of all the peculiar faults and traits that are possessed by different national groups, and in the process expunged any negative characteristics from each and every English person. This may seem harmless, but it is powerful because it is pervasive and experienced casually as part of normal everyday activities. Listening to the record of an evening was “family fun,” that just happened to instill a belief that my country was obviously superior to any other. Such “humour” was the basis for a geopolitical understanding of Britain’s “right” to tell other countries, using force if necessary, what to do.

My whole generation grew up in England on a steady diet of “Irish jokes:” continually painting an image of all Irish people as hopelessly stupid. How could I then, as I grew older, begin to think there was a historical basis for Irish nationalism? A deeper understanding of this conflict, and others, had to be actively sought by myself despite the obstacles of the “common knowledge” provided by mainstream media sources and cultural attitudes. My knowledge of the Irish had been created by the English media and the telling of Irish jokes at the back of the bus; what else did I need to know? The playground, the bus stop and the couch in front of the TV were very important arenas for an understanding of geopolitics. The basis for these images was not just playground jokes passed down from older to younger siblings, but also the result of cultural products such as movies, books, magazines, and songs.

In the Gramscian sense of power that we discussed in [Chapter 1](#), we carry with us “knowledge” of the world that is often of the most dubious and partial nature, but the knowledge is powerful nonetheless. Its power comes from it being taken for granted as “common sense,” on the one hand,

and in the way that knowledge is the foundation for the “ideals” used to justify geopolitical actions. For example, if whole swathes of the world are deemed “anarchic” then policies combining non-involvement in some cases (such as Rwanda) or military intervention in other cases (such as Afghanistan) may be implemented with little need to explain or defend them. Of course, production of the cultural common sense underlying foreign policy cannot be left to the imagination of playground humourists; the media industry is heavily implicated.

Box 3.2 Geopolitical word association

1. United States
2. North Korea
3. France
4. Mexico
5. Afghanistan
6. China
7. Turkey
8. Iraq
9. Japan
10. ISIS
11. Pakistan
12. Great Britain

Jason Bourne: representing men of action and the national security state

In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the US changed its geopolitical code in what became known as the War on Terror (as we discussed in the previous chapter). Accompanying the policy changes were representations of the US existing in a post-Cold War period of threat and uncertainty. Television shows and movies played the dominant role in popular culture justifications of the geopolitical actions of the US. Though some shows, such as *Homeland*, focused on anti-terrorist actions, the cultural messages within representations of the War on Terror had already

been established in Hollywood's depiction of an all-seeing security state with a global reach. The work of geographer Klaus Dodds (2010) has highlighted the key representations in one series of films; those that portray the journey of CIA operative Jason Bourne. The sequence of movies gained popular and critical acclaim; *The Bourne Identity* (2002), *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004), *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007). The trilogy tells the story of Jason Bourne, who is discovered afloat in the Mediterranean Sea, suffering from amnesia. We learn that Bourne was part of an illegal CIA assassination squad. The films, in the midst of relentless breathtaking action sequences, tell his story of discovering what he did, and uncovering the plot despite the existence of senior CIA officers trying to cover up their wrongdoing, and kill Bourne in the process.

By looking closely at the Bourne films, we can see some of the standard and pervasive representations that exist in Hollywood action movies and TV shows (Dodds, 2010), which are part of what has been called "the new violent cartography" in popular culture (Shapiro, 2007). We focus upon the portrayal of gender roles and the role of place. The national security state that is portrayed in the Bourne movies is dependent upon a largely male workforce that acts within a certain definition of masculinity. The male figures, epitomized by Bourne himself as portrayed by Matt Damon, are strong, protector figures who identify those who must be protected (usually women) and those who must be confronted because they pose a threat. Bourne plays a key masculine role because he acts in this highly masculinized way against the corrupt men of the CIA, epitomizing the national security state. "If Bourne's quest is deserving of viewers' sympathy, it is because of the fact that his male superiors are breaching their duty to secure national security for their domestic populations" (Dodds, 2010, p. 23). Furthermore, Bourne portrays other characteristics of the male protector: he is highly adept with an array of weaponry and demonstrates advanced fighting skills, and he is willing to take risks and immediate action against identified threats, often to the extent of killing people.

These masculine attributes, put to good use to protect the national security state, are enacted through some familiar elements of the action movie. The numerous chase scenes illustrate the ability of the national security state to track and pursue people in any place across the globe (Dodds, 2010). There is also the notion of a "race against time" in which the public and the state are aware of an imminent threat and so need, and

want, the male heroic protector figure to carry out his plan of action (Dodds, 2010). These political and gender narratives take place against a global backdrop in which particular places have meanings to generate the audience's understanding of geopolitics. In the Bourne movies, Washington D.C. and New York City are hubs for control and calculation that have global implications. Moscow and Berlin are contrasted as seedy legacies of the Cold War, and Tangier is seen as an "Orientalized center of contemporary intrigue" (Dodds, 2010, p. 26).

And what of the women in the movie? Female characters are there to be protected by someone with the "masculine attributes" of Bourne. The women also humanize Bourne by helping him figure out who he is and attempting to guide him back into a life outside the intrigue and violence of the national security state; though the woman he befriends in the first film and who becomes his girlfriend is promptly shot at the beginning of the second for her efforts. One key character in the series is Pam Landy (a senior CIA figure) who becomes aware of the illegal covert operation of which Bourne was part. While her male colleagues are urging her to kill Bourne, to keep their illegal assassination team secret, Landy tries to understand Bourne's motivations while at the same time defining a national security state that can be both brutal and moral. Her male colleagues continually tell her that she is out of place in the men's world of national security, but she challenges them by showing she is a woman of action tempered by thought and understanding (Dodds, 2010).

Security, the state, gender, and geography all play a role in creating the geopolitical representations within the Bourne films, and similar representations appear in most contemporary Hollywood action films. They illustrate the casual way that we experience geopolitics and are the building blocks for the everyday understandings of the world that create our perceptions of the world and what is deemed necessary and appropriate geopolitical action. Yes, you cannot even go to the cinema without being part of the construction of geopolitical codes!

Katniss Everdeen: women action heroes and geopolitical representations

Jason Bourne is just one of a string of action heroes that Hollywood and the entertainment industry have produced. Action movies like the Bourne series

portray a dangerous world that makes an invasive security state necessary. The role of a violent, though flawed, male hero such as Jason Bourne in these types of movies also creates a representation of who should protect us – masculine heroes in a male-dominated security state. Feminist geopoliticians have challenged the focus on geopolitical representations of men for two reasons: theory and content. Theoretically, thinking about the way women are portrayed in popular culture helps us think about non-elites (or policymakers) and draws our attention to the geographical scales of place and the body. In terms of the content of a movie, to fit the expectations of the popular audience women heroes must not only deliver the goods when it comes to action – they have to be good fighters – but they must also carry with them behaviours and feelings that reinforce cultural stereotypes of what it means to be feminine. Katniss Everdeen, the female hero in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, played by Jennifer Lawrence in the movie adaptations, illustrates these points.

Katniss has been described as a progressive heroine, meaning that her gender does not define her thoughts and actions (Kirby, 2015, p. 461). However, in her quest to take on the oppressive state apparatus of a future dystopian United States called Panem, Katniss must balance “the safety of her family, the stability of her relationships, and the quality of her own emotional life” while battling injustice and totalitarianism (Kirby, 2015, p. 463). She represents what has been called *emotional geopolitics* (Pain and Smith, 2008). The geopolitical actions of the female hero occur within a context of local and family life that expose her emotional struggles as she tries to achieve her geopolitical goals. Katniss is a geopolitical hero who is still tied to roles of provision and care within a family setting, a representation we do not see in male heroes like Jason Bourne and James Bond.

Feminist geopoliticians encourage us to see the body, the physical expression of self, as an arena of politics. Power relations may become evident when individuals are threatened with harm because of their gender, race, sexuality, or religious affiliation. People may also show resistance to dominant political rule and norms by using their bodies, such as resisting patriarchal expectations by dressing in a certain way or refusing to restrict their actions. For example, women in Saudi Arabia have posted videos on the web showing them driving cars in violation of the law. Unsurprisingly, for a feminist hero, the movies draw our attention to the scale of Katniss's

body. Katniss resists geopolitical oppression through the use of her body. The clothes designed for her in the pageants of the induction ceremony carry geopolitical messages of resistance that resonate with her supporters, notably the flaming dress that signifies “the girl on fire.” Also, a three-fingered hand signal (similar to the “black power” salute) is the way the message of resistance is conveyed by Katniss and through the insurgent population (Kirby, 2015, p. 466). The body as a site of geopolitics is a key part of the way the audience is led to understand oppression and totalitarianism. The movement of the people of Panem is restricted within bordered regions. Also, the imperial Capitol is separated geographically and socially from the rest of the population. The elites wear decorative and ostentatious clothing, while the rest of the population all wear similar drab and tattered clothing. When Katniss arrives in the Capitol she undergoes a sequence of cleansing and re-clothing rituals that creates a whole new appearance. Her body becomes distinct from the working-class population she has been separated from. Though Katniss’s appearance and behaviour as a warrior is created and regulated, it is very different from the regulation of birth, death, and feeding that the masses are subjected to (Kirby, 2015, p. 465).

Katniss, a female heroine, must do things that we expect from our cultural geopolitical heroes: fight, kill, and stand up for justice and democracy. In that way she echoes the geopolitical representations seen in a character like Jason Bourne. The difference in the representations lies in the way the female hero is placed in structures that emphasize emotion – family, place, and interpersonal relationships – in addition to what are more commonly identified as geopolitical structures, such as the state (Pain and Smith, 2008). It is these complexities in Katniss’s role – while her gender is underplayed in her fighting and leadership skills – that have led the character to be labelled progressive.

However, there are still problematic representations within *The Hunger Games*. The racial construction of the plantation workers of District 11 is one of honest, hard-working and moral “African-Americans,” but with limited agency. Only through the actions of the powerful and white Katniss can they gain geopolitical agency (Kirby, 2015, p. 466). The way racial stereotypes are even a part of a “progressive representation” shows that of all the social identities, race is the most problematic. Geopolitical agency occurs in a geopolitical context of global to local racial geographies of

economic and political inequalities. These differences are represented through the distinct Districts in *The Hunger Games*. In fact, it could be said that the racial differences, originating in the geopolitical legacy of Western imperialism and remaining in the inequalities between the Global North and South, are a core feature of geopolitical actions and representations. *Orientalism* is the key underlying concept to help us understand how geopolitical representations are racialized. We have already used the term when we spoke of how the role of Tangier in the Bourne movies was “Orientalized,” and it is also the foundation for the representation of Panem’s District 11 workers. So, what is Orientalism?

Activity

The Hunger Games and the Bourne movies are an example of both the Gramscian and feminist definitions of power. Look at [Figure 3.2](#) and identify the gender roles that are portrayed. Discuss how the gender roles build upon our taken-for-granted assumptions about how foreign policy is conducted and by whom.



Figure 3.2 “Nests for spies.”

Orientalism: the foundation of the geopolitical mindset

As we have seen, representations of geopolitics, with clear messages regarding personal and national behaviour, are embedded within a whole host of media that “entertain” and “inform” us, without claiming to be overtly political. They are in movies and books, etc., but the presence of these representations in readily accessible media is the product of much deeper cultural structures that go under the title of Orientalism.

Edward Said (1979) was the driving force behind the concept of Orientalism, which is the institutionalized portrayal of non-Western cultures as “uncivilized,” “backward,” “child-like,” even “barbaric” and “primitive,”

in such a manner that it pervaded government, academic, and popular culture circles. Said was a professor of English Literature and analysed novels, especially by English authors, of the nineteenth century. However, his work is still relevant today, and is the basis for many academic works on how “knowledge” of other cultures is created and disseminated. Furthermore, the point of Orientalism is that such “knowledge” of, say, Arabs, or Muslims, or Africans is a form of power. There is power in the ability of Western countries to create particular understandings of the rest of the world, or classify weaker countries and their inhabitants. For example, Western media portrayals of African countries are pervasive, African representations of Europe and the US are not. Such knowledge becomes unquestioned because it is seen everywhere. Secondly, the authority of the knowledge, given that it is largely unquestioned or uncountered by alternative images, allows for, or demands, particular foreign policy stances towards particular countries. Orientalism is the foundation of the responses to the geopolitical word game we played earlier ([Box 3.2](#)). North Korea is nuclear weapons, for example.

But Said did not only point out that the West portrayed non-Westerners as barbarians to justify their colonization. He also showed that there is a double-sided nature to the process too. By portraying non-Westerners as “backward” and “uncivilized,” etc., Western countries and their geopolitical practices were painted, for self-consumption, as the exact opposite; “modern,” “the bearers of civilization,” etc., and hence the “natural” rulers of the globe. This self-portrayal of the West was not done just to make people feel good about themselves: the extremely brutal acts of conquest and oppression that were necessary for the West to establish its imperial rule over the world could then be seen as the required, if unfortunate, acts needed to “discipline” or “civilize” the “natives.” If the competitive colonization of Asia was known as the “Great Game” in a reference to the sports-field escapades of the British ruling class, then the household belief that “to spare the rod is to spoil the child” was also transferred to the global scale – in the belief that “natives” only understood discipline. Orientalism did not die with the end of formal Empire. In fact, it has been noted that the portrayal of vast numbers of human beings as “savages” and “barbarians” has been in resurgence in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (Gregory, 2004).

The *profession* of Orientalism, as Edward Said called it, continues today. Academics at respected universities write books and newspaper columns, and make television appearances that combine to tell us the world out there is full of savage and irrational people just waiting to inflict pain and suffering on the innocent West. Kaplan's (1994) *Coming Anarchy* and the work of Bernard Lewis (2002) on Arab countries and Muslims are both good examples. Increasingly, the target of Orientalism has become Islam – a topic readily adopted by Western media. Across the media, including popular culture outlets, there are portrayals of a dangerous world needing US policing, with the help of other Western countries and especially Britain. These contemporary representations are built on the foundations of the nearly 200 years' worth of cultural products first analysed by Said. The contemporary catalyst was Samuel Huntington's (1993) *The Clash of Civilizations*: epitomized by its classification of the world into eight "civilizations" – the most problematic one being Islam with its "bloody innards and bloodier boundaries." Empirical analysis does not support Huntington's bold claims – in statistical analyses of conflicts across the world, connections to Islam do not increase the likelihood of war (Chiozza, 2002). But who reads the academic journals? The talking heads and op-ed pieces are the "high brow" contributors to "common sense," but most people gain these cultural understandings from "low brow" popular culture representations such as Indiana Jones movies.

Activity

Consider the movie releases in your home town over the past, say, six weeks. Who were the enemies or "baddies" portrayed in the movies? Do they represent, either overtly or subtly, real world countries or other geopolitical agents? Who do the "goodies" represent? What were the nationalities of the actors who played the "goodies" and the "baddies"? Consider the gender roles in the movies; can you trace geopolitical messages akin to the interpretation of the biblical epics we discussed earlier?

Scholars were quick to point out the cultural misrepresentations in Huntington's work, but it still, along with the work of Robert Kaplan, sowed the seeds of a post-Cold War understanding that the world was "chaotic," "messy," and "dangerous" and hence needed "order" and "stability" (Dalby, 2003; Flint, 2001). Perhaps more insidious is the

contemporary Orientalist practice of making whole populations invisible. With the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s the language of Orientalism has changed significantly, according to Gregory (2004). Iraqi and Afghani people are dehumanized – either by making them invisible by not mentioning them, or portraying them as “savages,” beyond our civilized codes and not deserving of political or economic support.

The new media representations of satellite images, and computer simulations allow the Western viewer to be a virtual participant in the War on Terror. Geographer Derek Gregory (2004, pp. 197–214) talks of this development at length, noting the interactive websites of *USA Today* and the *Washington Post* that allowed you to point-and-click over Baghdad, retrieve “details” of the targets, and keep track of the war by seeing photos before and after the bombs were dropped. At the same time, the images were almost completely empty of pictures of human suffering and carnage. Someone in Birmingham, Alabama or Birmingham, UK could “repeat the military reduction of the city to a series of targets, and so become complicit in its destruction – and yet at the same time ... refuse the intimacy of corporeal engagement” (Gregory, 2004, p. 205). Geopolitics has become just another computer game of killing the bad guys, only in this case the victims are not just computer-animated figures, they are absent. The essential point that Gregory is making by focusing on websites and computer games is that Orientalist representations are now something that the general public actively participate in and help create rather than being “fed.”

At the same time, death and suffering is officially absent, in a breach with historic military practice – the deaths of enemy combatants and non-combatants were not counted by the US government in the invasion of Iraq and the subsequent insurgency. Gregory’s use of blunt official statements is most effective: “we do not look at combat as a scorecard” and “we are not going to ask battlefield commanders to make specific reports on battlefield casualties” (Gregory, 2004, p. 207). From the Western perspective, contemporary war can seem like a computer game, just as long as you do not keep track of the human consequences: maybe it is the only computerized conflict available that does NOT allow you to count points!

However, in a time of electronic and globalized media, alternative visions are available. The Al-Jazeera satellite TV station was broadcasting images of carnage in Iraq across the Arab world; broadcasting pictures described by

its editorial staff as “the horror of the bombing campaign, the blown-out brains, the blood-spattered pavements, the screaming infants and the corpses” (Gregory, 2004, p. 208). In a change from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Orientalist situation described by Said, the technology to broadcast the story of the victims is now possible. However, the legacy of Orientalism lies not just in the ability to broadcast, but also in what gets seen and how it is interpreted. Here the Western powers still have some advantage. Images from sources other than mainstream Western media are easily dismissed as “cinematic agitprop,” or stories reported “from the enemy side.”

As technology and the global geopolitical context have changed so has the role of the public; becoming “embedded” in such a way that the creation and consumption of geopolitical information becomes blurred (Der Derian, 2001). News reports are now filled with, sometimes dependent upon, tweets and YouTube videos sent by members of the public at the scene of geopolitical events. For example, media coverage of the 2011 demonstrations in Arab countries was, at times, reliant on such forms of input. In a sense, the ability for the “colonized” to speak back and give their own version has been enhanced too. The internet is a means for people across the globe to be given the perspective of what it feels like to be “liberated” (see [Box 3.3](#)). The representations of the most powerful countries’ geopolitical codes, especially that of the US, are still touted and are powerful, but there are alternative interpretations too.

Box 3.3 Baghdad blog

For me, April 9 was a blur of faces distorted with fear, horror and tears. All over Baghdad you could hear shelling, explosions, clashes, fighter planes, the dreaded Apaches and the horrifying tanks tearing down the streets and highways. Whether you loved Saddam or hated him, Baghdad tore you to pieces. Baghdad was burning. Baghdad was exploding ... Baghdad was falling ... it was a nightmare beyond anyone’s power to describe. Baghdad was up in smoke that day, explosions everywhere, American troops crawling all over the city, fires, looting, fighting and killing. Civilians were being evacuated from one area to another, houses were being shot at by tanks, cars

were being burned by Apache helicopters ... Baghdad was full of death and destruction on April 9. Seeing tanks in your city, under any circumstances, is perturbing. Seeing foreign tanks in your capital is devastating.

9 April 2003 was the day Baghdad was declared to be under the control of American troops. The quote is from the weblog of Riverbend, an Iraqi woman, quoted in Gregory (2004, p. 213)

Representing geopolitical codes of non-state agents: beheading and misogyny as geopolitical spectacle

“Young people look at ISIS and say, ‘By gosh, they’re doing it!’ They see the videos with fighters riding on big tanks. They see that ISIS has money” (quoted in Shane and Hubbard, 2014). This is also the opinion of CIA analyst, Emile Nakhleh. He is just one of many within security and intelligence agencies across the world that have looked aghast as ISIS has made brutality a feature of today’s social media. Beheadings, oppression of women, and other forms of violence are spread across the world through a coordinated social media campaign as part of a strategy of geopolitical representation. The goal of ISIS representation is recruitment, a need that has similarities to and differences from with the need of a state. A state does not need to recruit per se, its “members” are its citizens. However, it does need its citizens to agree with the fundamentals of its geopolitical code, and also to ensure that enough of its citizens are recruited into military, security, and foreign policy organizations. ISIS uses social media to create a representation of its actions that is aimed at attracting men and women from across the world to create a caliphate – as we spoke about in the previous chapter.

ISIS describes the boundaries imposed upon the Arab world by European states at the end of World War I as “crusader partitions” and proclaims a

righteous mission to create an alternative Islamic state. As the nature of the geopolitical challenge to the West has evolved from bin Laden's al-Qaeda to contemporary ISIS, so have the content and the medium of geopolitical representation. Some have named the geopolitical representations of ISIS as jihad 3.0 (Shane and Hubbard, 2014). Osama bin Laden shocked the world through his declaration of a terrorist campaign against the West by using formal Arabic in videos broadcast by Al-Jazeera and other channels. The next step in the evolution of jihadist propaganda was the use of YouTube. The third generation uses Twitter to post messages in seven different languages. ISIS

videos borrow from Madison Avenue and Hollywood, from combat video games and cable television dramas, and its sensational dispatches are echoed and amplified on social media. When its accounts are blocked, new ones appear immediately. It also uses services like JustPaste to publish battle summaries, SoundCloud to release audio reports, Instagram to share images and WhatsApp to spread graphics and videos.

(Shane and Hubbard, 2014)

Western security agencies have tried to counter the messages of ISIS but are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of ISIS representations, and are struggling to find an effective message to counter the appeal of ISIS propaganda. The US State Department has created a Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications that posts stories of the horrors enacted by ISIS and the traumatic experience of ISIS recruits using the hashtag #ThinkAgainTurnAway (Shane and Hubbard, 2014). In Great Britain, former Prime Minister David Cameron launched a five-year campaign to tackle extremism in the British Muslim population (Ross, 2015). As of the summer of 2015, it was thought that 700 adults, plus some teenagers, of both sexes had travelled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS. Mr Cameron believed that the situation required the promotion of different geopolitical representations in a battle of ideas. His policy attempted to promote "British values," a geopolitical representation of the country as the bastion of liberalism; freedoms of speech and worship, and equal rights. Critics pointed out that the campaign was started in a context in which austerity policies within Britain had eroded certain rights, including access to the

legal system for the poor. Yet, Mr Cameron was adamant in painting a picture of jihadism that countered the positive images of fighting in ISIS:

And here's my message to any young person here in Britain thinking of going out there: You won't be some valued member of a movement. You are cannon fodder for them. They will use you. If you are a boy, they will brainwash you, strap bombs to your body, and blow you up. If you are a girl, they will enslave and abuse you.

(Quoted in Ross, 2015)

Along with the changing medium of jihadi representations, the content of jihad 3.0 has a different geographic scope from the video messages of bin Laden. Rather than celebrating al-Qaeda attacks within Western countries, the focus of ISIS geopolitical representations is upon claiming territorial control within the Arab world. The switch has been from the "far enemy," or the United States presence in the Arabian peninsula, to the "near enemy," or the leaders of Arab countries such as Bashar al-Assad of Syria (Gerges, 2009). The geographic scope of the geopolitical representation has changed. The global scope of bin Laden's *fatwa*, discussed in the previous chapter, provoked terrorist attacks across the world. In contrast, current representations focus on the experience of individual Muslims living in the West, and the attempt to attract them to become ISIS fighters and help control cities and territory within the Arab world. ISIS representations still retain a message that the West is attacking Muslims, but now the focus is on a new purpose or lifestyle for Muslims. One ISIS video features a British ISIS fighter, Brother Abu Bara al-Hindi, who portrays jihad as a way to become a new, stronger, and purposeful individual. He says, "Are you willing to sacrifice the fat job you've got, the big car, the family?" (Shane and Hubbard, 2014). He goes on to identify with potential recruits in Western countries, "Living in the West, I know how you feel – in the heart you feel depressed." The message concludes with a call from the Prophet Muhammad who, al-Hindi claims, said "The cure for depression is jihad" (Shane and Hubbard, 2014). The geopolitical outcome that ISIS geopolitical representations say will emerge once Western recruiters come and join ISIS is personal fulfilment that comes from a fight to gain control over territory. As Andre Poullin, a Canadian ISIS recruit, extols: "You'd be very well

taken care of here. Your families would live here in safety, just like how it is back home. You know we have expanses of territory here in Syria” (Shane and Hubbard, 2014).

The geopolitical representations of ISIS became notorious because they broadcast across the world a series of beheadings, especially of Westerners such as US journalist James Foley and British aid worker David Haines. Beheadings played a vital propaganda role for ISIS through their shock value that ensured media attention. In addition, some commentators saw beheadings as a particularly Muslim act and brought the attention of Western readers to a passage in the Koran, Sura 47:4 “When you meet the unbelievers, smite their necks” (Jacoby, 2014): an interpretation readily adopted by those wishing to represent ISIS as a geopolitical threat to Christianity. For example, the conservative Breitbart website promoted a report by the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ; a Christian conservative organization) that petitioned President Obama to act against ISIS “beheading, raping, and selling Christians” (Williams, 2015). On the other hand, President Obama and other Western leaders played down any sense that there is a specific form of Islamic violence, such as beheadings. Britain’s Immigration Minister James Brokenshire claimed that beheadings “have nothing to do with Islam” (Jacoby, 2014). Such statements are made by Western politicians recognizing the imperative of not alienating Muslim populations at home and abroad, to prevent domestic hate crimes and maintain states with Muslim populations as allies. The geopolitical act of beheading became a contested form of geopolitical representation. Different actors (ISIS, Prime Minister David Cameron, the ACLJ) talked about it in ways that, they hoped, would advance their own agendas.



Figure 3.3 ISIS fighters.

Another interesting feature of ISIS is the role of women in their geopolitical representations. Mah-Rukh Ali, a Norwegian journalist with Pakistani heritage, found three ways in which ISIS portrays women. The first is what became known as ISIS's Manifesto for Women, or more accurately the 2015 Women of the Islamic State: Manifesto and Case Study. The document was written by the al-Khansaa Brigade, an ISIS female militia established and dominated by educated Western women. The manifesto said that women are not equal to men, women should only wear black, and cover all their skin – including hands and fingers. The other rules and guidelines of the manifesto included the claim that women should only leave the house to “wage jihad, when there are no men available, or to study religion” (Ali, 2015). The text was supplemented with pictures of women seemingly happy living within these strict guidelines.

The second geopolitical representation of women used by ISIS was the idea of jihadi brides or “jihadi feminism” (Ali, 2015). It is estimated that ISIS, as of 2015, had recruited over 500 European Muslim girls to join ISIS. A picture of a new life free from anti-Muslim oppression was used to attract women because of a “feminist duty of all female Muslims to travel to ISIS areas. They believe that in this world they will get everything they need, not only a man that loves her, children, a beautiful house, but also

recognition as women warriors fighting alongside men on the battlefield for a just cause” (Ali, 2105).

The third geopolitical representation was the idea of “sexual jihad” (Ali, 2015). The idea came from a fatwa from Saudi cleric Sheikh Mohamad al-Arefe who claimed Sunni women should offer themselves for sex with ISIS fighters: the “logic” being that male fighters perform better on the battlefield if they have had sex. Pre-marital sex is forbidden, but the fatwa claimed men could marry for a few days, or even hours, to have sex. One report claimed that this practice resulted in women in Tunisia returning home pregnant and infected with sexually transmitted diseases after sex with ten to twenty men (Al Arabiya, 2013; quoted in Ali, 2015).

The three portrayals of women described by Ali (2015) are obviously contradictory; seeing women as pure but subservient, warriors, and sex-slaves. The contradictions illustrate the complexity and sophistication of the geopolitical representations of ISIS, a non-state actor. A specific representation was created and disseminated for a particular audience and to achieve a particular goal. In this way, the geopolitical representations of a non-state actor are no different from those of a state. The case of ISIS also shows that social media can be a flexible outlet for a non-state actor and can overwhelm the resources of a state, even the US. The weapon of geopolitical representation in the battlefield of social media may favour the weak over the strong.

The dynamism of geopolitical codes

Over the years the geopolitical code of a country will often retain some of its key ingredients. Japan has identified itself as the Pacific ally of the US since the end of World War II, for example, and since 1979 Iran has pursued a code challenging the US in the Middle East. However, geopolitical codes are not completely static. They may change dramatically, as at the end of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Or the change may be more protracted and contested, as with the slow development of what became known in the 1980s as a European Security and Defence Identity by the countries of the EU. In a context such as the Cold War we should expect stability in the geopolitical codes of the main participants, such as the US and the Soviet Union. The situation is likely to be quite different in the

post-Cold War world in which the source and nature of threats became more diverse. As a result, representations of geopolitical codes are likely to change too.

Tracking dynamism in a geopolitical code requires a regular event that may be analysed. For the United States the annual State of the Union address given by the president allows for such an analysis. This example also illustrates that it is not just the popular media that provides geopolitical representations: governments are also constantly justifying their geopolitical actions. By tracking the use of language in the State of the Union addresses from 1988–2008, or the final years of President Reagan's term through to the administration of President George W. Bush, we can see how the geographical orientation of the US's geopolitical code changed, as did the tone of the message (Flint et al., 2009). In this way the changes in the US geopolitical code can be seen to be a product of the combination of the will and beliefs of whoever is in the White House, on the one hand, and the changing global geopolitical context on the other hand. The technique used was to simply count the number of mentions countries were given within the State of the Union address. Countries that were mentioned most were, arguably, perceived as having the greatest strategic importance, either as threats or allies.

Figure 3.4 maps the geographic focus of President Reagan's 1988 speech. Surprisingly it is quite sparse and reflects concern with the Soviet Union and conflicts in Central America. In comparison, an aggregate of the speeches made by President George H.W. Bush (Figure 3.5) show retention of Reagan's geographical foci and the addition of China and the Middle East. The speeches in President Clinton's last term (Figure 3.6) became more global to include much of South, Southeast, and East Asia, though after the first Gulf War, prosecuted by his predecessor, there was less focus on the Middle East. The final map displays the global focus of the speeches of President George W. Bush's last term (Figure 3.7). The Global War on Terror was at its height and all the continents, with the exception of Australia, are mentioned. The focus on the Middle East has returned but the regional concentration has expanded to include Egypt and Sudan. For further discussion of these maps see Flint et al., 2009).

The sequence of maps shows that over time the key annual event of the State of the Union has been used by the president to draw the attention of policymakers and the public to different parts of the world and the US's

engagement with them. In some ways, this changing geography is a result of events, such as President George H.W. Bush's focus on the Middle East after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. In other ways, the changing pattern is a result of different presidents having the power to change the content of the US's geopolitical code and engage (positively or negatively) with particular countries. In other words, the agency of the president interacts with a changing global geopolitical context to define the content of the geopolitical code.

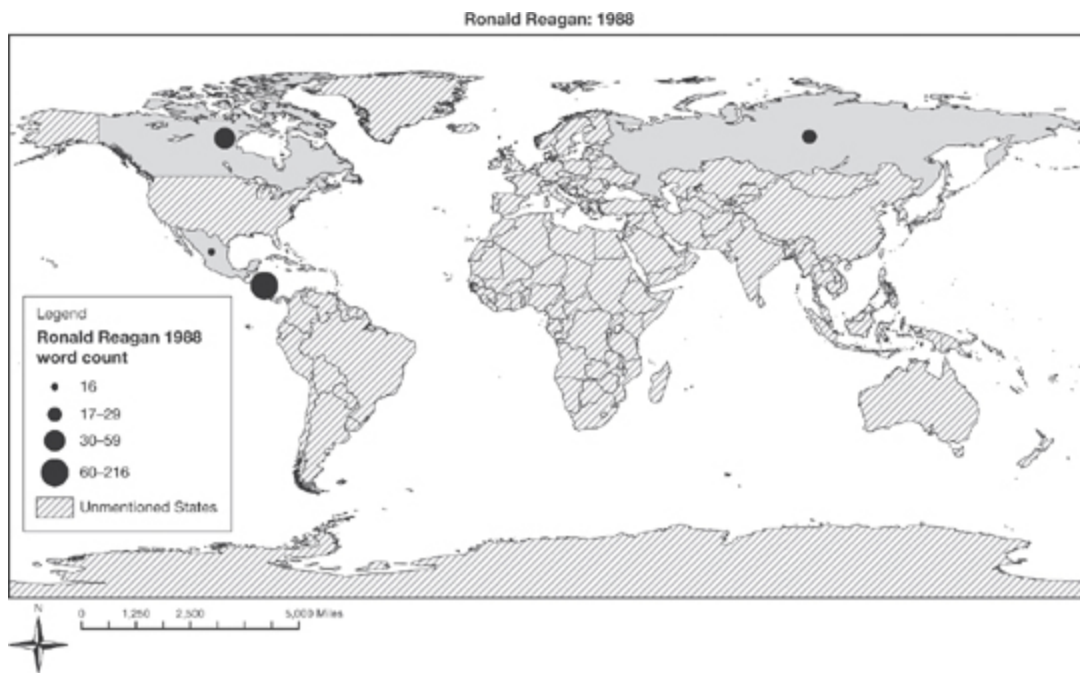


Figure 3.4 The geography of the State of the Union addresses of President Ronald Reagan.

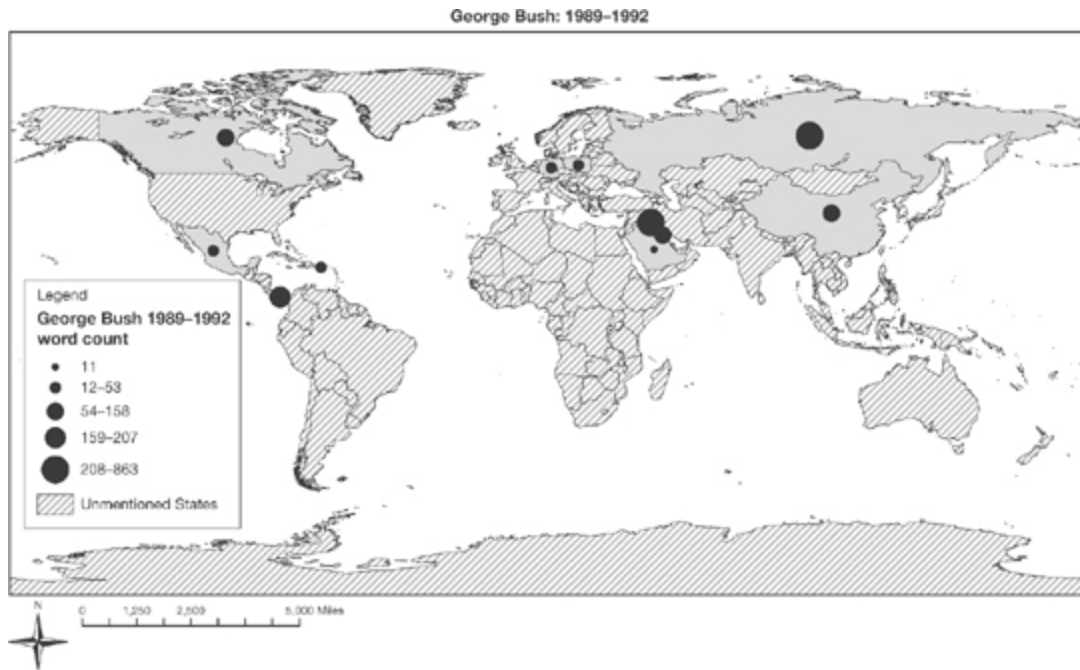


Figure 3.5 The geography of the State of the Union addresses of President George H.W. Bush.

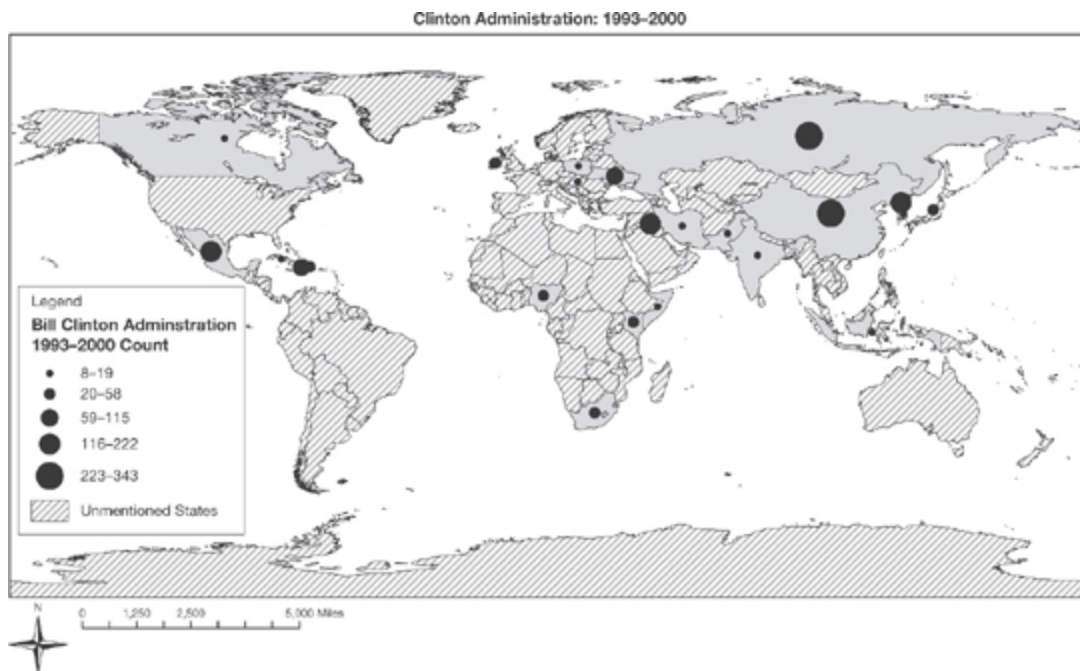


Figure 3.6 The geography of the State of the Union addresses of President William J. Clinton.

One thing that a president has control over is the tone of the speech. [Figure 3.8](#) displays analysis of the speeches to see if the language used focused more upon allies or enemies. A clear pattern emerges with the two

Bush presidencies predominately using language identifying threats or enemies and President Clinton's speeches using terminology referring to friends or allies. Though this still may be a function of context, to some degree it is also a function of the tenor created by the speech writer. Is the overarching image one of a dangerous world towards which the US must respond militarily or is it a world of actual and potential allies that are seeking cooperation with the US?

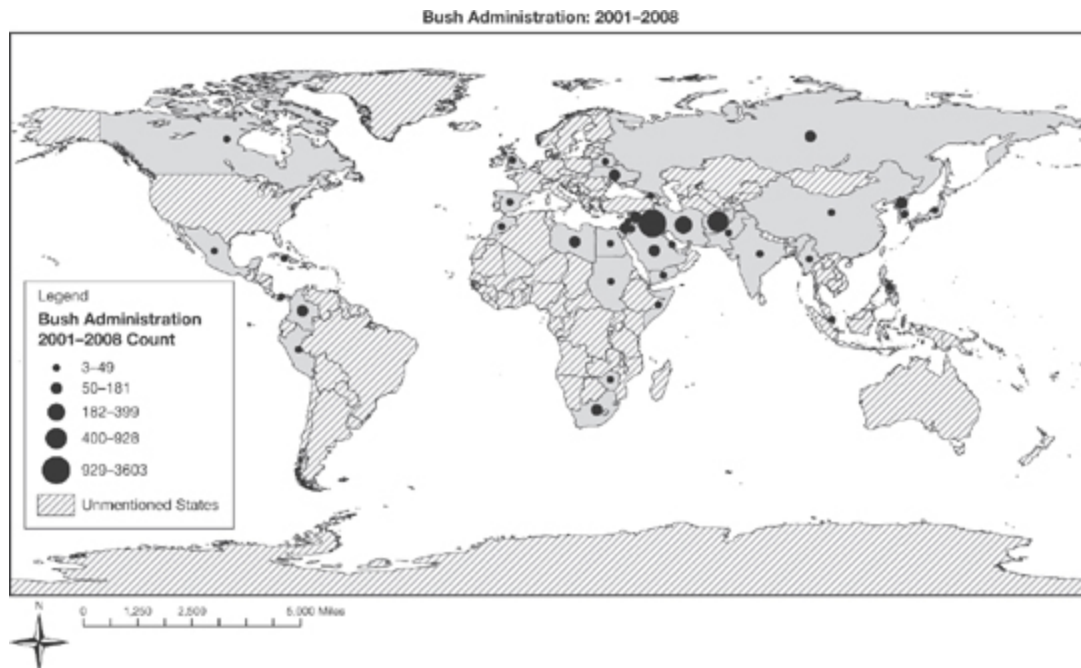


Figure 3.7 The geography of the State of the Union addresses of President George W. Bush.

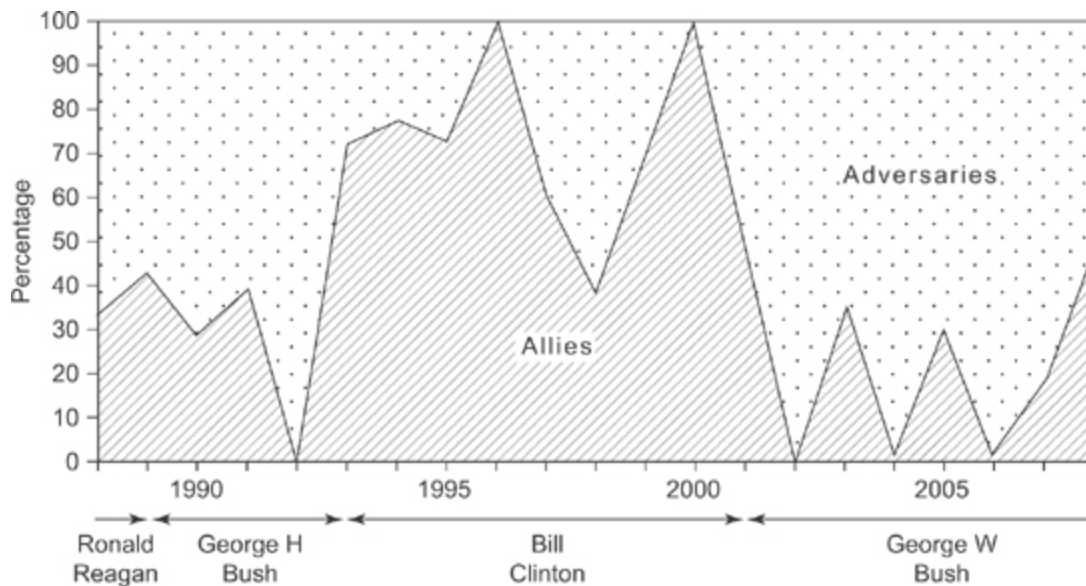


Figure 3.8 The changing emphasis upon allies and enemies in US State of the Union addresses.

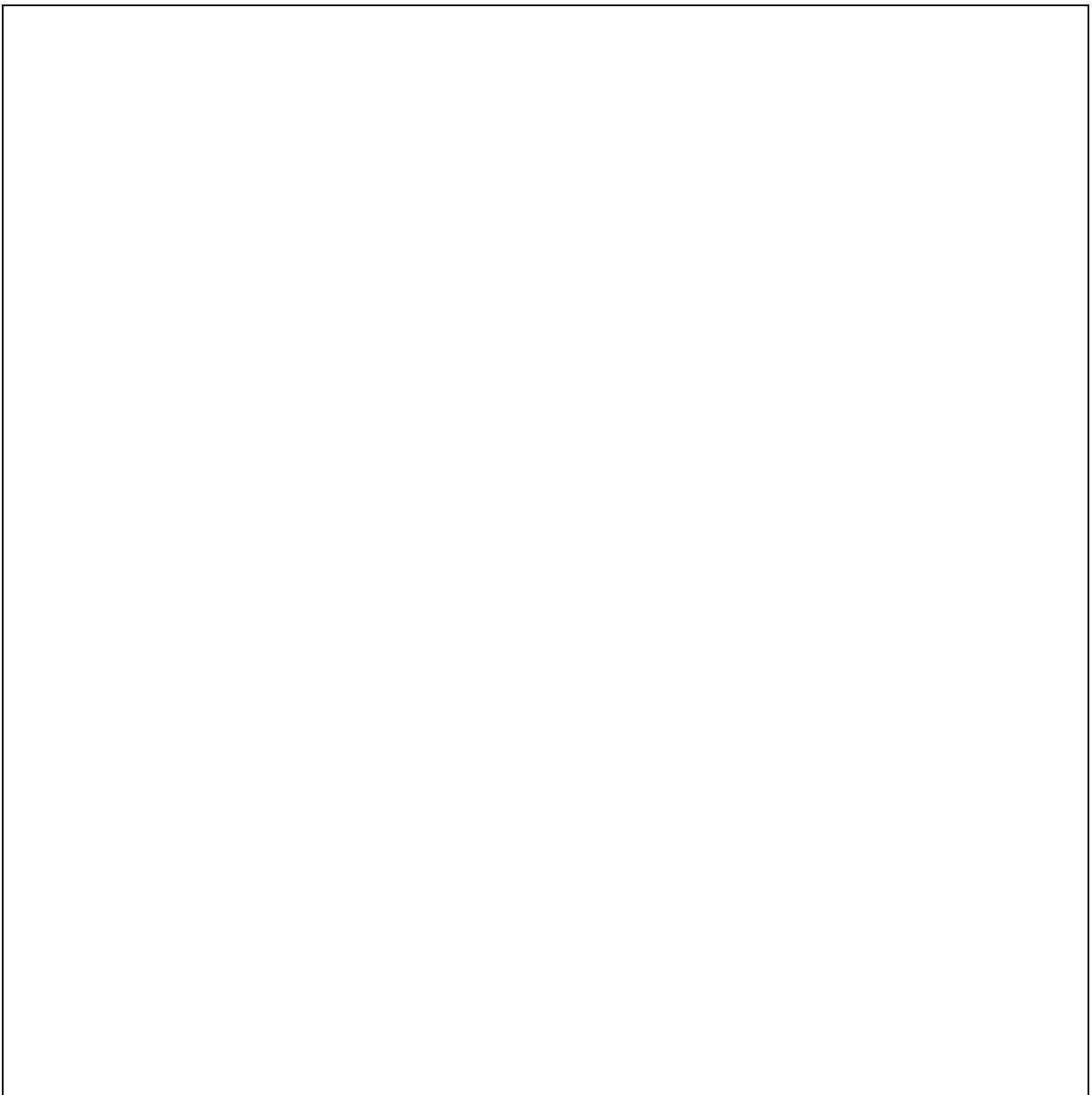
As we saw in the case study of jihadi representations and in the analysis of US State of the Union addresses, geopolitical codes can be dynamic. Leaders of states or non-state actors are faced with the task of justifying such changes to the public. In the case of al-Qaeda and ISIS, this involved a change in geographical focus. In the case of the US and its global geopolitical code, this required drawing attention to engagement with different parts of the world. Such engagement is often supported by the language of popular media, as we saw in our discussion of the Bourne films.

Summary and segue

In the conclusion to this chapter it is important to emphasize that we have discussed representations rather than “facts.” If the calculations for war can be traced to material interests, such as access to oil, governments must usually emphasize values or ideas in justifying their foreign policy, especially when it involves invading a country rather than defending one’s own. Two important audiences must be addressed to justify a country’s geopolitical codes: the domestic and the international audiences. The US, with its global geopolitical code, has a particular burden when it comes to representing its geopolitical practices; it must convince the whole world

that it is acting for the benefit of all rather than for its own interests and gain.

The representations of geopolitical codes will use “common sense” or Gramscian understandings of power relations to tell a story that is familiar and appealing to most people. This will be likely to include dominant ideas of male and female roles, as well as constructed common ideas of places and regions. For the geopolitical codes of countries another “common sense” understanding is crucial; countries are the obvious, or even “natural,” geopolitical agents. For this to resonate with the public requires a sense of nationalism, and it is to that topic we now turn in the next chapter.



Having read this chapter you will be able to:

- **Understand that popular culture is an integral part of geopolitics**
- **Critically evaluate government statements justifying foreign policy**
- **Think critically about the way other countries are represented in popular culture**
- **Think critically about the use of race and gender in the way foreign policy actions are justified**
- **Think critically about the way the foreign policy of one's own country is portrayed in popular culture and government statements**

Further reading

Dittmer, J. (2010) *Popular Culture, Geopolitics, and Identity*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

A discussion of the concepts behind the connections between geopolitics and popular culture illustrated by compelling examples and case studies.

Hedges, C. (2003) *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, New York: Anchor Books.

An exploration, sometimes disturbing, into the way that our individual and collective identities are inseparable from the practice of warfare.

Said, E. (1979) *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books.

Gregory, D. (2004) *The Colonial Present*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Said's book is the seminal text on the representation of "others" in the popular media. Gregory's book provides a stimulating update with relevance to contemporary conflicts.

The following readings provide examples of how the representational strategies of geopolitics have been studied:

See the special issue of the journal *Geopolitics* 10 (Summer 2005) on geopolitics and the cinema edited by Marcus Power and Andrew Crampton.

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4

EMBEDDING GEOPOLITICS WITHIN NATIONAL IDENTITY



In this chapter we will:

- **Define the terms nation, state, and nation-state**
- **Discuss nationalism and its different manifestations**
- **Discuss the way gender roles are implicated in nationalism**
- **Make connections between gender roles, nationalism, and geopolitical codes**
- **Provide a classification of different nationalisms and their impact upon geopolitical codes**
- **Provide brief case studies of two on-going conflicts: Syria and Myanmar/Burma**
- **Discuss nationalism in the context of globalization**

The nation: an essential part of geopolitical practice and representation

The previous two chapters have introduced us to geopolitical action or practice (through the concept of geopolitical codes) and the representation of those practices. In this chapter we will try to further understand these key elements of geopolitics by discussing what is commonly called the nation, inaccurately called the nation-state, and should actually be called the state. The nation has been identified as the key actor in geopolitics. Classical geopolitics was written from a particular national position with the explicit goal of furthering that nation's fortunes, often at the expense of, or in direct conflict with, other nations. Feminist geopolitics has called on us to rethink the us/them and inside/outside binaries that have dominated geopolitical thinking (Giles and Hyndman, 2004), and we will show the benefits and necessity of this idea later in this chapter.

Our first task is to understand why the nation is such an important element of geopolitics and, despite the imperatives of globalization and new ways of seeing geopolitics, why it will remain a key element of geopolitical practice and representation. The connection lies in the way that we have been socialized to think of the state as the nation. In the next section we will explain how and why the state has come to be understood as the nation. For now, we must recognize that states (or countries) have been the dominant geopolitical actors. They possess legitimacy to act within their own territory (through the notion of sovereignty or ultimate authority) and are mutually recognized by other states (through international law and institutions such as the UN). States have, literally, shaped our world by fragmenting the globe into territorial jurisdictions so that the world political map is composed of state-ruled and exclusive territories. We look to states to conduct legitimate military actions, regulate multinational companies, enact and police international agreements on "global" issues such as whaling and climate change, and provide a sense of governance of issues such as nuclear weapons proliferation through the UN. States have been, and remain, the essential and dominant geopolitical actor.

But wait a minute. We started talking about nations and the previous paragraph is all about states. Why? As the next section will show, everyday

geopolitical representations encourage us to call states nations. This is because the state is a geopolitical structure that requires the loyalty and participation of individuals (as citizens) and social groups (such as political parties, religious groups, etc.) to function. The idea of the nation is a more effective representation to generate individual and group identity and loyalty. Humans are apt to die and fight for their nation rather than their state. Hence, we “see” geopolitics through representations that are from a particular national position. A sense of national identity is the building block of geopolitical representations. Geopolitical representations are dominated by messages of national affiliation and history, and often threats to that nation from other nations. Or that should be states, right? Yes. In the previous chapter we learnt that nations/states are essential geopolitical actors and play a key role in geopolitical representations. Now we will see how and why we are socialized to use the term nation instead of state.

(Misused) terminology

It is important to get our terminology correct, before we proceed. Up to now, I have mainly used the term “country” when referring to the United States, Great Britain, Iraq, etc. The more precise term is state. This can be confusing, especially in the US, where the term state is used to refer to the fifty separate entities that comprise the country. While discussing geopolitics, however, it is more precise to refer to countries as states. Hence, the United States is actually a state, as is Great Britain, Kuwait, France, Nigeria, etc.

States are defined by their possession of sovereignty over a territory and its people. States are the primary political units of the international system. A state is the expression of government control over a piece of territory and its people. The geographic scope of the governmental control exists in a series of nested scales. For example, the London Borough of Hackney is a scale of government, nested within the Greater London Council, the United Kingdom, and, for the moment, the European Union. In another example, the Borough of Queens is a scale of government within New York City, New York State, and the United States of America. We would refer to Hackney and Queens as the local state or local government. The scalar organization of the state is a global phenomenon. For example, China is

organized into thirty-four province-level divisions (provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, and special administrative regions). In this book, state means the country: for more discussion on the political geography of states see Cox (2002) and Painter (1995).

The terminology may be confusing because it is so widely misused. Instead of using the term state, the term nation or national is usually substituted. Hence, we stand for the national anthem, rather than the state anthem. In the World Cup and Olympic Games we say that national teams compete, rather than state teams. However, the term nation has a very specific meaning. Focusing on the definition of nation develops an understanding that the term “nation” should not be used synonymously with the term “state.” In fact, using the term nation instead of state is a form of geopolitical representation that is intended to make us loyal to the state.

Before we get into the discussion of why we call states nations we also need to understand how nations differ from ethnic groups. Like all the other geopolitical actors discussed in this book, both ethnic groups and nations are social constructs. The idea that a group of people has a primordial and/or biological history that makes them a “nation” is merely a geopolitical representation intended to give the group legitimacy. However, the construction of groups as ethnicities or nations does not deny certain historical events or group identity. Instead, we should see the development of ethnic and national identities as occurring within historical and geographic contexts that allow these group identities to emerge, remain, change, and in some circumstances become important geopolitical actors.

An ethnic group, or an ethnic community or *ethnie* (Smith, 1991, pp. 20–21), has six key attributes:

1. a collective proper name
2. a myth of common ancestry
3. shared historical memories
4. elements of a common culture
5. an attachment to a region or piece of territory that is represented as a “homeland”
6. a sense of solidarity across the population.

Examples of ethnic groups would include communities who identify with an immigrant history; such as Irish-Americans or Mexican-Americans.

These groups identify with the nation-state, in this case the United States, and also see themselves as part of a distinctive cultural group different from, say, Polish-Americans.

The key word in Smith's definition is in point 5; attachment. Attachment may be symbolic or historical, rather than actual. It can be seen in, for example, Irish-Americans singing traditional Irish songs or being interested in their genealogy. When territory becomes a physical claim or presence by a group then we call the group a nation rather than an ethnic group. Smith (1991, p. 40) defines a nation as "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy, and common legal rights and duties for all members." In some contexts, membership of a nation will be granted only if inheritance, or blood ties to members, of a particular group can be established, but most nations do not require such blood ties.

As we can see from Smith's two definitions, there are many similarities between an ethnic community and a nation. However, the differences are important. Ethnic groups can often occupy a certain role in an economy (in the early waves of migration, Irish-Americans were predominantly manual labourers, for example). The members of a nation have a stratified division of labour: some members of the Irish nation in Ireland, the state, have certain economic roles and stature while others have different ones. For an understanding of nations and geopolitics, the most important issue is territory. A nation actually claims a piece of territory and wants political control of that piece of territory. The politics of these claims is the geopolitics of nationalism.

Box 4.1 Processes of state formation

The tradition of geopolitics has focused as much on how states have been created as it has on competition between states. The process of state formation is one in which a single political authority claims sovereignty (or undisputed power) over a clearly demarcated territory. The process involves political centralization and a means of collecting taxes that supports the new government institutions. The creation of what we now understand to be a modern state involves eliminating (sometimes by force and sometimes by incorporation into state

institutions) regional seats of power and religious claims to authority that would challenge the state. In some cases this may result in mass violence or genocide as those seemingly threatening or foreign to the state are literally eliminated. Often the process is more political as some regional autonomy is given to sub-national groups or religious institutions become “nationalized.” In the terms of sociologist Michael Mann (1986), the state develops despotic power (or the right and ability to use force within its boundaries) as well as infrastructural power (or tying the country together through the provision of services – roads, education, and a state bureaucracy). Part of this process requires creating a sense of national identity for the whole population so that regional and ethnic identities are subsumed within an overarching national allegiance.

State formation is not just an internal or domestic process. It also has an international aspect. The key historic moment was the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 in Europe. The treaty established states as legitimate, meaning that people were meant to accept the authority of state leaders. The treaty also recognized that the power and legitimacy of states was based on their control over territory. Finally, the legitimacy of a state required mutual recognition and interaction between states. In other words, states only become fully-fledged sovereign states when they are “recognized” as such by other states. Today, such recognition is formalized by a state being part of the UN. Now the whole globe (with the exception of Antarctica) is made up of a mosaic of states. But this is a relatively new situation. It was only in the decades after World War II that swathes of the globe ceased to be under colonial control by European powers and Japan. A wave of decolonization established the map of states that we are now familiar with. In 1945 the UN had 51 original members. Decolonization through the 1950s and 1960s resulted in a new total of 132 members in 1971. Another wave of new member states occurred in the early 1990s with the collapse of the Soviet Union leading to states such as Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia reclaiming their status as independent states and the establishment of states in Central Asia (e.g. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan). The UN had 193 members in 2016, with the newest member, South Sudan, joining in 2011.

The diffusion of modern states from their original formation in Europe across the globe has been categorized as a process of “Europeanization.” The model of how a state operates and what institutions are necessary to manage a state certainly has followed the original pattern established in Europe. For example, Japanese modernization in the late 1800s and early 1900s looked to Prussia as a model of what a modern state should be. Many modern states are still strongly influenced by the institutions that were imposed upon them during colonial rule (India and Australia are good examples). This does not mean that all states are the same. Though all states are centralized, bureaucratic, and territorial entities, the balance of the despotic and infrastructural power varies from state to state (Kuus and Agnew, 2008). A dictatorship such as North Korea is an example of a state where despotic power predominates, while democracies operate through the exercise of infrastructural or integrative power.

The series of protests and political changes that began in December 2010, known as the Arab Spring, is an example of how the balance of despotic and infrastructural power may change within individual states (Figure 4.1). For example, in Egypt there seemed to be a move towards democratization, with the Muslim Brotherhood winning elections. However, there was much public discontent with the Brotherhood’s agenda. Large protests occurred across the country, provoking the military to take control in July 2013. The military’s seizure of power was represented as either a “coup” or a “takeover” depending upon geopolitical perspective. The Muslim Brotherhood was banned, and the United States has had to negotiate what some see as a hypocritical stance. The US voiced support for democratization across the region but maintained a relationship, including military aid, with the new President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi even though he had played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected government (Hanna, 2015). In Tunisia, where the Arab Spring began, there have been moves towards a more democratic system, though there are still reports of abuses by the police and criminal justice system (Amnesty International, 2016). Saudi Arabia remains resistant to processes of democratization, and though proposing limited economic reforms, still hopes that oil wealth can provide enough infrastructural benefits to maintain political stability. Though there seems to be a desire across

many Arab countries to embrace some form of liberal democracy that is situated within the existing model of a modern state evolved from the Western model, such changes are limited and uneven across the region. The process is further complicated by civil war in Syria and Yemen, and the presence of ISIS – especially in Iraq and Syria. Syria and Iraq may well no longer be viable states, and their emerging fragmented polities will likely experience different forms of power. Areas under the control of ISIS suffer a contemporary manifestation of despotic power.

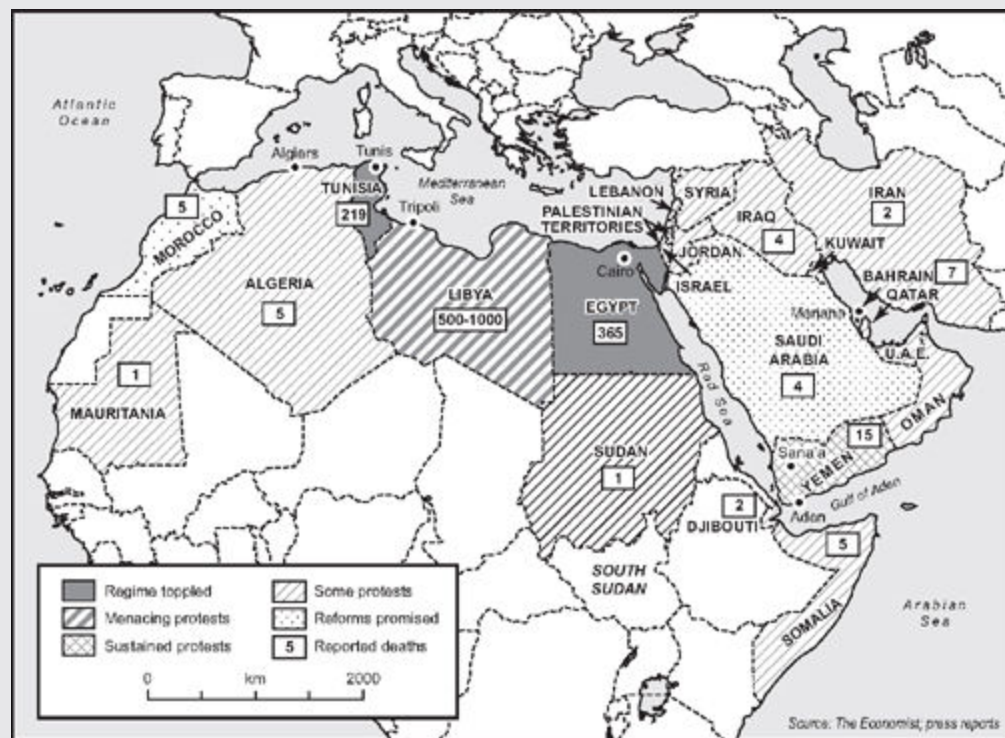


Figure 4.1 The Arab Spring.

The geopolitics of nationalism I: constructing a national identity

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori? (see Box 3.1). Can people be motivated to kill and die for a government bureaucracy? It is hardly a sense

of attachment to the Ministry of Defence or the State Department that inspires people to fight. Rather the “noble cause” of the nation is seen as the justification for killing and dying (Figure 4.2). The ideology of nationalism has equated national well-being with control of a state, the state and nation become synonymous, and the sense of identity is focused upon the nation rather than the state. Nationalism is the belief that every nation has a right to a state, and, therefore, control of a piece of territory. The ideology of nationalism claims that a nation is not fulfilled, the geopolitical situation is perceived to be unjust, if a nation does not have its own state. The geopolitics of nationalism have resulted in millions of deaths, as people fought to establish a state for their nation, and defend their states, in the name of national defence, against threats, real and perceived.

The state is equated with the nation through another term, the nation-state; the notion that each state contains one nation. Hence, the Australian nation-state, for example, refers to an Australian nation contained within the Australian state. Such is the ideology. The reality is much different, and the potential for conflict is large. Nearly all states have a diverse population of cultural groups: some of which may define themselves as separate nations (Gurr, 2000). In some situations, a national identity may take precedence over an ethnic identity (Arab-Americans or Italian-Americans, for example). In other cases, a group may demand a degree of autonomy, especially in terms of cultural practices such as the use of language in schools. When a cultural group defines itself as a nation, often there are demands for a separate state for that nation, the politics of nationalism. We will look at the politics of creating nation-states in two ways: top-down and bottom-up.

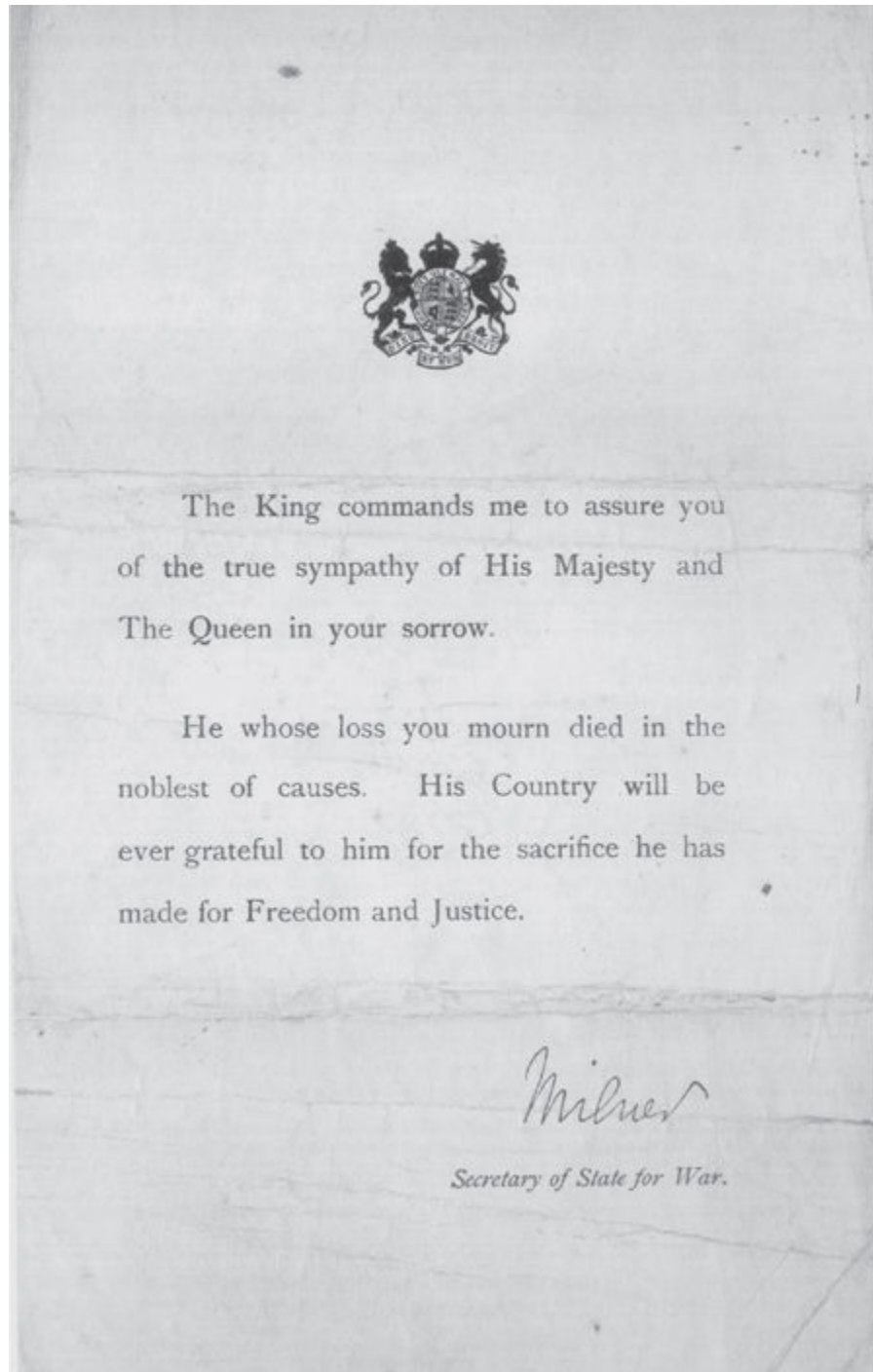


Figure 4.2 World War I telegram to next of kin.

Top-down nationalism refers to the role of the state in creating a sense of a singular, unified national identity (Mosse, 1975). The United States is, perhaps, the best example of this process. Historically, the United States defines its national identity as an immigrant nation; a collection of

individuals from national groups across the globe. The practice of the state has been to ensure a centripetal political force: that such a collection of nations does not create conflict, but is “a more perfect union,” an American nation. Education is the vehicle for this continual process of creating a nation-state. Children pledge allegiance to “the flag” at the beginning of each school day. The American nation is celebrated in song, dance, and study – the mythology of the nation, the sense of unity, and the child’s place within it is created in a “banal” or everyday manner (Billig, 1995). The celebration of the American nation (and also the Australian and Canadian national histories) illustrates that there are positive interpretations of nationalism as a collective identity that transcends ethnic differences.

Ironically, the dominant mythology of the United States as an immigrant land of opportunity rests upon a history in which different cultural groups have suffered at the hands of the state: racist immigration policies targeting Chinese, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the near genocidal Indian Wars of the 1800s, as well as the enslavement of black Africans and the African-Americans’ struggle for civil rights that continues today, and the contemporary harassment of Arab-Americans at airports and other security points in the name of the War on Terror. However, the power of the United States’ national identity is that despite the discrimination that successive waves of immigrants have experienced, and still do, the desire to be part of the American nation is still strong, and the degree of assimilation is high, compared to other countries.

The top-down nationalism of the United States illustrates the way the state apparatus has been brought to bear to create a nation. It is a form of nationalism; it promotes the ideology that the state is the natural and obvious political geographic expression of a singular nation. Funnily enough, it is not the type of politics we usually think about when we label a politician a “nationalist:” such terminology is usually a form of epithet used to refer to “monsters” such as Slobodan Milosevic or Adolf Hitler, for example.

Activity

How and where did you learn your national history? Think of the settings (home, school, etc.) where you were exposed to this history and the form the history took (books, films, lessons, etc.). Write down

two or three of the key ingredients of the history and what “moral” or story they may tell about the particular national character. Write down two or three key historic events that are usually ignored or played down in the national history of your country. How do these lesser-discussed events contradict the portrayal of the national character you identified from the dominant narrative?

The geopolitics of nationalism II: the process of “ethnic cleansing”

Let us turn to the politics of violent nationalism, or bottom-up nationalism, now; the type of nationalism that makes the headlines (Dahlman, 2005). Nationalism, in this sense, is the goal to create a “pure” nation-state, in which one and only one culture or national group exists. This geopolitical perspective views a nation-state as somehow tainted, weak, a geopolitical anomaly, if it contains multiple nations or ethnicities. Instead of the politics of assimilation, the geopolitics here is of expulsion, and eradication. Bottom-up nationalism is what has become known, almost nonchalantly, as “ethnic cleansing.” Though it is the bloody actions of “ethnic cleansing” (the killing and rape) that are the “sharp end” of this form of nationalism, the way the term has become readily, and quite uncritically, adopted by mainstream media as a handy phrase to “make sense” of an event also shows that we are implicated too. As viewers, the pervasive ideology of nationalism makes the goals of “ethnic cleansing” understandable: it is, simply, the most extreme form of the politics of exclusion that underlies discussion of immigration and refugee policies in “civilized” debates in the British parliament, for example. The politics of otherness related to particular territories is the underlying geopolitics.

The process of “ethnic cleansing” can be illustrated schematically. In the first diagram ([Figure 4.3](#)), two neighbouring states are both multinational: Triangle State is populated mostly by people ▲ with a scattering of people ● near the border, and Circle State displays the opposite pattern. Also, there are both ▲ and ● people living outside the borders of these two states. The existence of people of different nations does not determine conflict; most states exhibit this mixture of nations without violence. But, in some cases,

politicians gain prominence on the back of calls to alter the multinational make-up of the state, often by blaming economic and social woes upon the presence of a minority nation.

The drive to create a “pure” nation-state is illustrated in [Figure 4.4](#). In what has become known as “ethnic cleansing,” the minority ● nation is expelled from the landscape of the Triangle State. Expulsion usually consists of violence against people and their property that forces them to flee for their safety, leaving their property and possessions behind. Expulsion usually, takes place in conjunction with eradication ([Figure 4.5](#)); the slaughter, usually of young men and the rape of women to prevent the reproduction of future generations. Rape is a powerful weapon (see [Chapter 9](#)). Women are “defiled” in order to “pollute” the purity of the nation. In our schematic example, Circle State has retaliated to the expulsion of people ● in Triangle State by killing people ▲ within the borders of the Circle State. The goal of ● and ▲ nationalists is the creation of a state containing one, and only one, national group.

Sometimes, the geopolitics of nationalism will stop here. In other cases, there may be a further violent step ([Figure 4.6](#)). After the bout of “ethnic cleansing,” Circle State may be pure, but for some the process is incomplete: not all of the members of nation ● reside within the borders of Circle State. In a fundamentalist interpretation of nationalism, the members of nation ● in Triangle State are unfulfilled, denied their right to participation in the ● nation-state. The result is the mobilization of force to change the borders of Circle State so that all members of nation ● now reside within it. At the same time, any ▲ people in Circle State who survived the killing flee or are expelled. The “purity” and “wholeness” of nation ● has been achieved; a lot of blood has been spilt.

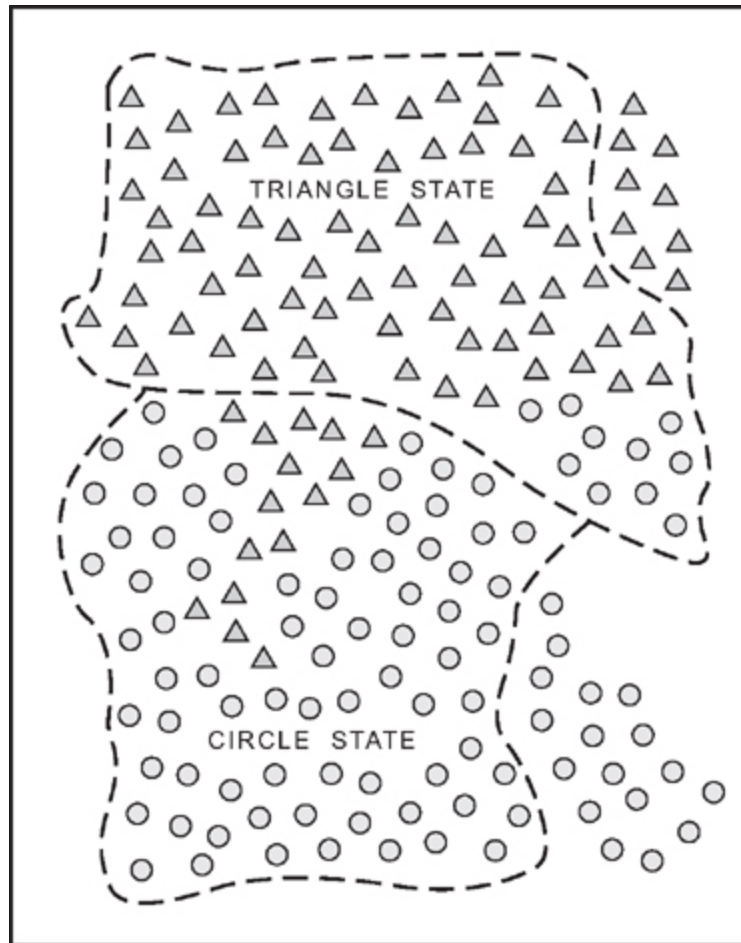


Figure 4.3 Prelude to ethnic cleansing.

Case study: Syrian Civil War

The Syrian Civil War did not begin as a politics of nationalism. A civil war is a fight between factions or regions within an existing state for control over the state. The sides in a civil war often believe they have the “true” interests of the nation-state at heart. This is true of the early stages of the Syrian Civil War. The conflict began in March 2011 as the Arab Spring’s calls for political change came to Syria. Protestors were met with resistance by the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, and by July 2011 hundreds of thousands of people were demonstrating against Assad’s regime across the country (BBC News, 2015a). Demonstrations and protest became civil war as rebels and government forces fought. The estimated death toll has climbed steadily: 90,000 in June 2013, 191,000 in August 2014, and

250,000 a year later (BBC News, 2015a). A UN commission of inquiry found evidence of human rights abuses and war crimes by all sides of the conflict, and there was also evidence of the government using chemical weapons. The conflict, and violence in neighbouring Iraq, spurred a huge movement of refugees (an estimated four million from Syria alone) that has led to a whole range of other geopolitical conflicts that are discussed in the next chapter.

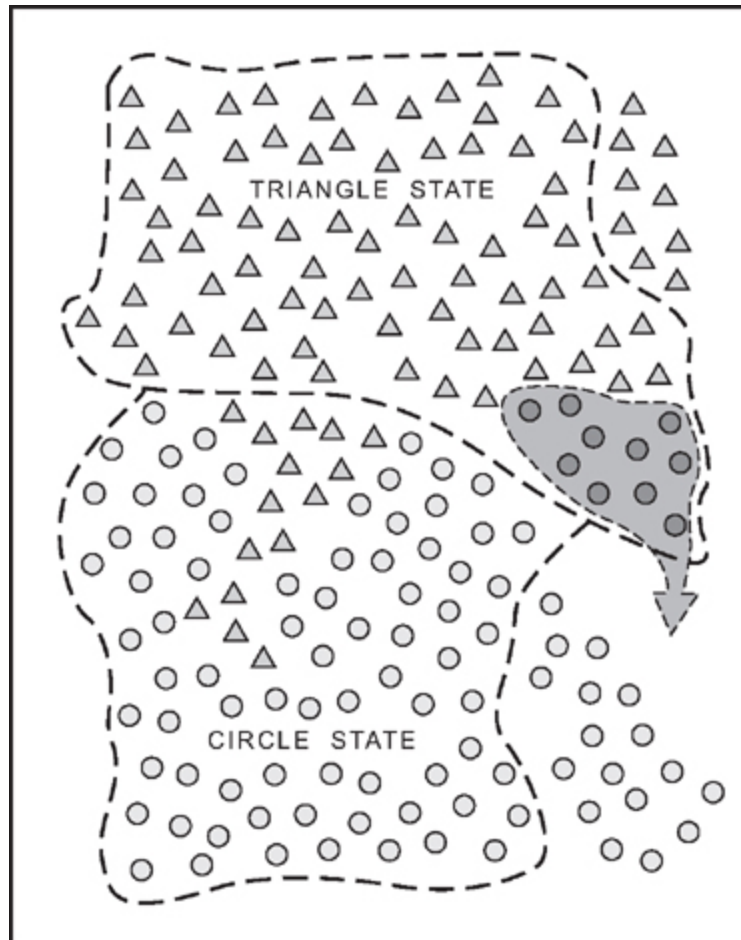


Figure 4.4 Ethnic cleansing: expulsion.

Though the Syrian Civil War did not start off with an agenda of nationalist politics, issues of identity and territorial control soon emerged. The very existence of a civil war is evidence that Syrian top-down nationalism had failed – the Assad regime lost the ability to create a sense of loyalty to the state. The conflict between government forces and rebel groups quickly became associated with sectarian identities and the control

of territory. The president is from the Shia Alawite sect while the majority of the country is Sunni Muslim. The war descended into a proxy war as Iran, a Shia majority country, supported the government and the rebels were supported by Sunni majority states such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Russia entered the war in support of President Assad, and the US, Britain, and France supported the rebels. The refugee crisis, air strikes, and support for armed groups by outside powers made this ostensibly civil war a matter of global geopolitics.

Nationalism has become a factor of the war in two ways. In the north of the country, along the border with Turkey, the Kurdish people have gained control of a swathe of territory. The Kurds believe they are a nation, but have no state of their own. They inhabit an area of territory that includes parts of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Armenia. They are a nation without a state, and the formation of a Kurdistan is resisted by existing states as it would lead to loss of their territory. For years the Kurds have been in conflict with the Turkish government, trying to establish a Kurdish nation-state. The conflicts in Syria and Iraq have allowed them to control territory, leading to the possibility of a territorial heartland that could be the basis for a Kurdish state; an expression of bottom-up nationalism. Another possibility is that the Kurds will use their control of territory to push for greater autonomy and the idea of a federal Syria as a way to create a peaceful outcome.

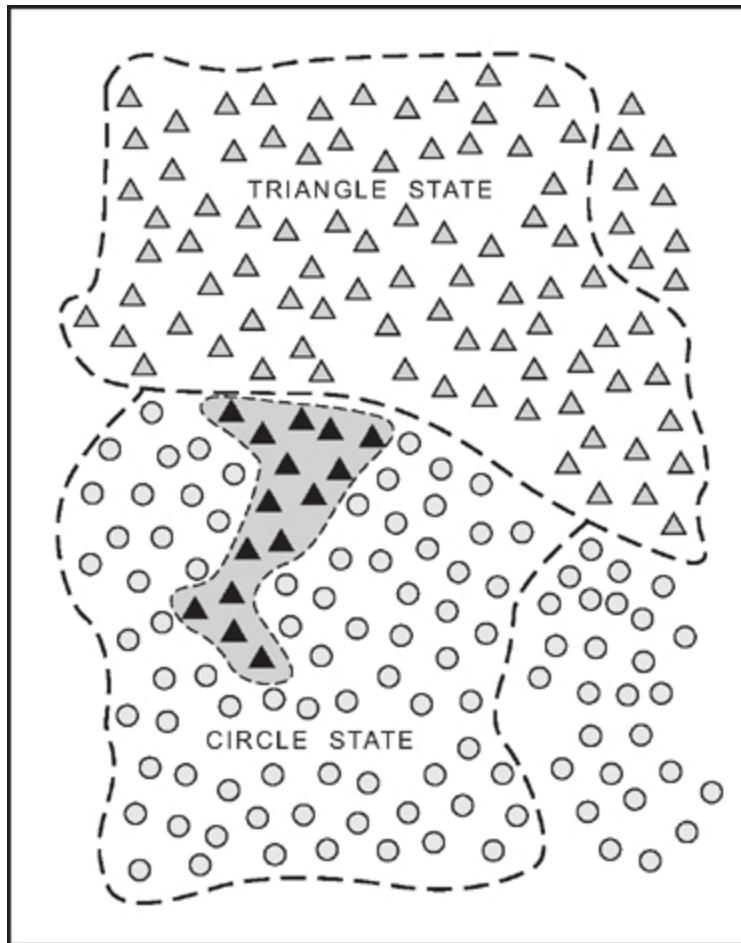


Figure 4.5 Ethnic cleansing: eradication.

The other form of nationalism demonstrated in the Syrian Civil war is the ability of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) to control cities and territory in the east of the country. This is a form of nationalism, based on religious identity and a claim to be the “true” representatives of Islam – a claim deeply offensive to the majority of Muslims. ISIS believes it can establish a new caliphate by controlling territory in Syria and Iraq that the civil conflicts in those countries have allowed them to seize. The “state” they proclaim is one based on religious rather than ethnic or national identity, inflaming sectarian tensions as ISIS fights Shia regimes and populations, as well as committing atrocities against Sunni Muslims they believe are not true followers of Islam. The violence of ISIS has elements of ethnic conflict, as its view of “purity” in religious practice has led to the victimization of groups who ISIS claim are apostates. For example, the Yazidis (a Kurdish religious minority whose belief are a syncretic mixture

of elements of Islam and other belief systems) have been killed and captured by ISIS, with one estimate that 3,500 have been taken in Iraq and the women sold for between \$500 and \$2,000 each as sex slaves (UN News Centre, 2016).

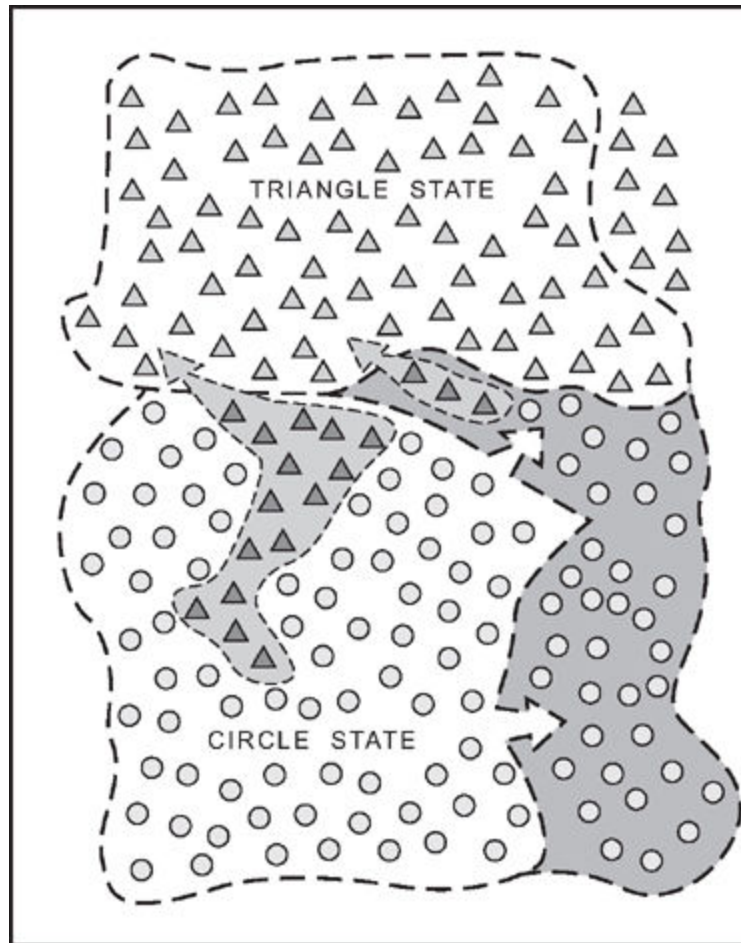


Figure 4.6 Ethnic cleansing: expansion.

The geopolitics of nationalism is essential in understanding geopolitical practices and representations. Nationalism brings together identity, territory, and political power. Even in conflicts that do not originate through the geopolitics of nationalism, such as the Arab Spring, top-down and bottom-up nationalism may soon emerge as complicating factors and may even become the primary reason for ongoing violence. The victimization of women by ISIS is a reminder of how gender plays a role in conflicts involving ethnic and national identity.

Gender, nationalism, and geopolitical codes

In *Dulce et Decorum est* Wilfred Owen portrays the harsh world of the battlefield. It is very clearly a masculine world. In World War I, the roles women were to play were limited to exhorting the troops to go off to war. Other classic writing on warfare is also a story of men under fire. In the novels *The Naked and the Dead* by Norman Mailer and *The Thin Red Line* by James Jones, women are “back home,” to be returned to and remembered, and their potential infidelities a further source of stress. Homosexuality is rarely a topic, though *The Thin Red Line* is a notable exception in its casual recognition that men found comfort with men during warfare.

The masculine nature of geopolitical codes is the goal of our discussion. To get there it is necessary to explore the gendered nature of nationalism, with special reference to the use of nationalism at times of conflict. We began this chapter with an emphasis on “naming” so that we can begin to understand nationalism as a political process of joining a nation and a state. Naming is not just a matter of academic classification; it also refers to the particular label given to an abstract concept, such as “the state,” in order to give it popular meaning and salience. Think of other, more colloquial names for the nation. Some that come to mind are homeland, motherland, and even fatherland. Fatherland is noteworthy because this particular gender reference to the nation has a very negative historical connotation: Nazi Germany, or nationalism gone “too far.” Instead, we are more comfortable with thinking of the nation as the “motherland,” with its references to nurturing, comfort, and sense of belonging. The nation is, as Anderson (1991) noted, an imagined community: meaning that we think of ourselves as part of a national community, but we will never interact with the vast majority of its members in any meaningful way. Instead, the sense of community is “imagined” through national events such as sporting events, elections, the funerals of statesmen and women, natural disasters, etc.

Perhaps a more accurate description of the nation is an “imagined family,” and a patriarchal one at that. For notions of the “motherland” imply a particular role for women; they should be active in the procreation and socialization of the nation’s future generations, and their domain is the home. The flip side to this gendered role is that men are then seen as the defenders and rulers of the nation – they inhabit the “public spaces” of

government, business, and the military. Hence, in the dominant narratives of *The Naked and the Dead* and other war novels, the men must fight for and defend their women “back home,” but the individual is only complete (and by extension so is the nation) when functioning as a household of a man and a woman: this, the narrative says, is what is to be fought for.

Feminist scholars have shown the gendered division of labour within politics, and foreign policy in particular (see the essays in Staeheli et al., 2004). Despite some positive changes in attitudes towards women, and legal recourse to equality, ideology is harder to change. By ideology I do not just mean the overt sexism of some individuals and political agendas that promote the role of the woman as “homemaker” and/or sexual object. Such agendas are by their very brazenness perhaps relatively easy to challenge. More threatening are the insidious or banal practices that promote gender roles that limit women’s participation in public space. Nationalism remains an exceptional tool for defining gender roles, and perhaps especially at a time of conflict.

Women and the War on Terror

In the United States after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the words “hero” and “nation” were pervasive and intertwined. Without dismissing the bravery of firefighters, police officers, and others who lost and risked their lives in the wreckage left by the terrorist attacks, it is also striking how gendered this narrative became. Men were the heroes, women the homebound helpless victims. The term “brotherhood” was used repeatedly in references to the New York Fire Department. The bravery of the “brotherhood” of rescue workers on that day was portrayed as a purely masculine pursuit: barely mentioned were the women rescue workers who also served (Dowler, 2005).

Of course, women did play an important role in the nationalist story that was told in the wake of these terrorist attacks; the tragedy of widowhood was exposed to a nationalist light. Again, one must emphasize that an academic analysis of the victims of 9/11 is not intended to diminish or demean individual loss and suffering. However, it is important to see how an individual’s loss becomes part of a national tragedy or episode that, in turn, feeds into the redefinition of a geopolitical code, especially its military

role. The following excerpt from President Bush's State of the Union Address of 29 January 2002 is particularly illustrative:

For many Americans, these four months have brought sorrow, and pain that will never completely go away. Every day a retired firefighter returns to Ground Zero, to feel closer to his two sons who died there. At a memorial in New York, a little boy left his football with a note for his lost father: Dear Daddy, please take this to heaven. I don't want to play football until I can play with you again some day.

Last month, at the grave of her husband, Michael, a CIA officer and Marine who died in Mazur-e-Sharif, Shannon Spann said these words of farewell: "Semper fi, my love." Shannon is with us tonight. (Applause.)

Shannon, I assure you and all who have lost a loved one that our cause is just, and our country will never forget the debt we owe Michael and all who gave their lives for freedom.

President Delivers State of the Union Address

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>

(accessed 22 December 2014)

In this segment of the speech the tragedy suffered by men in the defence of the nation is clearly flagged, in terms of losses suffered "at home" and also "abroad." Shannon Spann's loss was made a public event as television cameras broadcast her acknowledgement of the applause from the country's elected officials. Semper fi (or Semper fidelis) is the Latin motto of the United States Marine Corps, and is translated as "always faithful:" faithfulness that is promised to God, country, family and the Corps. The use of Semper fi in the State of the Union Address hits upon different aspects of the nationalist story: the women back home are "ever faithful" while the nation's menfolk are away fighting (contrary to the constant worries about fidelity of the characters of war novels); such faithfulness is part of the institution of holy matrimony, blessed by a God that is blessing the fighting too; the country demands a loyalty that requires people to put their lives at

risk, despite the claims to faithfulness to family. Loyalty to nation and the Corps takes precedence over loyalty to family.

The point to emphasize here is that the practice of geopolitics requires geopolitical agency in many different settings, including the home. The geopolitical actions of states are dependent upon the actions and sacrifice of people like Michael Spann. How can his wife's loss, or the loss of any individual fighting for any country, be justified? In other words, a foundational ideology, applicable in all countries, is necessary to justify the conflict that is undertaken as part of a geopolitical code. Nationalism plays that role by creating a sense of "community" and allegiance that warrants sacrifice.

Creating a national memory of "comfort women"

If national identities are based on a sense of the feminine that needs protection, we can also see the use of gender in geopolitics when there is a feeling that a nation's women have been victimized by another country. The example of Korean "comfort women" in World War II is an example of how gender roles can be part of history that retains significance. The term "comfort women" is a euphemism for Korean women used as sex slaves by Japan. The issue has been a long-standing contentious issue between Japan and South Korea, though women from across the Japanese empire were forced into sex acts, primarily for the Japanese military. It is estimated that about 200,000 women were forced into the role of "comfort women." South Korea, and many other countries, believed that Japan had failed to recognize or apologize in a sincere manner for this historic tragedy. In Seoul, a statue in remembrance of the "comfort women" was erected outside the Japanese embassy as a focal point of protest and what was intended to be a daily pointed statement towards Japan. The statue depicts a young Korean woman in traditional Korean dress sitting next to an empty chair that represents the victims. Similar monuments were erected elsewhere in Korea, as well as the United States, Canada, and other countries (The Straits Times, 2016).

In December 2015 the governments of Japan and South Korea acted in the hope that the issue could be laid to rest. The Japanese prime minister, Shinzo Abe, accepted Japan's "deep responsibility" for the legacy of the "comfort women" and established a one billion yen fund for the forty-six

surviving “comfort women” in South Korea. The South Korean government of President Park Geun-hye, a woman, said that if Japan stuck to the deal it would consider that matter resolved “finally and irreversibly.” However, the people in both countries were dissatisfied with the agreement. Some of the surviving “comfort women” wanted a direct apology to themselves, rather than a general apology to the country. As 88-year-old former comfort woman Yoo Hee-nam said:

If I look back, we’ve lived a life deprived of our basic human rights. So I can’t be fully satisfied. But we’ve been waiting all this time for the South Korean government to resolve the issue legally. As the government worked hard to settle the deal before the turn of the year, I’d like to follow the government’s lead.

(BBC News, 2015b)

Yoo Hee-nam was acknowledging that her own body and personal history had become subsumed within nationalist politics. Her individual experiences were a matter of the ongoing construction of national history and relegated below the perceived importance of the imperatives of the state’s geopolitical code.

Though the two governments hoped to use the issue of the “comfort women” as a way to improve their relationship, the way that the issue resonated with a sense of national identity meant that neither government could control the debate. Some in Japan still denied that Japan forced women into sex roles (Wingfield-Hayes, 2015). In South Korea, some did not see Japan’s apology going far enough, and campaigned to keep the statue outside the Japanese embassy. There was anger in South Korea that Japan was pressing for the removal of the statue and that the South Korean government would comply. Activists in South Korea still saw the “comfort women” as an expression of their national identity, in juxtaposition of how they viewed Japan. As Kim Seo-kyung, who made the statue with her husband, said, “Like the victims, the girl is not weak or too angry but is strong and never ashamed, looking at the Japanese embassy” (Park, 2015). The issue of the “comfort women” remained part of South Korea’s national identity, and how it saw itself as a strong and proud country. The way the role of the “comfort women” became part of South Korea’s national identity was a complicating factor for the governments of Japan and South Korea as

they attempted to renegotiate their cooperation within their individual geopolitical codes.

The importance of the “comfort women” in South Korea’s national identity was evident in the criticism faced by Professor Park Yu-ha of Sejong University for her book “Teikoku no Ianfu” (“Comfort Women of the Empire”). The book noted the role of Korean collaborators in helping the Japanese obtain Korean women for sex (Kirk, 2016). Park’s history undermined the sense of a blameless Korean past and a sense of national unity. The actions of collaborators showed that nations are not unified or monolithic geopolitical entities. Rather, nation-states are fractured and imperfect. Such a narrative undermines the way that the historical narrative of the “comfort women” was being used by groups in both countries to create simplified us-versus-them stories.

The agreement between South Korea and Japan was also a matter of the states’ geopolitical codes, and not just national identity. Both countries, under diplomatic pressure from the United States, were seeking a way to enhance their cooperation on military and security issues in light of what they saw as the growing power and ambitions of China. Creating a sense of “womanhood” within a national memory or “imagined community” is an important geopolitical representation to enable geopolitical codes to be made and put into action.

Gendered nationalism and the masculinity of geopolitical codes

Though each country’s nationalism is unique, in the sense of its particular history, nationalism is still consistent in defining particular gender roles, even during what are described as “revolutionary” situations such as Cuba. Women consistently are identified with a subordinate role and their access to public positions limited. In this sense, nationalism can be seen as a structure that contains a message of the “proper” roles for men and women. At times of conflict a state’s geopolitical code may reinforce these gender roles as warfare intensifies the different expectations of sacrifice expected of men and women: the “heroic” actions of fighting men and the “stoic” sacrifice of the women who are left behind. There is a constant feedback in this relationship too. As men continue to dominate the public sphere, a masculine perception of the world is continued, with the inevitable result of aggressive geopolitical codes and wars.

Nationalism requires the construction of difference between the populations of different states. Such difference allows for the construction of “enemies,” “threat,” and “danger” as part of a state’s geopolitical code. These notions are dependent upon a dominant military view in society that commands a particular vision of “a dangerous world” and how to respond. From a feminist perspective the dominant military view rests upon a masculine view of the world: the implication is that individual gender roles, geopolitical codes, and the structure of global geopolitics are connected in practice and ideology.

The concepts of militarism and militarization are related to how geopolitical codes are constructed and what they contain. The core beliefs of militarism are:

- (a) that armed force is the ultimate resolver of tensions;
- (b) that human nature is prone to conflict;
- (c) that having enemies is a natural condition;
- (d) that hierarchical relations produce effective action;
- (e) that a state without a military is naïve, scarcely modern, and barely legitimate;
- (f) that in times of crisis those who are feminine need armed protection;
- (g) that in times of crisis any man who refuses to engage in armed violent action is jeopardizing his own status as a manly man.

(Enloe, 2004, p. 219)

In an extension of these ideas, Bernazzoli and Flint (2010) point out that militarization also requires connecting these ideas to national identity through ideas of patriotism and moral right. Hence five other beliefs that underpin militarism should be added:

- (h) that soldiers possess certain values and qualities that are desirable in civil society;
- (i) that military superiority is a source of national pride;
- (j) that those who do not support military actions are unpatriotic;

- (k) that those who do not support military actions are anti-soldier;
- (l) that for a state to engage in armed conflict is to serve the will of a divine being.

(Bernazzoli and Flint, 2010, p. 159)

Militarism is, then, an ideology, a particular view or understanding of society and how it should be organized. It is a different ideology from nationalism, but they are usually found hand in hand. Related to militarism is militarization: “the multitracked process by which the roots of militarism are driven deep into the soil of society” (Enloe, 2004, pp. 219–220). One of these processes is the way the military is constructed as a masculine institution and war as a masculine enterprise. In this way, the masculine nature of militarization is complemented and enhanced by the gender roles promoted in nationalism, and vice versa.

The implications of militarization are individual, national, and global. In terms of the construction of geopolitical codes, militarization is seen as a foreign policy issue because of the dominant influence of the military in forming codes, and equating security with military matters. Most importantly, militarization is especially successful when civilian policy makers acquiesce to a foreign policy implemented by force (Bacevich, 2005; Enloe, 2004).

Box 4.2 Masculinity as a foreign policy issue

The militarization of any country’s foreign policy can be measured by monitoring the extent to which its policy:

- is influenced by the views of defence department decision makers and/or senior military officers
- flows from civilian officials’ own presumptions that the military needs to carry exceptional weight
- assigns the military a leading role in implementing the nation’s foreign policy, and
- treats military security and national security as if they were synonymous.

(Enloe, 2004, p. 122)

Consider the foreign policy of your own country. Who is making statements to the media about a particular issue, military officers, the Foreign Secretary (Secretary of State) or Minister/Secretary of Defence? Does the Ministry of Defence/Pentagon give regular news conferences?

The militarization of a geopolitical code rests upon the dominance of men in positions of public office, who are willing to facilitate a foreign policy that rests upon masculine assumptions about individual behaviour that are then transferred to geopolitical codes. The essential ideological building block is the masculinity myth: the notion “to be a soldier means possibly to experience ‘combat’, and ‘combat’ is the ultimate test of a man’s masculinity” (Enloe, 1983, p. 13; Hedges, 2003). What it means to be a “man” and effective military operation are mutually reinforcing:

Men are taught to have a stake in the military’s essence – combat; it is supposedly a validation of their own male ‘essence.’ This is matched by the military’s own institutional investment in being represented as society’s bastion of male identity. That mutuality of interest between men and the military is a resource that few other institutions enjoy, even in a thoroughly patriarchal society.

(Enloe, 1983, p. 15)

Combat defines the “man” and also validates the existence of the military. Moreover, combat as a masculine pursuit translates into the importance of the military as a masculine institution that, furthermore, plays a role in the militarization of geopolitical codes. The militarization of geopolitical codes is especially resonant when combat is in progress, defined as “likely,” or a recent matter of national history. The foreign policy experience of “combat” defines the identities of individuals (men and women) and, hence, continues the relationship between the construction of individual identities and the form of geopolitical codes.

Combat, constructed as an essentially masculine pursuit, rests upon women in two ways. One is in the practical sense: the exclusion of women from combat duty but their necessary role of “camp followers” (Enloe, 1983); in other words, women play a number of “supporting roles” that are necessary for the military to function. Some of these roles are with the

services, such as nursing and clerical work. Other roles are outside the services and even the law. Prostitution is perhaps the most obvious, but so is the role of the military or diplomatic wife (Enloe, 1990). Crucial to our connection of militarization, nationalism, and geopolitical codes are the twin needs for women's support services while women's roles are controlled and restricted to prevent "disorder" in the form of women's participation in combat. In the words of Cynthia Enloe:

This mutuality of interests has the effect of double-locking the door for women. Women – because they are *women*, not because they are nurses or wives or clerical workers – cannot qualify for entrance into the inner sanctum, combat. Furthermore, to *allow* women entrance into the essential core of the military would throw into confusion *all* men's certainty about their male identity and thus about their claim to privilege in the social order.

(Enloe, 1983, p. 15)

Combat defines the man, but man also defines the combat. In other words, by making combat the definition of manliness, and making combat a male preserve, military combat is the defining event of a patriarchal society and its members. "Women may serve the military, but they can never be permitted to *be* the military" (Enloe, 1983, p. 15, emphasis in original). The militarization of geopolitical codes is enhanced as it serves individual goals – making society's boys into men – while also facilitating a dominant role for the military in the definition of a geopolitical code. In turn, those with "combat experience," by definition men, are also privileged in public affairs (Enloe, 2004), a process very evident in US politics.

The militarization of society complements and intensifies the gender roles that are defined by nationalist ideology. Furthermore, in patriarchal societies, "combat" has an essential role in the essential identity or purpose of men. Not surprisingly, war is a key ingredient in national myths and interacts with the gendered understanding of public and private roles. Not only are men the "defenders" of the nation, but actual defence is necessary to make a man. With the militarization of society, in addition to the role of "combat" in defining male identity, and the dominance of men, and the military, in public affairs, it is hardly surprising that the necessary

construction of *difference* by nationalist ideology is readily “upgraded” into “hatred” and “threat;” in other words, war.

In the next section we discuss how different national histories can be related to different geopolitical codes and hence the forms of conflict that particular nationalisms may generate.

A typology of nationalist myths and geopolitical codes

The geopolitical codes of states rest upon the maintenance of their security. On the whole, security is related to the territorial integrity of the state. In other words, geopolitical codes define ways in which the sovereignty of the state must be protected or the state’s status and well-being enhanced. Perceived threat of attack upon the citizens of the country requires a geopolitical code attending to boundary defence. Enhancing the status and well-being of a state often requires identifying historic grievances that have denied a country its “rightful” access to a particular set of resources. Consequently, an aggressive geopolitical code may be written that requires the seizure of territory.

Whether the code tends to be more defensive or aggressive, the concepts of sovereignty and territory remain central to the ideology used to justify the geopolitical code. Three types of “historical-geographic understandings” that frame the specific justifications of particular countries have been identified (Murphy, 2005, p. 283):

1. The state is the historic homeland of a distinctive ethnocultural group.
2. The state is a distinctive physical-environmental unit.
3. The state is the modern incarnation of a long-standing political-territorial entity.

These categories are not deterministic, just because two countries possess a historical-geographic ideology emphasizing, say, territorial integrity, does not mean that they are likely to be equally aggressive. The benefit of this classification is that it shows that the justification for geopolitical actions used by a government must be grounded in a national ideology that resonates with the population; it must “make sense.”

For example, the continuing conflict between Turkey and Greece is focused upon islands off the west coast of Turkey as well as the divided island of Cyprus. The Mediterranean island of Cyprus had been under British colonial control until its independence in 1960. Britain had established two administrative entities, dominated by Greeks in the south and Turks in the north; arguably the root of the current conflict (Higate and Henry, 2011, p. 136). Tensions between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots began very soon after independence. In 1974 the Greek government sponsored an attempt to overthrow the elected president of Cyprus and in response Turkey invaded the island. The result has been a divided island. The resulting Turkish Republic of North Cyprus is not recognized internationally (37 per cent of the island), and is separated from the Greek Cypriot area (59 per cent of the island) by a UN buffer zone that covers the remaining 4 per cent of the territory (Cohen, 2003, p. 162).

An interpretation of geopolitics emphasizing material pursuits would point to the oil reserves under Turkey's western continental shelf. But what about the justification for the conflict? The Greek government's response to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 is replete with allusions to modern Greece's unbroken connection to the ancient Greek empire. In the words of the Greek Foreign Ministry:

The name of Cyprus has always been associated with Greek mythology (most famously as the birthplace of the goddess Aphrodite) and history. The Greek Achaeans established themselves on Cyprus around 1400 BC. The island was an integral part of the Homeric world and, indeed, the word "Cyprus" was used by Homer himself. Ever since, Cyprus has gone through the same major historical phases as the rest of the Greek world.

(Quoted in Murphy, 2005, p. 285)

The connection between Greek gods and an estimated 225,000 refugees may appear tenuous to a neutral and objective observer. The point is that going to war could be justified to the Greek public, and gain support, through the usage of this widely held belief in the national history of the country.

More specifically, we can use the historical-geographical understanding of a country's geopolitical situation to suggest broad relationships between

national identity and the content of a geopolitical code, though not in a deterministic sense (Murphy, 2005, p. 286):

1. An ethnic distribution that crosses state boundaries is most likely to be a source of interstate territorial conflict where the ethnic group in question is the focus of at least one state's regime of territorial legitimation.
2. A boundary arrangement is likely to be particularly unstable where it violates a well-established conception of a state's physical-environmental unity.
3. States with regimes of territorial legitimation grounded in a pre-existing political-territorial formation are likely to have particularly difficult relations with neighbouring states that occupy or claim areas that are viewed as core to the prior political- territorial formation.
4. States that are not in a position to ground regimes in any of the foregoing terms are less likely to have territorial conflicts with their neighbours unless there are strong economic or political motives for pressing a territorial claim and state leaders can point to some pre-existing political arrangement or history of discovery and first use that arguably justifies the claim.

The first point refers to the politics of nationalism discussed earlier in the chapter as “bottom-up” nationalism. The second point is illustrated by one of the most puzzling contemporary geopolitical tensions: the dispute between NATO allies Spain and Britain regarding the territory of Gibraltar. The tiny area (just 6.5 square kilometres) has a strategic location at the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea that has made it a matter of geopolitical contention. It was reluctantly conceded by Spain to the British in the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht and became a colony in 1830. Spain has been negotiating to gain joint sovereignty, but in 2002 Gibraltar's residents voted against such shared control. Spain's desire to gain control of Gibraltar is explained by the historical understanding of the physical extent of Spain; a physical geography currently violated by Britain's possession of just 6.5 square kilometres of territory. The third point was already exemplified in a discussion of the Turkish–Greek conflict over Cyprus. In addition, China's numerous territorial claims in East and Southeast Asia that rest upon the

geographic extent of the ancient Chinese empire are a contemporary example of the third point.

The final scenario of geopolitical conflict illustrates an important point: many states must legitimate their geopolitical codes without recourse to a national understanding of political geographies of ethnicity, physical extent, or historical claims. The states of sub-Saharan Africa are colonial constructs; they are recent creations with little basis in ethnic homogeneity or physical legacies. Hence, there has been little cause for border conflicts in this region of the world, instead the geopolitics has been a matter of which ethnic group is able to seize control of the state apparatus, and not the geographical extent of the state (Herbst, 2000). In contrast, the imposed borders of Latin America shifted over the course of Spanish colonialism, creating opportunities for disagreement over their “proper” course.

Geopolitical codes are not simply an objective or strategic calculation made by foreign policy elites; it is not a matter of “statecraft” that excludes the majority of the population. Everyone is implicated, to a certain degree, because geopolitical codes cannot be enacted unless the majority of the population is acquiescent, at least tacitly. To ensure that a geopolitical code resonates with its citizens, a country is careful to frame its actions within the established political geographic sentiment of the nation’s history. We have identified some broad categories with which we can interpret the major theme of the national tradition being evoked.

National identity frames the geopolitical acts of states within its commonly understood history. Emphasis is placed upon the important role that context plays in determining how and what people believe: “Identifying with a territory simply elicits certain views on the world, albeit in a contingent way, given certain national challenges, historical facts, and ideals” (Dijkink, 1996, p. ix). In other words, “to live within a territory arouses particular but shared visions (narratives) of the meaning of one’s place in the world and the global system” (Dijkink, 1996, p. 1). People are socialized within different territorial settings; what they hear, how they make sense of the information they receive, and the possible responses are limited by geographically specific institutions (Agnew, 1987). Referring back to our discussion of place in [Chapter 1](#), it is the uniqueness of a country’s geopolitical location or strategic situation, coupled with the way history is interpreted through dominant institutions, which formulates the particular ingredients of national ideology. Even in the age of satellite

communication technology, and “globalization,” information is distilled and interpreted through local journalistic and government lenses (Dijkink, 1996, p. 3).

Visions of one’s country and its position in relation to other countries are formed within particular national myths. These myths form the basis for geopolitical codes and the means to represent and interpret these goals so that they obtain popular support. Dijkink’s term is *geopolitical vision*: “any idea concerning the relation between one’s own and other places, involving feelings of (in)security or (dis)advantage (and/or) invoking ideas about a collective mission or foreign policy strategy” (Dijkink, 1996, p. 11). National histories are replete with the memories of both the pain of historical suffering and humiliation and the pride of past glories.

It is the tension between how these “maps of pride and pain,” as Dijkink calls them, are remembered and used to initiate and justify foreign policy that make geopolitical visions the way national sentiments are translated into geopolitical codes. “[N]ational identity is continuously rewritten on the basis of external events; and foreign politics does not mechanically respond to real threats but to constructed dangers” (Dijkink, 1996, p. 5). Strategic concerns about resources and economics, and ideological referents to national values combine in geopolitical visions, a framing of the world that connects the individual’s sense of identity to global geopolitics through the geopolitical code of their country. The content of national myths and the content of geopolitical codes are made within dynamic contexts of conflict. The connections between national myths and geopolitical codes identified by Murphy and Dijkink show that geopolitical conflicts must be understood by connecting the actions of one set of geopolitical agents (those who control the state) with another group of geopolitical agents, the population of those states.

Activity

Identify which of the “historical-geographic understandings” we described at the beginning of this section, best fit the way the nationalism of your country is portrayed. Think of current and past conflicts that your country has been involved in. Do the reasons and justifications these conflicts follow the expectations of the framework? Why?

Breaking down the binaries

The previous section provided a typology to show how the construction of national myths has been essential in representing geopolitical codes in a way that makes them believable or readily accepted. Such representation requires the construction of us/them and inside/outside categories. The goal is to create a secure or stable sense of what is meant by “us” and how others are very different (see the essays in Giles and Hyndman, 2004). In other words, the nation requires an understanding that it is tidily bounded both physically and socially. The geographic extent of the nation is understood to be clear, it simply follows the lines on the map, and we are led to an understanding of who “belongs” or is a member of the nation and who is a foreigner, alien, or whatever term is used to describe an “other.”

The dominant representation of the geopolitical world is one of clear distinctions, but the real world is quite different. Alternative representations of the world advanced by feminist geopoliticians (Giles and Hyndman, 2004) encourage us to think in terms of loyalty and action outside the constraints of the nation-state framework. As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the term nation-state is a misnomer. Nation-states are not neatly bounded homogenous entities. Instead they are complex mixtures of different identities, which often spill over international boundaries. See the following case study of Burma/Myanmar as an illustration.

Emphasizing the diversity of the nation, and the way in which identities are not neatly compartmentalized within defined nation-state categories, requires us to rethink the notion of security (Giles and Hyndman, 2004). Defining and attempting to achieve security drives geopolitical practice and representation. The dominant framing of geopolitics through national identity means that security has come to be understood as national security, and threats are usually identified as the threats from other nations. In the current geopolitical context focused upon terrorism, the dominant rhetoric is still about national responses (we will talk about this more in [Chapter 6](#)). However, if we come to understand nation-states as false constructs and take that seriously then we must also question the idea of national security. It can be replaced with the idea of human security; that our commitment

should be to the well-being of individuals regardless of their national identity, or religious beliefs, race, income-level, gender, or sexuality. Not only does such an approach lead us to question the placement of the nation, or state, as the primary geopolitical actor, it also leads us to question how we should situate ourselves within collective identities and broader social groups; it forces us to give priority to other identities and groups than the state/nation. And by seeing security as something other than a national us/them competition we can consider a host of geopolitical actors that emphasize global connections rather than separation via national divisions.

As we will see in the following chapter on territory and borders, and discussions of networks ([Chapter 6](#)) and environmental geopolitics ([Chapter 8](#)), new geographies that emphasize flows between places and countries have become increasingly important in how we live and how we understand the world. The term “globalization” has come to be used as a catch-all phrase to describe the intensification of global interconnections and flows, whether it be money, commodities, people, or ideas. In Castells’s (1996) terminology we now live in a “network society.” Unsurprisingly, some scholars and commentators have predicted the “end of the nation-state.” Such demise is proclaimed for two reasons. First, states can no longer manage or control global flows. In other words, they have lost their ability to claim sovereignty over a piece of territory. Second, people will become increasingly aware of global ties and develop a sense of identity that will transcend the nation; a global sense of collective identity will be established.

There is much scepticism that may be levelled at the end of the nation-state thesis. Especially, states are still powerful geopolitical actors, they can control flows across their borders to some extent, some global flows have been encouraged and assisted by states (especially financial ones), and the sovereignty of states has always been only partial. Also, the persistence of racialized and Oriental antagonism across the world is plain to see in many cases, and it is often framed through national perspectives. The vast majority of the world’s population is not made up of cosmopolitan global travellers who are willing and able to be cultural chameleons. Most people live their lives within the same geographical setting and learn to see the world in that way. Consumer culture may sell global products, but the nation still plays a strong role in interpreting how we consume them. Global culture is adapted and understood within national settings. People are still

readily mobilized to fight and die in the name of national security, and environmental disasters and wars may provoke global sympathy but the refugees they produce are still very much evaluated through an us/them and inside/outside national lens (Hyndman, 2003).

Though it is clear that the nation still plays an essential role in the practice and representation of geopolitics, it is also a mistake to view the operation of politics as being limited by discrete and clear-cut national boundaries. Agnew (1994) called this mistake the “territorial trap,” or the dominant tendency to see processes of politics and society to be neatly encompassed within state borders. Instead, Agnew notes that sovereignty is “unbundled” through the operation of networks that cut across national boundaries. Networks of migration are a clear example. In the past few years the ability of global currency markets to dictate the way European countries manage their economies (Greece, Italy, and Portugal, for example) has illustrated how flows across the globe have constrained the sovereignty of states.

In sum, states operate in a world of global flows; and nation-states are a complex mixture of competing identities. Hence, the world political map of neatly bounded nation-states is a fiction. But it is an important fiction as it has been the material and representational basis of identifying “national security” imperatives that have been the driving force of geopolitics. The idea of the nation-state is problematized by considering the population of states as a mixture of competing identities and by noting global connections through networks. The result is a challenge to the dominant idea of “national security” through the recognition of human security within a connected global humanity (Hyndman, 2003).

Case study: Myanmar/Burma: a militarized state trying to build a unitary nation

This short case study of Myanmar/Burma is a précis of an excellent essay by geographers Carl Grundy-Warr and Karin Dean (2011) that explores how a militarized state used force to create a sense of national unity in the face of ethnic diversity and opposition. The past few years have seen dramatic political change within the country and significant steps towards

democratization. However, conflict between ethnic groups and the central government persist.

The country was known as Burma until 1989, when the current regime changed the name to Myanmar. Both terms have existed in the history of the territory. Though the name change has been recognized internationally, the Burmese democracy movement has rejected it because they see it as part of the militarization strategy discussed in this case study. Myanmar/Burma gained independence from British colonial rule in 1948. Since then the military has launched a series of actions intended to create a centralized state that reaches across the entire geographic expanse of the country. In March 1962 a military coup established a regime that resisted moves towards democracy. State-building by the ruling military regime was associated with fighting enemies, whether “internal” or “external.” The Burma Army, or *Tatmadaw*, was the key institution in the attempt to create a clear sense of the “nation” (Selth, 1996). However, this national project was continually challenged, even before the military coup, by ethnic and communist insurgencies in the border regions. In short, ever since the 1960s the military represented itself as the sole institution of law and order across the territorial extent of the state with the aim of creating a coherent nation-state and prevent the fragmentation of the country: the political goal has been preservation of “the Union” (Lintner, 1990; Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2011). In other words, the militarized state has attempted to create a sense of nation-state in the light of diversity and competing identities. Despite recent steps towards democratization, the attempt by the military to create national unity continues through the repression of minorities.

After the coup, General Ne Win and the “Revolutionary Council” established the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) as sole party and created a militarized and isolationist version of the “Burmese Way to Socialism” that attracted criticism from the international community for its treatment of human and civil rights violations. A key element of the government’s project was the creation of a sense of “nationhood.” One step was a political map which demarcated Burma as consisting of seven divisions surrounded by seven so-called “minority states.” However, the map imposed by the government did not reflect how the “ethnic” political parties in the “minority states” identified the most appropriate form of federalist representation (Steinberg, 1984; Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2011). The BSPP’s attempts to create a nation-state through force were challenged.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the military regime and *Tatmadaw* were in conflict with the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and with a number of ethnic insurgencies that challenged the government's unitary vision of the nation-state.

Following the brutal repression of the pro-democracy movement in 1988 the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was formed, a further militarization of the state with the continued goal of "national unity." SLORC tried to establish political control through Law and Order Restoration Councils (LORCs) at different scales of administration, including state/divisional, district, township, and ward/village-authorities. With an eye to creating a unified nation-state the LORCs were planned to encompass all seven divisions (*taing* in Burmese) and the seven designated ethnic states (*pyi-neh* in Burmese) of the country previously created by the BSPP. In reality, the reach of the LORCs in the *pyi-neh* was patchy because of the ability of ethnic political parties and local armies outside the control of the military regime to establish rule and authority. In other words, geopolitical actors other than the state operated at local and regional scales to frustrate the military regime's attempts to create a unified nation-state.

After 1988, an attempt was made by the central government to accommodate ethnic groups through agreements and ceasefires. However, such attempts should be judged carefully and critically. Grundy-Warr and Dean (2011) argue that the agreements are just another means for the central government to extend its reach across the whole of the territory. Notably, it is argued that the purpose of these agreements was to make it easier to exploit vital natural resources, especially oil, natural gas, teak, and gems. Given these goals it is perhaps unsurprising that the establishment of a period of ceasefires saw the continuation of the military regime's brutal repression against pro-democracy uprisings in 1988 and 2008, especially the long-term suppression of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and Aung San Suu Kyi. The period of repression targeted "pockets of armed resistance, particularly in the west (targeting the Muslim Rohingya) and in the eastern borderland – targeting non-ceasefire groups, such as the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), the Karen National Union (KNU), and remnants of the Shan State Army (SSA), particularly Shan State Army – South (SSA-S)" (Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2011, p. 94). These ethnic groups are a challenge to a unitary sense of the nation-state and it is

for this reason that they were targeted by the military regime and its national project.

As a result of the militarized national project the *Tatmadaw* saw a steady increase in terms of troop numbers and the geographic reach of operational deployments within the country (Selth, 1996; Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2011). Between 1990 and 2000 it is believed that the army doubled in strength to about 400,000 personnel, making it the twelfth largest military in the world (Selth, 2001, p. 12). An increasing amount of troops were stationed in parts of the country where the military regime had established a presence either by force or ceasefire negotiations. Sadly, the growth of the military was accompanied by deterioration in public services, especially health and education, and a mismanagement of the economy – resulting in daily shortages and the expansion of corruption and black markets (Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2011). The military regime ignored responsibilities to the daily well-being, or security, of individuals while ensuring a process of militarization – increased involvement in the political, economic and social spheres. It is argued that these actions come from the military's geopolitical aim of military-centred state-building to achieve “National Unity” (Steinberg, 2007).

The geopolitical construction of a unified nation, or more accurately the attempt to create a nation-state in a diverse country, included geopolitical practices such as the 2005 creation of a new capital, Naypyidaw, and subsequent annual military parades under the shadow of the enormous statues of the three historical Burmese *unifying* kings (Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2011). The geopolitical representation of SLORC's attempted construction of a militarized nation-state required the broadcast of images of the “national geo-body” and the “nation.” The key theme was the identification of “Three National Causes:” “the non-disintegration of the union, the non-disintegration of national solidarity, and the perpetuation of national sovereignty” (GOM, 1994). However, these were representational fictions hoping to justify state-building (Lambrecht, 2004).

While the military regime was trying to create a sense of national unity through geopolitical representations, and enforcing these representations through force, it was also facing pressures from a pro-democracy movement. Aung San Suu Kyi became the leader of the movement. She was released from house arrest in 2010 and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. Aung San Suu Kyi was allowed to travel internationally and was

the focus of attention during Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to the country in 2011. Facing growing international pressure and the strength of social movements within Myanmar/Burma, the military regime agreed to a process of democratization. What was largely seen as a fraudulent election in 2010 put the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) into power. Despite the fraud and the connection to the military regime, the elections led to a process of democratization. Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), was re-established and won 43 out of 45 parliamentary seats in the 2012 by-elections.

After the 2012 elections Myanmar/Burma began to open itself to the world, and the European Union lifted sanctions while the US did not. The NLD won 2015 parliamentary elections in a landslide, but the process of democratization was incomplete. A "hybrid" system was put into place. Parliament was made up of some elected members and others appointed by the military. The military set its own budget, and limited the powers of parliament. A National Defence and Security Council had powers over the parliament; though there was some move towards democratization, the military still acted under the long-standing imperative of "National Unity." The brutal manifestation of this policy is ongoing oppression and violence. Communal violence occurred in Rakhine State between Muslims and Buddhists in 2012 and 2013, including one incident in which 40 people were killed and 12,000 Muslims displaced. Human rights groups alleged that the military was complicit in acts of ethnic cleansing and human rights abuses. In 2015 a state of emergency was declared in Kokang region because of fighting between the army and ethnic minority groups (see BBC News, 2015c).

The existence of ethnic groups within Burma, and their resistance to the central state illustrates that a unitary vision of the nation-state is a fiction. This situation is common in the world, reflecting the artificial and imposed nature of state boundaries. The result is that governments try to create national unity by projects of state-building that sometimes include the construction of external threats. In the case of Myanmar/Burma the military regime has maintained a dynamic project of "national reinvention," in which the military state and *Tatmadaw* believe they must and can "hold the country together" and protect "national unity" (Callahan, 2004, pp. 215–217; see Grundy-Warr and Dean, 2011). The geopolitical practice of creating a unified political entity under central control, or the Myanmar

nation-state, through force has persisted despite democratic progress. The case study of Myanmar/Burma shows that the geopolitics of the nation-state is often a combination of top-down and bottom-up nationalism; representations of “National Unity” and central government repression operate in tandem.

Summary and segue

Nationalism is an ideology that defines an overarching national identity that transcends ethnic differences. Simply put, the claim is that people within the boundaries of a state hold a common identity. In other words, the emphasis is upon homogeneity. Increasingly, however, emphasis is being placed upon hybridity. Individuals possess multiple collective identities, and, furthermore, these collective groups are themselves the product of mixture. The identity Arab-American, for example, is complicated by the complexity of both Arab and American, the way in which both reflect diverse experiences and identities. The same can be said for the term Black British. Current discussion of the movement of people (legally and illegally, voluntary and forced) across the globe has, on the one hand, increased the hybridity of people’s collective identity. On the other hand, some people have reacted to such movement by reinforcing a belief in maintaining the “purity” of national identity.

It is false to separate the “domestic” and the “foreign” in an understanding of geopolitics. The geopolitical actions of states, the way they interact with agents external to their boundaries, require the support, tacit or overt, of their populations. The ideology of nationalism provides a sense of loyalty to the state and the belief that security rests upon sovereignty and integrity of the territory to which a national group lays claim. A component of nationalist ideology is the promotion of gender roles that facilitate a militarized foreign policy. In this chapter we have seen the ideological “glue” that maintains states and their geopolitical codes. In the final sections we challenged the dominant view of the nation and state, and the false binary of inside/outside, to reconsider how we think of security. In the next chapter, we explore a geographic feature that is also essential in maintaining the integrity of states and their national identities: boundaries.

Having read this chapter you will be able to:

- **Understand the connection between national identity and the state**
- **Identify the manifestations of nationalism in current affairs**
- **Identify the way gender roles are defined by the practice of nationalism**
- **Identify the important role of “combat” in the creation of national identities**
- **Understand how geopolitical codes are rooted in national histories**
- **Question the dominant inside/outside binary underlying the geopolitics of national security**

Further reading

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Smith, A.D. (1995) *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

These provide an introductory discussion of nations and nationalism.

Cox, K.R. (2002) *Political Geography: Territory, State, and Society*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Parts of this textbook provide useful explorations of the state, including the local state.

Dahlman, C. (2005) “Geographies of Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing: The Lessons of Bosnia-Herzegovina,” in C. Flint (ed.) *The Geography of War and Peace*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 174–197.

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5

TERRITORIAL GEOPOLITICS: SHAKY FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD POLITICAL MAP?



In this chapter we will:

- **Gain an understanding of the role boundaries play in geopolitics**
- **Define boundaries, borders, borderlands, and frontiers**
- **Situate boundaries and borders as one form of territoriality**
- **Consider territorial constructions other than states**
- **Discuss the role of boundaries in the construction of national identity**
- **Identify the boundary conflicts that most commonly appear in geopolitical codes**
- **Discuss how peaceful boundaries may be constructed**
- **Discuss the concept of the borderland and its implications for boundaries, nations and states**
- **Provide case studies of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the Korean peninsula**
- **Introduce the territoriality of the sea**

In the previous chapter we saw the geopolitical importance of the state; its representation as a nation-state, and the practices such representation requires and legitimates. An essential material and representational feature of states and nation-states is the boundary: the means to create in-groups and out-groups. The boundary is a material and ideological geopolitical feature. Despite eye-catching, or perhaps more accurately “book-selling,” cries of the end of the nation-state and a borderless world, movement of goods and people (but less so ideas) is still constrained by physical controls imposed by governments. Much of the geographic work on the porosity of borders and boundaries has been by European geographers looking at the internal boundaries of the EU. Recently, the flow of refugees from conflicts in Syria and Iraq have provoked calls for reasserting boundary controls and limiting the free movement of people within the EU amongst fears of terrorism and pressures upon welfare services. The War on Terror had already promoted fears of “porous borders” that have been reinvigorated by ISIS attacks in the US and Europe, and al-Shabaab attacks in Somalia. In summary, the geopolitics of borders and boundaries remains, but the geography is the product of strong imposition on the one hand, and greater

porosity on the other. See Donnan and Wilson (1999) for an excellent discussion of boundaries and borders, as well as the collection of essays on specific boundary conflicts in Schofield et al. (2002).

In this chapter we focus on boundaries, but must note that their function is to control flow or movement. In the following chapter we concentrate on the geography of networks and the flows they facilitate. Boundary formation is one example of a broader set of geopolitical processes known as territoriality (Sack, 1986), or the way in which territories are used to impose political control. The territorial politics of the state and nationalism are partially constructed through the geopolitics of boundary formation and control (see Jones, 2012). By thinking of boundaries and states as just one form of geopolitical territoriality, and seeing it as a continually dynamic process, we raise the question of how the state was formed (as discussed in the previous chapter) and other forms of territoriality, such as territories where no functioning state exists and supra-state territorial formations (e.g. the EU).

First, we will define our terms and examine the ways in which boundaries are created and maintained, and the geopolitical role they play. The broader geopolitics of territoriality will then be described. To help understand contemporary conflicts we will provide a brief catalogue of potential border disputes by examining the woes facing the fictional country of Hypothetica. We will then expand our discussion with a case study of the Israel–Palestine conflict. Boundaries and borders are geographical features that may also reflect movements towards peace, the topic of the following section of the chapter. We will relate the demarcation of a boundary to global geopolitical conflict with a case study of the Korean peninsula. Boundaries are designed to manage, and sometimes prevent, movement – or what are often called flows. We illustrate the tension between flow and territory with a discussion of the EU’s attempts to control refugee movements. Finally, we discuss the territoriality of the sea, and the role of maritime disputes in geopolitics.

Box 5.1 Boundaries, algorithms and your body

You are playing a role in the global War on Terror just by buying a ticket, jumping on an airplane, and flying to a foreign destination.

Your personal details and some of your actions are recorded in the process and used in a host of analyses that are used to create algorithms designed to identify terrorists as they attempt to cross international boundaries. The relevant social scientific term is “biopower” – or the way in which the personal details of individuals are used to create a host of legal and social categories: gender, race, religion, etc. These categories are then coupled with behaviours or decisions: what type of ticket was bought, when and by what means it was purchased, what meal and seat requests were made, etc. The belief is that authorities can use this information to identify individuals and the way they act in a politics of “risk management” that will prevent terrorism. The outcome is a grouping of categories that can be defined as, on the one hand, trusted traveller biometrics, and on the other hand, biometrics that can be used to identify people within categories of “threats” (Amoore, 2006, p. 343).

The issue for scholars such as Louise Amoore (a geographer at the University of Durham) is that “algorithms appear to make it possible to translate *probable* associations between people or objects into *actionable* security decisions” (Amoore, 2009, p. 52). Or, in other words, the everyday actions of peaceful travellers (including you) are recorded and included in ever-updated algorithms that are believed to be able to predict the future behaviour of terrorists. As then US Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff (2006, p. A15, quoted in Amoore, 2009, p. 52) claimed:

If we learned anything from September 11, 2001, it is that we need to be better at *connecting the dots* of terrorist-related information. After September 11, we used credit card and telephone records to identify those linked with the hijackers. But wouldn't it be better to identify such connections before a hijacker boards a plane?

But this is not a simple matter of science and statistics. Amoore (2009) points out that human judgement and labelling is essential to identifying individuals and groups as “risky.” For example, surveillance cameras track “atypical” behaviour that is judged and classified by a human, but then becomes translated into something that

is seen as scientific and, therefore, less questionable. These algorithms are partially constructed through the insertion of technology into travel documents, such as passports and immigration forms. For example, radio frequency identification (RFID) is on trial at the US–Mexico boundary. It is part of a package of “smart” immigration and travel documents that can track a person as they journey in the US far from the boundary (Amoore, 2009). Sometimes “surveillance” or identifying someone can be much less “high-tech.” For example, in Britain, there have been allegations of refugees being placed in houses with distinctive red doors that made them susceptible to attacks and harassment. This is another example of how the geography of the control of people extends beyond the passport control checkpoint (Mason et al., 2016).

In summary we must ask the question, Where is boundary control? One implication of the use of algorithms and RFID is the amorphous geographic and temporal location of the boundary. We contribute to the construction of boundary policing practices when we sit at home and buy a ticket through our computer. We are being tracked before we even arrive at the airport. Visitors and refugees may be monitored as they go about their everyday lives miles and days after they have entered the country. As Bigo (2001), quoted in Amoore (2009), argues, such practices blur the distinctions between overt war (with its obvious violence) and war by other means, which entails control of the movement of people because of what they might, probabilistically, do based on the attributes and behaviour of others. As we shall see in this chapter, boundaries control people by creating in-groups and out-groups, or identities of us versus them, the trusted and those to be feared. Boundaries are essential in this geopolitics of identity and control, but the “location” of these boundaries is something that is becoming increasingly vague and fluid.

Definitions

As with other topics, we will start by making sure we are using the same language, and we will adopt Prescott’s (1987) terminology. The term

boundary will be used to refer to the dividing line between political entities: the “line in the sand” if you wish, that means you are in, say, Mexico if you stand on one side and the US if you hop over and stand on the other. Later we will look at the geopolitics of defining the precise location of the boundary and its effectiveness and role in controlling movement. The term *border* is often used synonymously with the term *boundary*, but for our discussion it is useful to distinguish the two. *Border* refers to that region contiguous with the boundary, a region within which society and the landscape are altered by the presence of the boundary. When considering neighbouring states, the two borders either side of the boundary can be viewed as one *borderland*. This is especially useful when looking at the cross-boundary interaction between two states.

Finally, a term that is often used in the media when talking about boundaries is *frontier*. To be precise, a frontier refers to the process of territorial expansion in what are deemed, usually falsely, as “empty” areas. For example, the American frontier involved the killing, expulsion, and confinement of Native Americans to facilitate the land’s “settlement” and its integration into the US economy. Even when indigenous populations were recognized, the creation of a frontier was justified through the language of religion and civilization: the regional population was a void for Christian practices to fill and integrate into the Christian realm. Echoes of this language remain today, as failed states are identified as the repositories of “evil” and, hence, must be brought back into the international state system and its norms of behaviour.

Modern geopolitics was the politics of boundary construction. The building block of geopolitics was the nation-state, a political geographic entity that required territorial specificity as the basis for its sovereignty. Boundaries delineated the population and resources that came under the control of particular states. The geopolitics of mapping modern boundaries has three stages (Glassner and Fahrer, 2004). First, the course of the boundary must be *established*. This decision can be made through war, mutual political agreement, or external imposition. For example, we will see the role of external states creating the boundary between North and South Korea in a case study later in this chapter. The political boundaries in the continent of Africa are overwhelmingly the result of decisions made by colonial powers (Herbst, 2000). Once the boundary has been established it must be *demarcated*; its course must be made visible. In some cases, the

visibility may not be clear on the actual landscape, but is solely a feature of maps. One could walk across the boundary without knowing it. In some cases the visibility of the demarcation is sporadic; checkpoints exist at trans-boundary roads and railways, but a fence does not extend along the full extent of the boundary. In extreme cases, the demarcation of the boundary is a violent expression, a continuous barrier of concrete, razor-wire, land-mines, attack dogs, and trip-activated machine guns. Not surprisingly, the form of demarcation is related to the degree of *control*, the third and final component of mapping boundaries. Decisions about the nature and intensity of flows across a border display great variation. North Korea is the most “closed” of all the contemporary states; goods, people, and information rarely travel out, and the opposite flow is sparse and completely controlled by the government. In the EU, entrance from other EU countries is relatively free, but there are many restrictions, made as visible by the governments as possible for political capital, on refugees. The debate in the United Kingdom whether to remain within the European Union was primarily driven by the issue of boundary control and the movement of people. The degree of control also varies with time; post-9/11 travellers entering the US have come under much more rigorous inspection, and required documentation has increased. In early 2016, for example, people with dual Iranian citizenship faced new restrictions to entering the US even if the primary country with which they identified, such as Britain, had a visa-free entry programme.

With so much effort being put into the establishment, demarcation, and control of boundaries, one must reflect upon the geopolitical purposes that boundaries serve. Within the geopolitical context of the War on Terror, as it has morphed from concern with al-Qaeda to ISIS, boundary control is related to “security.” States maintain their legitimacy, in part, by keeping their citizens safe, and control of borders is a pivotal factor. For example, in the US the Office of Homeland Security was established in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 2001, and maintained its relevance through recent ISIS-inspired attacks, in order to enhance boundary security. Another example is Israel’s success in establishing its boundaries in its quest to provide a territorial haven for Jews in a policy of Zionism.

The connection between boundaries and security is more complex than the ability to prevent invasion or infiltration. National identity is a territorial identity that rests upon the existence of, or desire for, a state with

sovereignty over a piece of territory. National homeland, mythologized as it is, and state authority both rest upon territorial demarcation; boundaries demarcate nations and states and so define nation-states. Boundaries are, simultaneously, instruments of state policy, the expression and means of government power, and markers of national identity (Anderson, 1996). Their role in providing security extends into the taken-for-granted nature of national identity and citizens' expectations of government services.



Figure 5.1 Closed border: Egypt–Israel.



Figure 5.2 Open border: Russian Caucasus.

The converse becomes of interest in discussions of the porosity of boundaries. If boundary control is, at least in some regions of the world, increasingly beyond the control of states, then what are the implications for national identity and state authority? We will address this geopolitical development later in our discussion of borderlands.

Constructing territory

Our discussion of the process of boundary construction shows us that geopolitical agents construct territory (Elden, 2009). In the case of the boundaries of colonial Africa, for example, or the demarcation of the ceasefire line between North and South Korea that became recognized as an international boundary, external powers defined the course of boundaries. Over time these established boundaries became recognized features, or structures, of new geopolitical activity. The broader point to consider here is that all forms of territorial politics are the product of agency. For example,

the simple act of a homeowner erecting a fence to keep a neighbour's dog off their lawn is an act to declare a particular piece of territory "off limits."

Geographer Robert Sack (1986) has called such processes territorialization, or the way that territory is used to enable politics. The clearest and most dominant form of territorialization in the study of geopolitics is the process of state formation that we discussed in the previous chapter. Jean Gottman (1973) contrasted two expressions of geopolitics that are useful in understanding the importance of territory: flows between spaces, and bounding space into identifiable areas that structure how we live. Some forms of geopolitics are best thought of as movement of "things" across the globe. We live in a world where we expect and assume that the products we buy in shops will likely have come from across the globe; students are encouraged to "study abroad" and frequently share classrooms at their "home" institutions with students from foreign countries; investment firms shift money in pension plans across the globe using the temporal sequencing of financial markets across the world's time zones to create a constant flow; immigrants and refugees are a focus of vociferous political arguments; and finally, terrorists have been identified as a threatening flow that requires a securitization of boundaries.

The geopolitics lies in the discussions of how, and to what extent, the amount and speed of these flows can be controlled. This form of geopolitics is the second part of Gottman's idea and has centred upon the ability of states to create a territorial politics that not only controls flows but creates a view of politics that is bounded or limited by loyalty to the nation-state. The latter is the politics of nationalism that we discussed in the previous chapter. The former is the never-ending tension between the desire for state boundaries to be open to some degree and for some purposes but closed for others. Those who want strict restrictions on incoming migrants or refugees would still like to leave their country and be allowed to enter another on vacation. Though some may want restrictions on some products entering their country, such as rice or other agricultural goods produced more cheaply abroad, they are also used to cars and electronic products being relatively accessible because of free-flowing global trade. The different interests and opinions towards restricting or allowing different forms of flow mean that the geopolitics of the territorial restrictions of flows is dynamic and often contradictory.

In the next chapter we will concentrate upon the geopolitics of flows. In this chapter our emphasis upon boundary formation and management as a territorial process suggests that there are other geopolitics of territorialization (Elden, 2009). We may consider two questions about the contemporary geopolitics of territorialization. Has the geopolitical project to cover the whole of the globe with territorialized nation-states regressed? What alternative forms of territorialization are emerging?

Box 5.2 Connecting failed states and human security

In 2011 the World Bank issued a report outlining its concern about the inability of some states to provide for their citizens (World Bank, 2011). The report estimates that 1.5 billion people on the planet live within situations of inadequate state rule and continually experience violence and criminal activity. In the words of the report: “How is it that almost a decade after renewed international engagement with Afghanistan the prospects of peace seem distant? How is it that entire urban communities can be terrorised by drug traffickers? How is it that countries in the Middle East and North Africa could face explosions of popular grievances despite, in some cases, sustained high growth and improvement in social indicators?”

These are unsettling questions and are a stark illustration of the differences in life experiences between the relatively comfortable and the vulnerable in today’s world. They are also examples of the ways in which some states are failing to provide a context for basic security in daily life. The report also highlights the contemporary security agenda that downplays conflicts between states and emphasizes civil wars, as well as more fluid and less easily defined civil disorder. The intersection of crime and politics is also a concern. The report highlights the case of Guatemala where the levels of violence related to crime and drugs have surpassed the killing during the country’s civil war of 1960–1996.

The focus of the World Bank has always been economic development rather than conflict. Hence the report makes a connection between security and economics, arguing that the lack of employment

prospects in many countries lies at the root of instability. The World Bank suggests that any steps to improvement are likely to be gradual, requiring a generation of institution building to provide security, justice, and jobs.

The positive aspect of this report is the emphasis upon human security that we introduced in the previous chapter through the framework of feminist geopolitics. However, persistent differences between Global North and South remain. Continued focus upon the individual scale will be necessary if human, national, and global security is to be achieved, but global inequity is a barrier to change.

The report can be downloaded at www.worldbank.org/wdr2011.

The first question forces us to consider the geopolitics of deterritorialization, or how an established territorial entity, such as a state, fragments or is merged into a different territory. This may happen if a state faces civil war, such as Syria, and loses its ability to enact the despotic and infrastructural forms of power we introduced in the previous chapter. In contemporary geopolitics these entities have been represented as “failed states” and have been identified as security threats (Patrick, 2007; Clunan and Trinkunas, 2010). The definition of a failed state is contested but revolves around the inability of a central government to rule effectively across the whole of its territorial extent. Not only is a state unable to provide basic services (especially education and health), but has no ability to provide order or security for its population. Instead, geopolitical actors that are represented under various labels (such as rebels, warlords, and terrorists) display effective rule in different parts of the country. States in these types of circumstances (such as Afghanistan or Iraq) have been represented as geopolitical threats within the United States’ War on Terror. As we will discuss in [Chapter 6](#), the United States has identified “failed states” as potential “safe havens” for terrorists. Immediately after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 Afghanistan was represented as a state in which Taliban warlords held sway and facilitated the presence of senior al-Qaeda leadership. Ironically, in the wake of the conflicts in Afghanistan, and Iraq, that erupted after the US invasions in the name of fighting terrorism, both states have shown the tendency to fragment into a mosaic of territorial entities under the control of competing factions. The

territorial expression of states is a mixture of resilience and fragility; acting to shore up what are labelled “failed states” may reinvigorate other territorialized identities that had been subsumed within the fiction of nation-states.

In contrast to the notion of deterritorialization, or framing politics within state boundaries as somehow “failed,” there are ongoing processes of reterritorialization. The term reterritorialization is used to consider how territorial geopolitical entities other than nation-states are becoming increasingly important. The most obvious example is the EU, a territory made up of an organized grouping of states. Other parts of the world have also seen tendencies for states to come together and cooperate: the African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for example. The EU is the most important example, though, because the member states have created laws and institutions that have territorial reach beyond their own boundaries to encompass the whole Union. Employment laws, regulations about business monopolies, human rights, and environmental laws all have a territorial expression across the whole of the Union, and national laws must be altered to reflect the supremacy of the laws and regulations of the EU. The freedom of movement of citizens of EU countries throughout the whole of the Union, as well, the establishment of a common currency (the Euro), are the best examples of this reterritorialization. However, the resistance of the United Kingdom, when an EU member, to the Euro – it retained its own currency – and the continued existence of some passport checks at state boundaries illustrate that the reterritorialization of European politics is contested and member states still enact their abilities to restrict flows across their boundaries. In late 2015 and early 2016 politicians across Europe were reacting to the flow of refugees, primarily from Syria and Iraq, in a way that suggested a possible reassertion of boundary controls and the restriction of movement; a reterritorialization that could fundamentally alter, even challenge, the form of territorialization the EU has established.

Geopolitical codes and boundary conflicts

Though we are currently witnessing the intertwined and dynamic processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, boundary geopolitics is still an

important issue. Boundary conflicts remain a key motivation for states to go to war or make threats to do so. [Figure 5.3](#) shows the sorry situation of a fictional country Hypothetica; a country that suffers from most of the usual grievances over boundary issues that can ignite conflict (Haggett, 1979). The separate issues can be grouped into four main categories: identity; control of national resources; uncertainty over demarcation; and security.

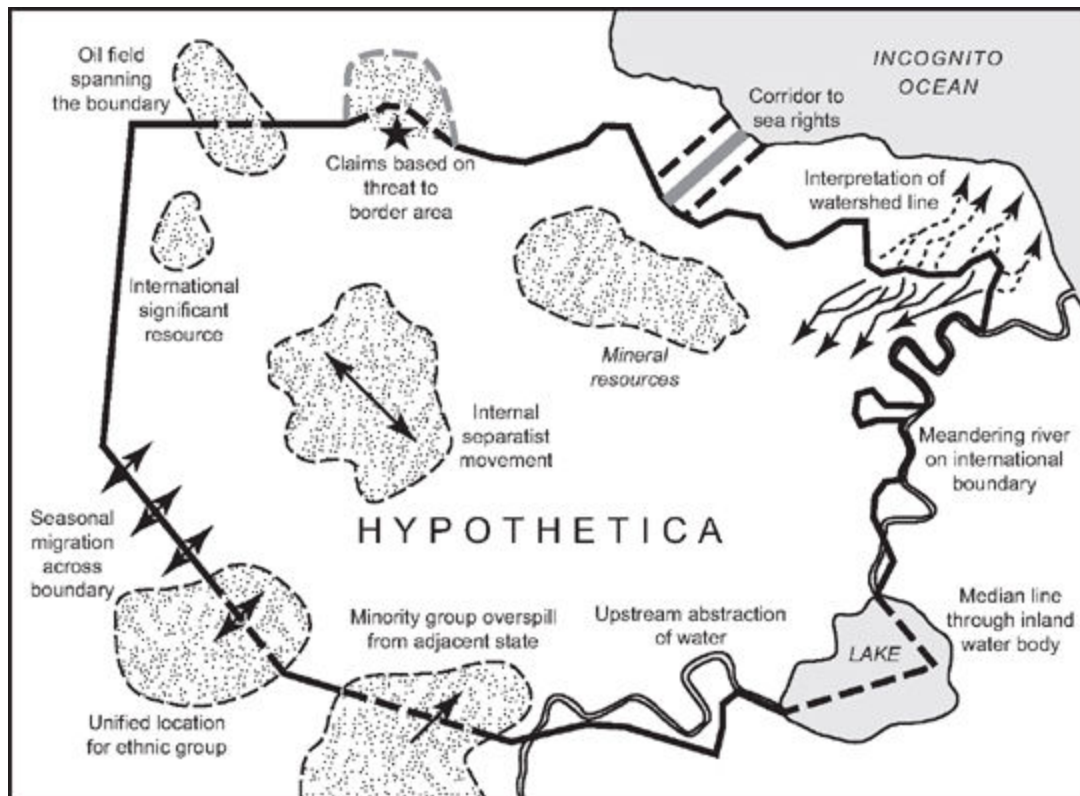


Figure 5.3 Hypothetica.

Identity

In discussing our definitions and functions of boundaries, we saw that they play an important role in the geopolitics of nationalism. Nations require or desire the establishment of boundaries; they provide the legitimacy and power of the state. The geopolitics of an internal separatist movement reflects a perception that a group within Hypothetica has identified itself as a nation separate and different from Hypotheticans. For the separatists, the boundaries of Hypothetica do not provide a meaningful territorial marker for their national identity, and the boundary needs to be redrawn so that a

new nation-state is created. The geopolitics of such a boundary dispute are likely to be difficult to resolve and the potential for violence is high, because the separatists' attempt to define national boundaries is an attack upon the notion of territorial integrity of Hypothetica, an integrity that is the basis for its state power and national identity. The geography of the dispute also heightens the difficulties. The location of the separatists wholly within Hypothetica disrupts two related understandings of nation-states: a common nationality within the state's boundaries, and the territorial integrity of the nation-state.

The same issues exist for Hypothetica in two other locations. An ethnic group, with a collective identity distinct from both Hypotheticans and their neighbours, straddles the boundary. The primary collective allegiance of the ethnic group is not Hypothetican or the national identity of its neighbour. Perhaps the establishment and demarcation of the boundary ignored the location of this ethnic group, or decided that it was insignificant. On the other hand, the ethnic group may only have mobilized its identity into a political issue once the boundary had been established, and the control of the boundary prevented interaction between members of the ethnic group, patterns of interaction that were likely to have been established in the group's culture.

A similar problem exists to the north-west. The imposed boundary of Hypothetica transects historically established patterns of seasonal migration of pastoral peoples, following a path determined by the changing seasons and physical landscape in the search for water and fodder for their herds. The boundary does not take into consideration the functional needs of the pastoral peoples; their seasonal movement (or flow), possibly seen as "primitive," runs counter to the modern definition of nation-state spaces. In some instances, states may be unable to control such flows, or deem the seasonal movement as unimportant to national security. In other cases, the control of the movement may heighten as the geopolitical context changes, disrupting the social geography of the pastoral group.

The final boundary issue related to identity facing Hypothetica is a matter of the boundary's imprecise reflection of the geography of national identity. A minority group within Hypothetica has been created; a group that identifies with the national identity of the neighbouring state. Political campaigns to unite such groups with the neighbouring national body are known as irredentism. As we saw in the discussion of nations and states,

such situations may result in pressures by Hypothetica to expel the minority group and/or attempts by the neighbouring state to redraw the boundary and capture some of Hypothetica's territory so that the minority is no longer outside the boundaries of "its" nation-state.

Demarcation

Demarcation of a boundary often reflects the physical geography of the landscape. Indeed, as we discussed in the typology of national myths in the previous chapter, physical coherence may be the ideological basis of the nation state. The physical barrier imposed by mountain ranges has led them to be used as the basis for political boundaries, but this can result in an imprecise and disputed boundary demarcation. Logically, if a mountain range is to act as a boundary then the "centre" of the range should be pinpointed. The physical centre of the range is the watershed line, the line that divides the process of precipitation run-off; in other words, if a raindrop falls on one side of this physical line it would flow, say, east, but if it landed the other side it would flow west. In theory, this physical feature is definite and precise. In practice, especially in remote and rugged terrain, it is hard to define and demarcate across the whole extent of the mountain range or political boundary. Uncertainty in the course of the watershed line can result in different interpretations of the course of the boundary, resulting in conflicts regarding demarcation.

Another physical feature often used to demarcate boundaries is a river, often the thalweg or deepest channel of the river is used to pinpoint the course of the boundary. However, rivers are highly dynamic physical features. The flow of the water through the landscape creates erosion of the river's banks, and the course of the river will change over time. If the river has been used to demarcate a boundary, does the political boundary follow the old or new course of the river? If the old course of the river remains the official line of the boundary, what practical problems regarding fishing, agriculture, and water rights, for example, will emerge?

The final issue relating to physical features and boundary demarcation involves the use of lakes. If the boundary between states cuts through a lake, the norm is to define the median line between the shores as the boundary's line. However, erosion and changing water levels can provoke conflicts over the line's course, and the inability to paint a line on the water

can lead to problems of control; precisely where does one state's jurisdiction end and the other's begin?

Resources

Boundaries define the territorial extent of a state's sovereignty, and sovereignty includes the right to extract and use resources. The course of a political boundary decides which states have access to which resources, and which states do not. Three resource-related boundary issues are facing the sad and troubled Hypothetica. First, on the southern border, water resources are a concern. The neighbouring state is upstream, meaning the land in that state is higher in altitude and the water travels through it before reaching Hypothetica. The water in the river is available for use and misuse before it crosses the boundary and reaches Hypothetica. The upstream state could, for example, use all the water in the river for irrigation or industry, leaving the river dry and denying Hypothetica use of the water. Also, the upstream state could pollute the river, not only denying Hypothetica use of the resource, but delivering it a problem of toxic waste and environmental risks.

In the north-west of Hypothetica an oilfield spans the boundary. Who has access to the oil, and, more specifically, how should the quantity of oil in the reserve be divided between the states? Next to the oilfield is a deposit of a particularly significant resource, uranium for example. Given the importance of this resource to the rest of the world, Hypothetica may face pressures to extract and sell the resource in a particular way. For example, uranium, essential for making nuclear weapons, is a resource that lies beyond the control of the state in which it is located. International agreements control how much, to whom, and for what purpose the uranium is sold, reducing the effective sovereignty the country has over it.

Security

The final set of boundary issues facing Hypothetica, a country I strongly recommend you do not invest your life savings in, fall under a general title of security. Hypothetica is a landlocked state, and so depends upon the goodwill of its neighbours to import and export goods by land. Particularly, the transport of mineral resources requires access to the sea, and so Hypothetica may negotiate for a territorial corridor to the ocean. Conflict

can result if the corridor is not granted, controlled, in the eyes of Hypothetica, too rigorously, or closed once established. Finally, in light of potential or actual conflict with its northern neighbour, Hypothetica has invaded and now controls some of the land of its northern neighbour, the justification being that rocket or guerilla attacks on town “w” were emanating from across the boundary, as in the case of Israel and its boundary with Lebanon and the Gaza Strip.

Activity

Look through an atlas of contemporary conflicts, such as Andrew Boyd’s and Joshua Comenetz’s *Atlas of World Affairs*, and see if you can relate the boundary conflicts identified in Hypothetica to real-world conflicts. In what way do the different types of boundary conflicts interact? Also, by looking at one conflict in detail, think about how different social groups (class, race, gender, state bureaucrats, etc.) have different roles in these conflicts.

Case study: Israel–Palestine

Perhaps more than any other contemporary geopolitical issue, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is fought with “facts” as well as tanks and thrown stones. Each side contests the history of the dispute in order to portray their current actions as just. Here, I will try and give a “bare bones” history of the dispute in order to help us understand contemporary developments. I am sure it will not be to the satisfaction of anybody deeply committed to either side, but that is not its goal. I merely hope to provide some background to allow a reader who does not have a deep knowledge of the conflict to interpret media reports and also begin their own exploration of its causes, claims, and counter-claims. For a more in-depth discussion there are numerous sources, and each one will be perceived as biased. Well, they are. Here is my pick: Shlaim’s *The Iron Wall* and *War and Peace in the Middle East*, Friedman’s *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, Bregman and El-Tahri’s *Israel and the Arabs*, Drysdale and Blake’s *The Middle East and North Africa*, and Mansfield’s *The Arabs*. Also, to weigh the opposing views

compare Said's *From Oslo to Iraq and the Roadmap* with Netanyahu's *A Durable Peace*.

Similar to many boundary conflicts and related nationalist struggles, the Israel– Palestine conflict began with the dissolution of an empire. The Ottoman Empire was first established in the mid-1300s and at its peak had extended into Europe, across south-west Asia, and parts of north Africa. By the end of the nineteenth century it was in terminal decline. Some of its subjects sought greater autonomy and independence. Simultaneously, powerful countries such as France and Great Britain were extending their influence into Ottoman territory. The decline of Ottoman power was provoking both internal and external interest in establishing boundaries in territory that had been or still was under the declining control of the Empire.

At the same time, the ideology of Zionism was creating a sense of Jewish national identity. It was a secular nationalism, with elements of socialist ideology, and its tenets were captured in Theodor Herzl's *The Jewish State* (1896). From our earlier discussion of nationalism we know that in all nationalist movements a necessary connection between nation, state, and territory is made. Though other parts of the world were floated as possible sites for a Jewish state, the main focus was upon the biblical lands of Israel. The convening of the First Zionist Congress in 1897 encouraged and promoted Jewish migration to Palestine in a policy that was defined as, “a people without a land for a land without people.” This statement is the kernel of the current conflict, for at the time more than 400,000 Palestinian Arabs lived in Palestine. However, within 30 years, Jewish immigrants outnumbered the Palestinian Arabs.

In World War I, the Ottoman Empire was one of the Axis powers and the region was a key strategic theatre. The allies had defeat of the Axis powers in mind. However, they also practiced considerable rivalry and scheming amongst themselves. France and Britain used the war to jockey for position in a struggle between the two of them for greater control in the Middle East after the war. There was much duplicity and tension between the French and British, and between the two European powers and the Arabs with whom they tried to foster alliances. During the war, in 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, in what became known as the Balfour Declaration, stated:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

The two halves of the statement contradicted each other, as there was no plan on how a Jewish state could be established without compromising the existing Arab residents. In the wake of the Balfour Declaration and continued Jewish immigration, Arab-Jewish violence began around 1919. In one incident in 1929, 59 Jews were killed in Hebron. The volume of Jewish immigration increased in conjunction with lobbying efforts by Zionist organizations in France, Britain, and the US. In what was interpreted as a pro-Zionist move, the British government appointed a Jew and Zionist, Herbert Samuel, as governor of Palestine; a territory it now controlled in the wake of World War I.

Partly as a result of these developments, an Arab rebellion lasted from 1936–1939 in which 5,000 Arabs were killed; some through aerial bombing by the British Royal Air Force. The initiation of World War II altered Britain's geopolitical calculations. Britain needed cooperation from the new Arab states and territories to secure the flow of oil and, more importantly at this time, to maintain a continual territorial link with British India. As a way of nurturing Arab support, the British decided to try and limit the flow of Jewish immigration to Palestine to a trickle.

Unsurprisingly, Britain's policy met with resistance from the Jewish migrants. The policy was especially hard to justify in light of the Holocaust: Hitler's persecution of the Jews. At the end of World War II British policy was in tatters. Promises had been made to wartime Arab allies to limit Jewish immigration, but the Holocaust had energized the moral argument of Jews for a state. The Zionist movement resorted to violence, defined as terrorism, resistance, or national liberation, depending upon the political vantage point. A turning point was the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946, the headquarters of the British administration, in which 91 people died. The intensity of the campaign led Sir Alan Cunningham, senior British official in Palestine, to admit the "inability of the army to

protect even themselves.” The 100,000 British soldiers in Palestine were unable to control the 600,000 Jews living there. The threat of violence towards the soldiers was so great that the troops were ordered to stay within their compounds, unless they left in groups of four with an armed escort. In a defining moment, two British sergeants left their compound, were captured by terrorists of the Irgun group and killed, with their bodies displayed for public viewing. The British government and people had had enough and handed over the situation to the UN.

The UN drew up a partition plan in November 1947. Under the plan, a Jewish state would control 56 per cent of the existing Palestinian mandate, and an Arab state would control 43 per cent. The city of Jerusalem would be a UN-administered, internationalized zone. The plan left no one happy. The Zionists were upset as the Jewish state would not cover the whole of Palestine, as per the Balfour Declaration. Arabs saw a grave injustice with Israel receiving 56 per cent of the territory, when Jews accounted for just one-third of the total population and owned just 7 per cent of the land. Despite some misgivings, the Zionists accepted the partition plan, which was a generous territorial award and led to the recognition of the state of Israel.

In 1948, in the wake of the British withdrawal and the presentation of the partition plan, war broke out as the contiguous Arab states, plus Iraq, invaded to negate the establishment of the state of Israel. The war was a victory for the Israelis: they ended up with all of the area allotted to a Jewish state by the UN plan, plus half of that allotted to the Arab state. Jordanian forces, with the help of Iraq, held the “West Bank” of the Jordan river and Egyptian forces held the “Gaza strip.” About 700,000 Arabs became refugees in Gaza, Jordan and Lebanon, and approximately 700,000 Jewish immigrants arrived in Israel over the following twelve months. Simply put, the war of 1948 created the “de facto” boundaries of the state of Israel. Jordanian forces controlled East Jerusalem, but Israel proclaimed it as its capital, a move that was not recognized internationally.

In the decades that followed, a series of wars demarcated and established Israel’s military dominance in the region and its boundary with its Arab neighbours. The Six Day War of 1967 began when Egypt moved its army up to the Israeli boundary and blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba. In response, Israel attacked Egypt, Jordan, and Syria and easily captured the West Bank, Gaza, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. After this violent re-

demarcation of the Israeli boundary, the Arab states responded with what is known as the Yom Kippur War of 1973 when Egypt and Syria attacked Israel during the religious holiday. Despite initial successes given the element of surprise, the Syrian army was soon defeated and an Israeli counter-attack encircled the Egyptian army.

The Yom Kippur War was a turning point in the conflict, though not a decisive one. Defeat led the Arab countries to reconsider the benefits of the relationship they had established with the Soviet Union, with the region being a strategic focus of the Cold War. While the UN brokered a gradual Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai peninsula, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt turned away from the Soviet Union and began to explore peace with Israel; a very brave initiative for any Arab leader. The result was the 1978 “Camp David” peace agreement that ushered in massive and continuing US aid to Egypt and Israel, but established the first peace agreement between Israel and a neighbour.

Of central significance to the conflict and hopes of a resolution are the UN Resolutions 242 and 338, passed after the 1967 and 1973 wars respectively. The key points of the resolutions are:

- Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, meaning the West Bank and Gaza
- Recognition of the state of Israel and an end to the state of conflict
- The right of return for Palestinian refugees was left vague and open to competing interpretations.

These resolutions have been the basis for the Palestinians’ claims to the West Bank and Gaza Strip; what they see as the necessary territorial foundation for a Palestinian state. With, at least in theory, goals of their own nation-states living peacefully side-by-side, the Israeli state and the Palestinian people have attempted peace negotiations. These negotiations have been sporadic. At times expectations and hopes of peace have been high, but at other times the situation has been confrontational. Israel, an independent state with a large and sophisticated military, has dominated the Palestinians in terms of the ability to create “facts on the ground:” A code word for putting its military and people where they want to, despite their illegality under international law, diplomatic protest, Palestinian stone-throwing and civil disobedience in an *Intifada* or uprising, and terrorist

attacks upon Israeli citizens by factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Hamas.

Attempts at peace have followed three general rubrics: Land for Peace; Comprehensive Peace; Peace for Peace. Land for Peace, or the “two-state” solution, calls for Israel to comply with Resolutions 242 and 338 and withdraw from the occupied territories of West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. The withdrawal would, so the story goes, be the basis for Palestinian national self-determination and sovereignty. Though this is often portrayed as a huge success or victory for the Palestinian people, the historical timeframe we have adopted in this case study shows that such a move would be seen as an enormous compromise by the Palestinian people: they would gain control of just 23 per cent of what they see as their historic homeland. Put the other way, Israel would control 77 per cent of the land covered by the Palestinian mandate.

The belief exists that “land for peace” would lead to “comprehensive peace:” in other words, once Palestinian people achieve national self-determination then the Arab states would recognize the state of Israel and make peace once and for all. Though countries such as Egypt and Jordan have made steps along this path, continuing conflict, at various levels, with Syria and Iran for example, suggest that the connection or path should not be taken for granted. The harshest “plan” that exists is the Israeli rhetoric of “peace for peace,” or a construction of the conflict as Israel’s self-defence against an untrustworthy enemy that is not worthy of the title “negotiating partner.” From the Palestinian perspective, such a stance is not only being cavalier with history but fails to acknowledge the level of violence committed against the Palestinians – deemed greatly disproportional to the Israelis’ loss from terrorism (Falah, 2005).

Land for peace rests upon Palestinian control of the West Bank. But what does “control” of the West Bank mean? Negotiations have given some concrete basis to who would control what in the West Bank, though the points of negotiation are contested within both the Israeli and Palestinian camps. Under what are known as the Oslo II Agreements of 1995, the West Bank has been divided into 3 areas:



Figure 5.4 Israel–Palestine I: Oslo II Agreement.

- Area A: Controlled by the Palestinian Authority
- Area B: Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control.
- Area C: Israeli authority

Under closer scrutiny, such a division strongly favours Israel. Area A comprises just 3 per cent of the West Bank, Area B 27 per cent, and Area C an overwhelming 70 per cent. In addition, Israel would maintain control of

East Jerusalem. The geography of the division results in a “Swiss cheese” state for the Palestinians, the small area they control being surrounded by territory under the control of the Israeli military (Falah, 2005). It would be like controlling Cardiff and Swansea, or Madison and Milwaukee, but not being able to move freely between them. The balance of power, or the element of territorial control, would remain firmly in the interests of Israel as they cite terrorist threats and overarching hostility to the state of Israel. As Israeli Prime Minister Sharon said, on 28 January 2003:

Palestine would be totally demilitarized . . . ; Israel will control all the entrances and exits and the air space above the state; Palestinians would be absolutely forbidden to form alliances with enemies of Israel.

The death of Yassar Arafat, long-term leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization and first chairman of the Palestinian Authority, was believed to offer opportunity for progress toward peace. The election of Mahmoud Abbas in January 2005 to new President of the Palestinian Authority was met with hopes for peace, but also brinkmanship from Prime Minister Sharon who threatened renewed occupation of Gaza unless terrorist attacks were halted. Palestinian leaders must satisfy both the Israelis and Palestinian militants; a tough task that will require the US and other influential countries to encourage talks and ensure that both sides act in good faith. However, while attention is often drawn to terrorist attacks by Palestinians, the Israeli government is using its dominant position to alter the geography of settlement and occupation that will: i) make the Palestinian leader’s task of bringing militants into the political process very difficult, and may increasingly alienate the mainstream; ii) create “facts on the ground” that run counter to the spirit and goals of the UN resolutions; and iii) are violations of international law as well as violations of human rights.

The issue of Israeli “settlers” has emerged as one of the most contentious manifestations of the conflict. In August 2005 Prime Minister Sharon fulfilled a promise to remove Israeli settlers from Gaza. However, the process of establishing settlements in the more desirable and historically significant West Bank continues. International law prevents countries from building permanent structures and communities on land that they control

through military occupation. However, by the end of 2013 there were 125 government-sanctioned Israeli settlements in the West Bank – not including East Jerusalem and enclaves in Hebron (B'Tselem, 2015). It is estimated that 547,000 settlers live in the West Bank (B'Tselem, 2015). The Israeli government provides a maximum subsidy of \$28,000 for each apartment built in a settlement, and settlers receive tax benefits and other incentives. In addition, there were about 100 “outposts” – smaller than settlements – that are not officially sanctioned, though often created with government support. Of course, the different sides of the conflict will portray this settlement in different ways. On the one hand, the claim is made that Jewish settlements constitute only 1.7 per cent of the land of the West Bank. However, when the full extent of the municipal boundaries is considered, as well as the territorial extent of the authority of Jewish regional councils then the coverage extends to at least 6.8 per cent and 35.1 per cent respectively (Falah, 2005).

The increase in settlements is paralleled, and some would say, facilitated, by the building of “The Wall” or security fence along a route that is based upon the “Green Line” boundary, but with some key exceptions (Newman, 2005). The Israeli government emphasizes that their security needs are being met by the construction of the wall; it is seen as a barrier to prevent suicide bombers and other terrorists entering Israel and killing their citizens. There is, of course, some grounds for their stance. However, the wall has been imposed upon the Palestinian population with no consultation and has amounted, in some cases, to a “land-grab,” as some Palestinian villages have found themselves on the Israeli side of the wall.



Figure 5.5 Israel–Palestine II: Palestinian villages and Israeli settlements.

The construction of walls and territorial areas is only part of the construction of territory that is the ongoing means of the Israelis' control of the Palestinians. The architectural scholar Eyal Weizman (2007) has described how the built landscape at the scale of buildings, checkpoints, and road routes restricts and defines movement and access in such a way that the occupation of the West Bank is facilitated by, as well as being the reason for, the construction of Israeli settlements. Weizman's work forces

us to consider how the construction of territory for political reasons is not only about overt political boundaries, but is a matter of everyday landscapes that allow for the observation and control of the weak by the powerful. Technology, architecture, and ideology intersect to create spaces that enable some at the expense of others.

The issue of human rights remains when considering Israel's treatment of the Palestinian population. The destruction of Palestinian homes and olive groves that have stood for generations has been a constant focus of complaint by the Palestinians and human rights organizations. In the twenty years after the Oslo Accords, Israel demolished 15,000 Palestinian structures in what Oxfam defines as the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT), such as homes, water infrastructure, and agricultural facilities. Usually, the demolition takes place because the structure had no building permit; though the Israeli government rejects about 95 per cent of all permit requests (Oxfam, 2013). In just one year, 2011, an estimated 10,000 Palestinian trees, primarily economically important olive trees, were damaged or destroyed (Oxfam, 2013).

The recent situation has seen the increasing role and profile of Hamas, an Islamist group that has challenged the secular Fatah movement as being the leader of the Palestinian people. Following elections in January 2006 in which Hamas defeated Fatah, the US, EU, and Israel enacted severe economic sanctions, called by some a "blockade," on the Gaza Strip causing severe hardship to the population. The blockade continued through 2007 and there was fighting between Hamas and Fatah forces. In June 2008 Hamas agreed to a ceasefire with Israel but this broke down after rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel, which caused anxiety within the Israeli population though casualties were very low. In December 2008 Israel launched a wave of airstrikes on Gaza over a three week period, and then Israeli troops entered Gaza. It is estimated that over 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed in this phase of the conflict. An Oxfam report (2013) highlights the cost of the blockade to the residents of Gaza, including loss of the fishing industry, a GNP per capita decreasing to just over \$1,000, and an eye-popping population density of 4,657 people per square kilometre, 14 times the population density of Israel.

Since the violence of December 2008 and January 2009 the violence has been relatively low. Disorganized, low-intensity, and isolated attacks by Palestinians (designed to rattle the nerves of Israelis) have been met by the

strength of the Israeli security forces. Between October 2015 and the end of January 2016, about 26 Israelis were killed in stabbings, car-rammings, and shootings, while 150 Palestinians were killed in the same period, either being identified as assailants or in protests and other clashes with the Israeli security forces (Kershner, 2016). Despite the disapproval of the US government, Israel continues to build in the West Bank and any movement in what could be called a peace process has stalled.

What are the sticking points or major barriers to peace in this conflict? Four main issues stand out:

- Dispute over the control of Jerusalem: Palestinians have been increasingly excluded.
- Right of return for refugees.
- A sovereign Palestinian State, but one that has territorial congruity and meaningful sovereignty from Israeli demands.
- Unequivocal recognition of Israel and its right to exist in peace with its neighbours.

The construction of the security wall, the Israeli settlement of the West Bank, the continuing Israeli control of Jerusalem, continued violence by Palestinians and the violent response of the Israeli security forces, the dubious efficacy of the Palestinian Authority to harness the violence and provide a political future for their people, the increasing role of Hamas, the humanitarian suffering resulting from the “blockade,” and doubts about the US’s ability to play the role of “honest broker” conspire to make the path to peace most challenging.

The case study illustrates some important points about the geopolitics of boundaries. Demarcation and establishment through war are unlikely to make a peaceful boundary. The political goodwill necessary for the construction of peaceful boundary relations is nigh impossible to cultivate when there is gross disparity of power between the geopolitical agents. Boundary conflicts are not merely the product of the local geopolitical codes of neighbouring states but are often the product of the geopolitical codes of other states. Boundary disputes are inseparable from the politics of nationalism, and so identity plays a central role – including particular interpretations of history. Identity and control of movement were seen to be the key issues in the Israel–Palestine conflict, but these central issues may

also be seen in an opposite light, as the sources for peaceful cross-boundary interaction.

The geopolitics of making peaceful boundaries

Boundaries are the focus for a variety of geopolitical disputes. Perhaps a geopolitics that concentrates upon the geographic line in the sand, an absolute marker of national identity and state sovereignty, provokes conflict. Boundaries create an absolute world of being either completely within a particular nation-state, or completely outside of it. There is no grey area in this geopolitical vision; the resource is either Hypothetica's or not, an individual is either a Hypothetican or not. Some argue that a more productive approach is to emphasize the geopolitics of borders rather than boundaries. Reflection upon borders and borderlands may result in trans-boundary interactions that allow for mutual control and utilization of resources and joint economic activities.

Goodwill between neighbours is fundamental to making a peaceful boundary. Mutual trust and shared goals are the basis for cooperation (Newman, 2005, p. 336). Specifically, the following conditions are necessary to facilitate trans-boundary interaction (Newman, 2005, p. 337):

1. Territorial questions are settled. There is no dispute over where the boundary has been established and how it has been demarcated.
2. Trans-boundary interaction within the law is easy. The boundary facilitates flows (tourists and labour migrants, for example) between neighbouring countries rather than preventing them.
3. The boundary provides a sense of security. Rather than being seen as a source of potential conflict, the boundary is seen as a sign of strength as commuting and joint economic projects enhance well-being and eradicate concerns of potential warfare.
3. Joint resource exploitation is possible. The basis of the peaceful boundary is mutual economic growth through interaction. For example, shared lakes, rivers, and aquifers may be managed jointly. Other examples are the "peace parks" or "free enterprise zones" that minimize the existence of the boundary by creating tariff-free international trade.

The boundary as the enclosure of state-imposed taxation is loosened by these zones.

4. Local administration is coordinated. Emergency services and transportation logistics are examples of how local governments in neighbouring states can create functional integrated areas that straddle an international boundary.

In introducing trans-boundary cooperation, the focus was upon how two states interact politically for economic purposes. The coordination of local administration facilitates interaction, with the main goal being economic gain: increased trade, commuting to work across a political boundary, or jointly harvesting timber or fishing a lake, for example. The assumption is that the increased economic efficiency will strengthen the legitimacy of the separate states. However, cooperation may provoke other questions and concerns. What about issues of identity, if the role of the boundary in delimiting national identity diminishes, and what impact does this have on the way individuals in the borderland identify themselves?

Borderlands

Interest in the cultural question of identity has focused attention upon borderlands (Martínez, 1994). The borderland is a trans-boundary region that shares common cultural traits, producing a geographic region of identity that is different from the two contiguous national identities. The borderland trans-boundary identity challenges the ideology that state boundaries encompass a national identity (Appadurai, 1991). Instead, borderlands require consideration, on the one hand, of the fractured nature of national identities, and, on the other hand, the commonalities (rather than differences) across national groups.

There are five key processes that shape a borderland (Martínez, 1994):

1. Transnationalism: borderlands are influenced by, and sometimes share the values, ideas, customs, and traditions of their counterparts across the boundary line. Hence, the ideological unity of national culture is challenged, as is the idea of state boundaries acting as the “containers” of national identity.

2. Otherness: the borderland is culturally different from the majority of both of the states' populations it is part of. The majority of the two states' populations view the inhabitants of their border region and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the whole borderland as exhibiting different cultural traits.
3. Separateness: the cultural difference or otherness of the border and the borderland can result in an ideological and functional separateness from the rest of the state. Separateness may manifest itself in discrimination towards the border culture in education and the media, possibly with manifestation in government employment. In addition, the states' infrastructures may be relatively inefficient in the border region. Either alone, or in combination, cultural and functional separateness can make the two borders peripheral to their respective states. In light of this status, shared cultural traits across the boundary may foster solidarity and cooperation.
4. Areas of cultural accommodation: peripheral status and discrimination within their respective states may encourage the residents of a borderland to forge a sense of solidarity that transcends ethnic differences. The "them" and "us" dichotomy that a state boundary fosters can be undermined as collective identities that cross a state boundary and challenge national homogeneity are created.
5. Places of international accommodation: functional cooperation and cultural fusion can foster borderlands as zones of international cooperation, especially if economic integration and joint security and military operations have muddled the notion of state sovereignty being a singular enterprise that stops at the boundary. Instead, responsibility for security and economic growth is shared by two states, and its scope is no longer bounded by what has been understood as the geographical limits of the state.

The reason why scholars have increasingly focused upon borderlands is the role they play in creating geographies of identity and economic cooperation that are not based upon state boundaries and their ideological overlay with the pattern of national identity. If the boundary is key in establishing a state and nation, borderlands could play a role in challenging states and nations.

The geopolitics of identity, of which borderlands are one example, is challenging the importance of the hyphen in nation-state (Appadurai, 1991). The ideology of the nation-state asserts that all those within the boundaries of a state are members of a common nation. Going back to the chapter on nations and nationalism, we saw that national separatist movements are practicing a geopolitics based on the idea that a particular state contains more than one national identity, and minority nations have a right to their own state. Appadurai alludes to a different geography: the geography of cultural groups is not a mosaic of nations that can be given territorial expressions as nation-states. Instead, cultural groups are tied together across the globe in networks of migration and cultural association that are played out over and within the boundaries of states. Networks of cultural association intersect state boundaries. Territorial manifestations of identity are subnationally connected to regions and localities within states. As ethnic groups settle in particular parts of a state they may construct a regional identity. Alternatively, the group may assimilate and move within the state, which reduces geographic concentration over time.

Case study: global geopolitical codes and the establishment of the North Korea–South Korea boundary

Korea's recorded history dates back to 57 BC, dominated by periods of subservience to the Chinese Empire. However, this changed in dramatic form at the end of the Sino–Japanese war of 1894–1895 when both Japan and China recognized Korea's complete independence. In the wake of Japan's victory, conflicting Japanese and Russian interests in Korea led to the Russo–Japanese war of 1904–1905. Japan's victory stunned the Western world, where dominant racist ideology had made an Asian victory over a European state unthinkable. The final settlement to end the war was brokered with the aid of the president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt. Japan was permitted to occupy Korea through the Treaty of Portsmouth of September 1905. By 1910 Korea was forcibly annexed and incorporated into the Japanese empire (Collins, 1969, p. 25).

Korea was administered as a Japanese colony until 6 September 1945. Facing both Chinese and Soviet attempts to exert influence in Northeast Asia, Japan became increasingly anxious to develop a regional geopolitical code. Korea was a key part of Japan's expansion into mainland Asia. In a quid pro quo between global and regional geopolitical codes, the United States and Britain were willing to give Japan free reign in Korea in exchange for Japanese recognition of their interests in Asia and the Pacific. Japan justified its occupation by portraying it as a "civilizing mission" of modernization (Hoare and Pares, 1999, p. 69). However, the objective of these developments was to turn Korea into a dependable and productive part of the Japanese empire (Hoare and Pares, 1999, p. 69). Furthermore, the occupation was brutal, fostering an animosity towards Japan that remains, to some extent, today.

The animosity bred a nationalist geopolitical code of resistance. At the beginning of the twentieth century, camps were established to train a military force to resist the Japanese occupation, while other groups tried to gain assistance for the independence of Korea in a more diplomatic way, lobbying foreign governments. For example, Syngman Rhee, later to be the first president of South Korea, established the Korean National Association in Hawaii in 1909 (Eckert et al., 1990).

In the wake of World War I, the United States began to disseminate a global programme of national self-determination. Koreans interpreted the context as one in which the major powers would be sympathetic to their own goals of ending the Japanese occupation. On 1 March 1919, a peaceful uprising burst out when a Declaration of Independence, prepared primarily by religious groups, was read out in Seoul. In the wake of fierce suppression many Korean nationalists fled to China. A Korean provisional government was established in Shanghai in April 1919. However, the Korean exiles were very scattered and divided politically. These divisions were reflections of different perspectives on how to bring the Japanese domination of Korea to an end, as well as varying ideologies (Hoare and Pares, 1999, p. 24).

The establishment of the Soviet Union had promoted the diffusion of social revolutionary thought. Socialism spread first among Korean exiles in the Russian Far East, Siberia, and China, and then among Korean students in Japan, attracted by its combination of social change and national liberation. The different groups of exiles continued to clash, sometimes

violently, over ideological differences. The Korean nationalist movement was too weak to end Japanese occupation. Instead, Japan was driven out of Korea in the wake of its defeat in World War II and the dissolution of its empire. Differences amongst Koreans remained unresolved (Hoare and Pares, 1999, p. 24).

Almost immediately, efforts were made to form a Korean government with its headquarters in Seoul. Initially named the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence, on 6 September 1945 the government changed its name to the Korean People's Republic (Cumings, 1997, p. 185). Soviet troops had been fighting the Japanese in Korea since 8 August 1945. They gave "permission" for US troops to enter Korea further south than Seoul, while supporting the Korean People's Republic (Cumings, 1997, p. 186). As part of the redefinition of the US geopolitical code at the beginning of what came to be known as the Cold War, it did not recognize the republic the Soviet Union had helped create. In a move that presaged the division of Korea, the US chose instead to support the nationalist exiles and the few conservative politicians within Korea who comprised the Korean Democratic Party (KDP). Within a context of competition between two external powers, Koreans made political choices and within a matter of months Korea was divided into socialist and capitalist political allegiances with, virtually, a north and south geographic expression respectively (Cumings, 1997, p. 186).

The subsequent division of Korea had no historical or political basis. For Koreans, the 38th parallel that was originally chosen to divide Korea had no prior meaning, but now is central to their lives (Cumings, 1997, p. 186). Instead, the demarcation of the boundary was a product of the geopolitical codes of the Soviet Union and the US. The rationale of US policymakers was to include Seoul, the capital city, within the American zone. Surprisingly, the Soviets accepted the division. Unbeknown to the Americans, the Soviets and the Japanese had themselves discussed dividing Korea into spheres of influence at the 38th parallel. An American official confessed many years later that, "Had we known that, we all most surely would have chosen another line of demarcation" (Oberdorfer, 2001, p. 6). The decision was made without consulting any Koreans (Cumings, 1997, p. 187).

On 15 August 1948, the US-backed Republic of Korea was officially proclaimed in the south and on 9 September the Soviet-backed Democratic

People's Republic of Korea was proclaimed in the North. The Soviet Union chose Kim Il Sung (born Kim Song Ju), a 33-year-old Korean guerilla commander who had initially fought the Japanese in China but had spent the last years of World War II in Manchurian training camps commanded by the Soviet army, to lead the regime in the North. In the South the US chose 70-year-old Syngman Rhee as the first Korean president. He was a product of contacts with the US, and had obtained degrees from George Washington University, Harvard, and Princeton. Both leaders felt they were destined to reunite their country.

After the creation of these regimes both Soviet and US troops left the peninsula in 1948 and 1949, respectively. Just a matter of weeks after the US troop withdrawal, civil war broke out in the peninsula. On 25 June 1950, North Korea, with the support of the Soviet Union and China, invaded the South in an effort to reunify the country by force. The invasion was challenged and repulsed by the forces of the United States, South Korea, and fifteen other states under the flag of the UN. The United States pledged support for South Korea against North Korea and sought legitimacy through the UN. In Resolution 83 of 27 June 1950, the United Nations Security Council recommended that the member states of the UN should provide assistance to South Korea. The UN created a "unified command" (Hoare and Pares, 1999, p. 194), and asked the US to name a commander (General Douglas MacArthur). The distribution of ground forces for the United Nations Command was 50.3 per cent US, 40.1 per cent South Korean, and 9.6 per cent others. The United States provided the majority of naval and air force units.



Figure 5.6 Korean peninsula.

The invasion came after Kim Il Sung had repeatedly requested authorization from Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader. Stalin eventually approved the war plan due to what he called the “changed international situation.” What this meant remains debated. Possible reasons are the victory of Mao’s Communist Party in China, the development of the Soviet Union’s atomic bomb, the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea, or a statement by Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s excluding South Korea from the US defence perimeter, all of which occurred in 1949 or early 1950 (Oberdorfer, 2001, p. 9). The Korean War was a proxy war, a war fought between the superpowers through their allies rather than direct conflict between the Soviet Union and the US. The war lasted from 1950 to 1953, and fortunes swung back and forth until an armistice agreement between North Korea, China, the US, and the UN was signed on 27 July 1953 (Hoare and Pares, 1999, pp. 3–4). The nature of the agreement means that the war is still unresolved; no final treaty has been signed. It is estimated that 900,000 Chinese and 520,000 North Korean soldiers were killed or wounded, as were 400,000 UN Command troops, nearly two-thirds of them South Koreans; 36,000 US soldiers were also killed (Oberdorfer, 2001, pp. 9–10).

The end of the fighting resulted in the demarcation of a boundary close to the 38th parallel, a process initiated and defined by foreign countries. To this day the very limited flows across the boundary are controlled with the assistance of US soldiers stationed in South Korea, and the boundary is highly militarized. On the South Korean side, minefields line the roads, bridges are fortified, and checkpoints and gun emplacements are visible. The North Korean border is inaccessible. The war is, technically, still going on, and even today there are still fears in both Koreas that the fighting could break out at any moment.

In the aftermath of the fighting, the Rhee regime in the South became increasingly dictatorial and corrupt until it was deposed in 1960 by a student-led revolt. There were numerous coups and assassinations in South Korea until its government finally seemed to normalize in the late 1980s. In the North, Kim Il Sung systematically purged his political opponents, creating a highly centralized system that accorded him unlimited power and generated a formidable cult of personality (Oberdorfer, 2001, pp. 10–11). Kim Il Sung was in power for nearly five decades; he died of a heart attack in 1994, and was succeeded by his son Kim Jong Il. The dynasty continued

after Kim Jong Il's death in 2011 with the appointment of his son Kim Jong-Un as "the great successor."

A short period of friendlier relations either side of 2000, known in South Korea as the "sunshine policy," was supported by the US who tried to negotiate an end to North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles (Heo and Hyun, 2003, p. 89). The US evaluated the politics of easing tensions over the Korean boundary as a means to advance its global geopolitical code. The situation changed dramatically in the 2000s with the development of a North Korean nuclear weapons programme. In 2003 North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), prompting unprecedented talks between China and the US. With North Korea's declarations that it had enough nuclear material to make up to six bombs, a series of talks between North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the US (the "six-party talks") were held. Though North Korea formally pulled out of these talks in June 2004, the September talks appeared to produce an agreement that North Korea would give up its nuclear weapons programme in return for aid and security guarantees; an additional demand of a civilian nuclear reactor came later.

In 2006 the nuclear brinkmanship escalated as North Korea first tested a long-range missile and then, in October, claimed to have tested its first nuclear weapon. Though this is a sign of North Korean nuclear power, the fragility of the state is exposed through terrible famines and malnutrition, killing approximately two million people and devastating life in North Korea (Holmes, 2016). With another period of warmer relations in 2007 and 2008, the South and North Korean presidents met and pledged to initiate talks about formally ending the Korean war. Tensions soon reappeared. In March 2010 the South Korean warship Cheonan was sunk, allegedly by a North Korean attack. Tensions rose as the US imposed sanctions and conducted joint military exercises with South Korea. In November 2010 North Korea fired shells into South Korean territory killing two soldiers, and artillery fire was exchanged again in incidents in 2014 and 2015. Concerns about North Korea's nuclear programme continue, with North Korea claiming it tested a hydrogen bomb in January 2016. China has been frustrated by its neighbour's behaviour, especially the nuclear tests. However, it remains the country's only ally in the world and balances supporting North Korea to prevent its implosion while hoping the bilateral relationship does not complicate China's global engagements.

The story of the Korean peninsula is one of a militarized boundary that is virtually closed to movement. The boundary is a product of external geopolitical influence that reached its most violent form to date in the Korean War. Its establishment, demarcation, and control were a component of the Cold War. More recent attempts by Koreans to change the boundary regime have been hindered within a new geopolitical context that has focused US attention upon North Korea's nuclear capabilities. To date, the nature of the Korean boundary is very much a product of geopolitics operating at the global scale, making any intermittent agency by the two Korean states towards a more open boundary problematic.

Boundaries, flows, and refugees

Boundaries and borders are an integral component of a state's geopolitical code. The legitimacy and tenure of a government depends upon its ability to maintain boundaries from actual and perceived external threat. The identity of a nation depends upon the effective use of the boundary in maintaining a sense of geopolitical "order" which is the maintenance of a particular domestic politics in the face of "outside" threats. The separation of a domestic "inside" from an "outside" realm of foreign policy has always been a fiction, but, arguably, this is increasingly so in the wake of intensified economic integration of the globe and related cultural and migratory flows. Nevertheless, governments feel the need to maintain the distinction in their policy and rhetoric. The inside group has rights and privileges that needed to be protected from the undeserving "outsiders."

The pressure upon governments to control their borders can be intensified when international norms and global events combine. One example is the refugee crisis that emerged in the wake of the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Countries such as Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon coped with the vast majority of the refugees. However, it was the movement into Europe that drew the most attention as national governments raised barriers preventing people crossing boundaries. Harrowing images of people desperately crossing the Mediterranean Sea, many losing their lives in the attempt, were matched by calls from some politicians and citizens to restrict entry into their countries. This movement occurred within UN rules and norms, demanding the humane treatment and

accommodation of people fleeing for their safety. The result was a tension between the geopolitics of flow or movement and territorial control (Gottman, 1973) that we mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Box 5.3 Forcibly displaced persons and economic migrants

The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees defines a *refugee* as a person who has crossed an international boundary “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” Simply, a refugee is someone fleeing from their country to another because they fear for their safety.

An *internally displaced person* is someone whose fears compelled them to move for the same reasons as a refugee, but travel from one part of their country to another without crossing an international boundary.

An *asylum seeker* is someone who claims to be a refugee, but their status has not been evaluated. If a court does not believe an asylum seeker is under threat of persecution they can be sent back to their home country.

A *migrant* is someone who chooses to move, often for economic reasons. This may be someone moving from a region of extreme poverty (say Global South to Global North) or just seeking better opportunities, as I did when I moved from Britain to the US to obtain funding for my PhD studies. A migrant may move with the correct legal documentation or be undocumented. If they are undocumented they may be deported.

Someone who arrives in a country as a refugee or an asylum seeker may then undertake a subsequent move as a migrant. This becomes complicated in Europe because of the Dublin Regulation, an EU law

that generally expects an asylum seeker to register in the first country they enter. However, this regulation is facing stress because of the sheer number of refugees arriving in countries such as Hungary, Greece, and Italy, as well as the desire of people to move to countries such as Germany and Sweden. Hence, many of the refugees try to avoid registration in the country they arrive in and move through Europe.

For the geography of refugees and internally displaced persons see the website of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>.

At the beginning of 2016 António Guterres (2016), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said, “Global forced displacement has reached proportions very few of us have seen in our lifetimes – more than 60 million people worldwide – and unlike previous years, refugees are now squarely in the centre of international media attention and political agendas.” His claims about political and media attention were very true. Conversations in the 2016 US Presidential election campaign often contained a virulent connection between refugees and terrorism. However, it was in Europe that the political ramifications of refugee movement were the clearest. The legitimacy of German Chancellor Angela Merkel was under threat as a result of her brave statements about the need for her country to accept refugees. In Britain the timing of a referendum on continued membership of the EU in the summer of 2016, at the likely height of refugee movement, was thought to promote support for leaving the EU.

In 2015 the total number of people experiencing forced displacement reached a record high of 60 million people. Over a million refugees arrived in Europe, mainly from ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In 2015 a total of over 4 million Syrians were refugees, most of them in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Though a minority of refugees from Syria were heading towards Europe, the volume of the movement was still provoking a political crisis. The territorialization of Europe was interacting with the flow of refugees to unsettle the established politics of the continent. One of the foundations of the EU was the free movement of its citizens, meaning that a citizen of, say, Poland could move to France or

Germany freely and work there. The system is known as the Schengen Agreement that came into effect in 1995 and now includes 26 countries: 22 EU-members plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein. Six EU countries (Britain, Ireland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, and Romania) are not part of the Schengen Agreement; they impose some control over the entry of EU citizens (see [Figure 5.7](#)). The idea behind the Schengen Agreement was to create a region of economic integration in which workers could move to take advantage of job opportunities within the EU. The geopolitics of flows was prioritized over the geopolitics of national boundary control.

Terrorism and refugee movements emerged as issues that challenged the geopolitics of flows and reasserted the primacy of boundary control. Politicians favouring the restriction of refugee movements were quick to connect the two issues, though nearly all refugees were victims of conflict (including women and children) rather than perpetrators of violence. Severe challenges to the spirit and practice of the Schengen Agreement occurred in 2015. Hungary became a magnet for refugees and in response it built a fence between itself and Serbia (a non-EU and non-Schengen country) to stop movement into the country, and close an entry point into the Schengen zone. To create further disincentives to refugees, Hungary then built fences on its boundaries with EU members Slovenia and Croatia. The refugees were seeking to enter the Schengen zone and then move to countries that they saw as providing the best benefits and other forms of support; notably Germany, Denmark, and Sweden. In developments that illustrated the increasing fragility of the Schengen Agreement, Germany imposed some controls on its boundary with Austria, and Austria restricted movement from its neighbour Hungary. Sweden refused entry to anyone without photographic identification, and Denmark also imposed more boundary controls. In January 2016, other EU governments were putting pressure on Greece to do more to document and register migrants arriving on its shores, primarily from Turkey. Though these governments were referring to the Dublin Regulation (see [Box 5.3](#)), Greece was struggling with a severe economic austerity programme along with the influx of refugees. It was another indication of the stress being put upon the EU. The Schengen Agreement allows countries to establish boundary controls for ten days if there are concerns over “public policy or national security.” Such controls can be extended over “renewable periods” and an extension for a maximum of two years is allowed in “exceptional circumstances” (BBC News, 2016).

In early 2016, as governments eyed the likely increase of refugees through the spring and summer, the tendency to invoke boundary control seemed to be trumping international norms of refugee assistance and Europe's own emphasis upon flow rather than national boundaries.



Figure 5.7 Schengen Agreement and migration flows.

The flow of refugees and the decisions to enable or impede their movement are examples of geopolitical agency by different entities. An organization like the UNHCR can act to provide assistance to forcibly displaced persons, and norms can be established regarding the behaviour of states to refugees and asylum seekers. States can act to welcome and resettle refugees, or they can try and stop that movement by building fences. The experience of refugees is an example of the body as a scale of geopolitics – as men, women, and children face hardship and, perhaps, hope in their attempt to make a new life away from war or persecution. In aggregation, the movement of refugees can threaten established geopolitical

entities and their rules, such as the EU and the Schengen Agreement. Another geopolitical arena in which the imperative of flow or movement can clash with the attempts by states to impose control is the sea, the major vector for world trade.

Territoriality of the ocean and territorial disputes

A focus on the geopolitics of territory should include consideration of maritime disputes. The oceans have their own territoriality that is framed around the distinction between national and international waters. In 1609 Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius advanced the principle of *mare liberum*; the now taken-for-granted belief that the sea is international territory allowing anyone free access for the purposes of peaceful trade. This policy was established to facilitate global trade. But not all the ocean is deemed international. A substantial portion is claimed by coastal states through their declaration of control over the parts of the oceans “near” to their coastlines. The legal term exclusive economic zone (EEZ) defines what we mean by “near.” The EEZ may be a maximum of 200 nautical miles from the coast and within it the coastal state lays claim to fishing rights and rights to exploit minerals under the seabed (Glassner and Fahrer, 2004, p. 453). The intersection of state sovereignty and claims to the ocean’s resources explains why states dispute ownership of small islands and outcrops of rocks. These pieces of territory may appear worthless, but are a segment of national territory that defines the extent of the EEZ, or “national waters,” and the fish and mineral resources within and below the compartmentalized sea.

Many such disputes exist at the moment, but the oceans of East Asia and Northeast Asia contain some of the most interesting and potentially problematic. Some of these disputes stem from the definition of boundaries at the end of World War II as the Japanese empire was defeated, and the Soviet Union extended and established its presence in the region. The tensions occur within the context of China’s growing naval strength and its increasing ability to project power away from its coastline. A long-standing concern has been whether China will invade Taiwan, which it sees as a province of China. Recently, China has begun to build a deep-water navy, though its size pales in comparison to the US fleet. China claims that it is

developing a navy with an eye to the common good; fighting piracy and ensuring global trade routes are protected. However, these developments have been complicated and amplified by China's increasingly aggressive claims over disputed territories in the South China Sea (see [Figure 5.8](#)).

The territorial aspect of China's presence is epitomized by its "island building" campaign. Since 2013 China has engineered the physical extent of existing islands and turned submerged reefs into man-made islands. The size of these constructions is significant, accommodating a 3,000-metre-long runway on what is known as Fiery Cross Reef, with another being built on Subi Reef. The military effectiveness of these islands is limited. However, they do provide logistical sites for naval and air patrols. Also, they are an attempt to increase the territorial extent of China, as, if they were to become recognized sovereign possessions, they would have their own EEZ. The United States has challenged their legitimacy and the creation of new EEZs by conducting freedom of navigation exercises in their vicinity; essentially signalling that they believe the "near" waters are international. China's island building intensifies a number of maritime disputes in the area, of which we will discuss three.

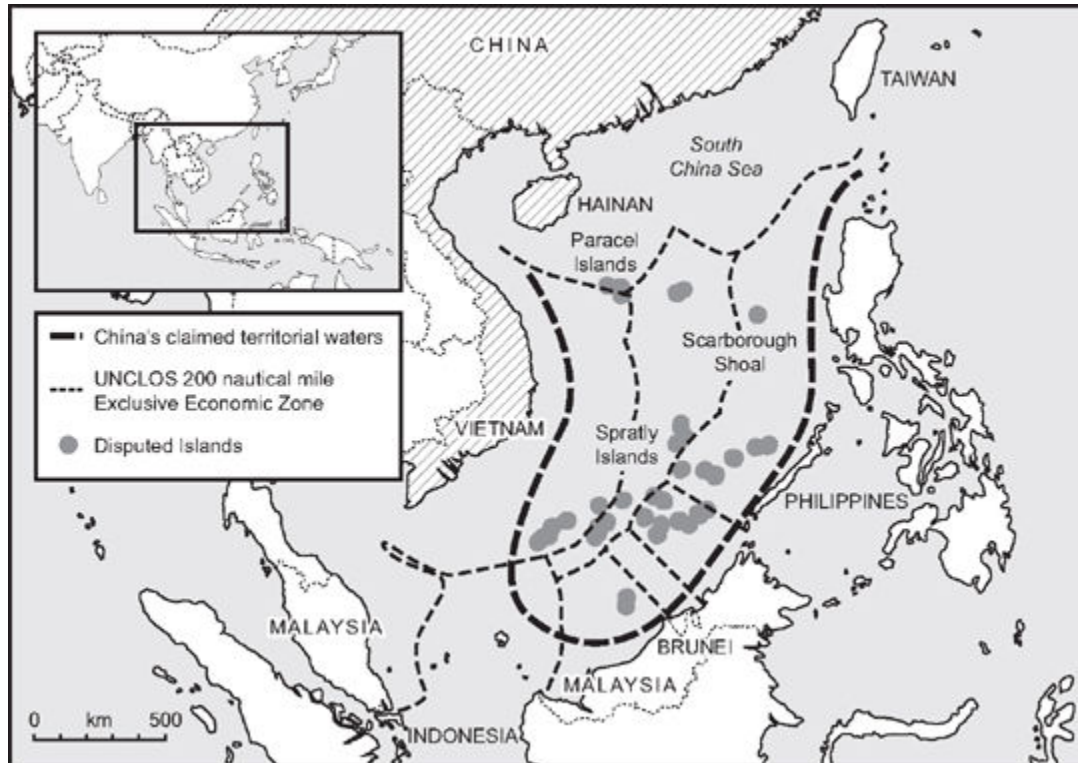


Figure 5.8 Maritime territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

The Paracel and Spratly Islands are small coral outcrops in the South China Sea and straddle the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The islands themselves are barely above sea level and practically uninhabitable, but the region is of interest because of the oil and natural gas reserves under the seabed. Also, the islands are in a key strategic position in the important sea route between the Middle East and the oil-consuming countries of East Asia, notably China and Japan. China and Vietnam have fought over the Spratly Islands and the neighbouring Paracel Islands in 1976 and in 1988, when Vietnamese boats were sunk and over 70 sailors lost their lives. The dispute continues and has become increasingly tense since 1993 when China released a map depicting the nearby Natuna Islands within their national waters; an area that contains some of the natural gas fields currently claimed by the Philippines and Malaysia. Tensions increased in 2012 when China detained some Vietnamese fishermen, and there were concerns that China was advancing plans for oil exploration. An ASEAN conference in 2012 failed to resolve the dispute. Other maritime boundaries in the region are disputed between Vietnam and China and also between Thailand and Cambodia, preventing oil exploration. For further details see <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/spratly.htm>.

The Kuril Islands stretch from the southern point of the Kamchatka peninsula in Russia to the northern tip of Hokkaido island (Japan). The southernmost Kuril Islands were occupied by the Soviet military at the end of World War II and remain under Russian authority, but are claimed by Japan who call them the Northern Territories. Part of the geopolitical struggle over the islands has appeared as a scientific tactic by the Japanese, who claim some of the islands under Russian control are not actually part of the Kuril chain. The dispute between the Soviet Union and Japan prevented a formal peace agreement between the two countries at the end of World War II. Accommodation was finally obtained through the 1956 Soviet–Japanese Joint Declaration, but this agreement was resisted by the United States who, in the midst of the Cold War, wanted the Soviet occupation to be deemed illegitimate. The situation remained fairly stable for some decades after 1956, but (quite surprisingly) the dispute has still prevented formal closure of World War II between Russia and Japan. Recently, certain incidents have heightened tensions, especially visits to the region by Russian President Medvedev in 2009 and Japanese school textbooks representing the islands as under Japanese sovereignty. It was hoped that

the beginning of liquefied natural gas shipments between Russia and Japan in 2009 would emphasize the benefits of peaceful discussions. However, in 2011 Russia began an investment programme in the islands that became a plan to establish a military base by 2018. Demonstrations in Japan and calls by nationalist groups to take control of the islands are a sign that passions are high in both countries.

South Korea and Japan are currently embroiled in a tense dispute, with a centuries-old history, over tiny islands that lie in the ocean between them. These islands are known as Dokdo (by the Koreans), Takeshima (by the Japanese), and are also known as the Liancourt Rocks. Both countries resort to historic tales to proclaim the legacy of their rightful sovereignty over the islands, as well as the use of biology and geology to give scientific legitimacy to their claims. The nationalist significance of the dispute lies in the fact that it was the first piece of territory annexed by the Japanese in their colonization of Korea in 1905; control that lasted until the end of World War II. Since the 1950s South Korea has staffed a lighthouse on the islands as a symbolic act of possession. The intensity of the dispute increased after 2004 when exploration for oil and gas resources under the seabed surrounding the islands was initiated by the South Korean government. Japan responded in kind with its own geological survey in 2006. In 2005, the Shimane Prefectural Assembly declared 22 February as “Takeshima Day” to highlight Japan’s territorial claim, inevitably provoking strong protests in South Korea. On 8 March 2005 South Korean military jets flew over the islands towards a Japanese civilian plane attempting to fly over the area without permission. On 10 August 2012 South Korean President Lee Myung-bak became the first South Korean leader to visit the islands, leading to Japan temporarily recalling its ambassador in South Korea in protest. More information can be found at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/liancourt.htm>.

These three disputes illustrate how territorial disputes over maritime boundaries are an intersection of material practices aimed at exploitation of natural resources and representations of the dispute that reference long-standing nationalist beliefs. Though the islands may be small they are the territorial manifestation and focal point of broad historical geopolitical processes that are the continuation of imperial projects and the prosecution of World War II. These disputes, and others not discussed in detail, require careful management so that they do not become catalysts of future wars.

More information on these disputes, and any contemporary boundary dispute in the world, can be found at the website of the excellent International Boundaries Research Unit at Durham University: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/>.

Summary and segue

In this chapter we have focused on geopolitical practices that create territories as means of bounding or delineating political jurisdiction and identity. The key concept is territoriality (Sack, 1986). Though we have focused on international boundaries and the territoriality of states (as key geopolitical actors), processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization are also important. Boundaries are the product and process of geopolitical agency. They are geographical features that are the manifestation of geopolitical actions, but they are also dynamic and contested geopolitical ideas and policies. A number of agents make boundaries the target of their geopolitical actions (governments, terrorists, nationalist groups) and boundaries are also the outcome of geopolitical processes operating at global, state, and sub-state scales (such as the movement of refugees). Actual and perceived boundaries, whether in existence or potentially established, provide the structure for geopolitical actions – whether it be the norms of international diplomacy or the terrorist actions of nationalist movements.

However, the emphasis upon flows in the academic discussions of borderlands, or the policy imperatives of the Schengen countries, require us to consider a very different geopolitics: networks and flows that cross political boundaries and so connect different places and territories. In the next chapter we explore the geopolitics of networks through a discussion of terrorism and social movements.



Having read this chapter you will be able to:

- **Understand the concept of territoriality**
- **Identify geopolitical practices of deterritorialization and reterritorialization**
- **Understand how boundaries are an important part of the practice of geopolitics**
- **Identify the types of boundary conflicts within current affairs**
- **Understand why the establishment of boundaries is an important geopolitical practice**
- **Consider how geopolitical agency can undermine or change the roles boundaries play**
- **Understand the interaction of flows and boundaries as a form of territorialization in the geopolitics of refugee movement**
- **Consider the importance of maritime disputes over territorial demarcation**

Further reading

Appadurai, A. (1991) "Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology," in R.G. Fox (ed.) *Recapturing Anthropology*, Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

A provocative discussion of identity that emphasizes diasporas and multiple identities rather than nationalism.

Boyd, A. and Comenetz, J. (2007) *An Atlas of World Affairs*, 11th edn., London: Routledge.

This collection of short essays and maps is an extremely useful and accessible introduction to most of the world's conflicts.

Bregman, A. and El-Tahri, J. (2000) *Israel and the Arabs: An Eyewitness Account of War and Peace in the Middle East*, New York: TV Books.

It is practically impossible to recommend one book on any conflict, especially one as contested as this. But this book does an effective job of describing the main historic events in the conflict with the use of interesting interviews.

Donnan, H. and Wilson, T.M. (1999) *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*, Oxford: Berg.

An excellent survey and discussion of the literature addressing borders and boundaries.

Jones, R. (2012) *Border Walls: Security and the War on Terror in the United States, India, and Israel*, London: Zed Books.

A thought-provoking book that examines the proliferation of walls as a form of territorialization in the context of the War on Terror.

Elden, S. (2009) *Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

A thought-provoking essay that provides a historic consideration of constructions of territory with particular pertinence to the way territory is being reworked within the War on Terror.

Martínez, O.J. (1994) *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

An in-depth study illustrating the nature of borderlands and their impact on boundaries.

Oberdorfer, D. (2001) *The Two Koreas*, Indianapolis, IN: Basic Books.

A highly interesting and accessible introduction to the Korean peninsula conflict.

The refugee crisis was ongoing at the time I was writing this edition of the book. The UNHCR website (<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>) provides a variety of interesting updates and reports. Human Rights Watch, an NGO, also provides commentary and data: <https://www.hrw.org/topic/refugees>.

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6

NETWORK GEOPOLITICS: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND TERRORISTS



In this chapter we will:

- **Introduce the term metageography**
- **Discuss the geopolitics of globalization**
- **Consider the geopolitics of transnational business**
- **Identify the key attributes of transnational social movements**
- **Discuss the geopolitics of defining terrorism**
- **Identify the changing geography of terrorism over the past 100 years**
- **Identify the geography of contemporary religiously motivated terrorism**
- **Define the metageography of terrorist networks and counterterrorism**
- **Introduce the geopolitics of cyberwarfare**

Geopolitical thought and practice has been dominated by the state. The geopolitical codes of states are usually seen as being the most influential, and the classic geopolitical thinkers were advocates for the national security of their home country. The world political map is commonly identified as that of territorial nation-states. In the preceding chapters we have exposed some of these ideas as either partial or outright myths. Our task now is to recognize that the geopolitics of the world is one in which the construction of territorial entities, such as states, has always occurred in conjunction with the construction of networks to enable flows across the globe. The construction of networks and maintaining flows within them is no less a form of geopolitics than the construction of states and the practice of their geopolitical codes. In some instances states have actively participated in the construction of such networks, and in other instances they have resisted flows that they see as a threat. Often such actions take place at the very same time, such as contemporary actions to enable networks of finance and trade, at the same time that terrorist networks and flows of refugees and migrants are identified as threats.

To gain a full understanding of contemporary geopolitics, in this chapter we will focus upon the geopolitics of networks. First, we will discuss the term metageography and its connection to the geopolitics of globalization. Then we show the necessity of a geopolitical perspective in understanding the substantive topics of transnational businesses and social movements, terrorism, and cyberwarfare. For each of these topics we concentrate upon how networks both challenge and are partially created by the state.

Box 6.1 Brexit and Greek austerity: flows and sovereignty

At the beginning of 2016 it seemed clear that the European political agenda would be dominated by two separate but related issues: the management of refugee movement and whether Britain would vote to leave the EU. Seemingly, the two issues are very different. The refugee crisis is a matter of flow or movement. Brexit (short for British exit from the EU) is a matter of national sovereignty, or how many political decisions will be made by the British parliament rather than the European Union. However, the two matters became connected in the political manoeuvres, linking the geopolitics of territory and networks.

At the beginning of February 2016 British Prime Minister David Cameron was in negotiation with EU Council President Donald Tusk over an agreement that would give concessions to Britain and, some hoped, negate political pressures for Britain to leave the EU. A key part of the negotiations was the ability of migrants from other EU countries to collect social benefits in Britain. One of the key principles of the EU is the free movement of workers. However, tensions over refugees and migrants were promoting moves by some countries to return to a traditional sense of territorial sovereignty. Policy discussions about the payment of taxes and the receipt of social benefits were highlighting the geopolitics of bounded and distinct nation-states rather than a supranational Europe.

As Britain's negotiations were ongoing, other European leaders were looking to southern Europe, especially Greece. The Greek government, and its long-suffering citizens, were still struggling to meet austerity measures, such as demands for more expenditure cuts and increased taxes. Would the powerful countries of Europe, particularly Germany, be patient and continue to provide assistance to Greece to help them out of their predicament? In what some commentators saw as a form of "blackmail," the prospect of more financial help was tied to calls for Greece to improve its registration of refugees arriving on its shores and prevent them from moving further into the EU, specifically towards Germany.

In both of these examples, the question of territorial sovereignty for Britain and Greece was occurring within a geopolitical context of flows of refugees, and this movement was driving the decisions and futures of the European states.

Geopolitical globalization: a new metageography

The world has changed since the time of the classic geopoliticians. We now live within an era of globalization, a term used to describe the global economic, political, and social connections that shape our world. The state-centric view of the classic geopoliticians has been replaced by a contemporary focus upon globalization, or a geography of networks that cross boundaries and are expressions of power that cannot be tied to particular national interests. The networks cannot be connected simply to the interests of a particular country in the same way as, for example, Ratzel's vision reflected German interests and Mackinder's British goals. Geopolitics is not just the calculation of countries trying to expand or protect their territory and define a political sphere of influence; it is also about countries, businesses, and political groups making connections across the globe.

Metageography refers to the "spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world" (Lewis and Wigen, 1997, p. ix; Beaverstock, et al., 2000). Modern geopolitics, within the dominant framework of Anglo-American geography, has disseminated a metageography of the world as a mosaic of nation-states, despite the artificiality of these geographic units. For years, conflict between states was the focus of geopolitics; in other words, geopolitics was the sub-discipline that examined the power relations within the assumed metageography of nation-states. But the intensifying transnational networks of globalization are an emergent metageography in which flows of goods, money and people across boundaries makes banks, businesses, and groups of refugees, for example, important geopolitical actors. Political power is not just a matter of controlling territory, it is also a matter of controlling movement, or being able to construct networks to one's own advantage across political boundaries (Figure 6.1).

Let us contrast the geopolitics of globalization with the political vision of the classic geopoliticians. The economic concerns of, say, Mackinder and the German school were, for them, solvable through the exercise of political power by their own countries and by the extension of political boundaries. Countries were the most powerful geopolitical agents. In the era of globalization the geopolitical agency of countries has been limited as economic decisions must be made with reference to transnational economic organizations such as the IMF or WTO. Interest rates and currency values are set by the reactions of global markets and, in some cases, the IMF. Economic sovereignty is limited. In addition, the geopolitics of globalization has led to a dramatic increase in the number of geopolitical actors, especially non-governmental organizations and social movements.

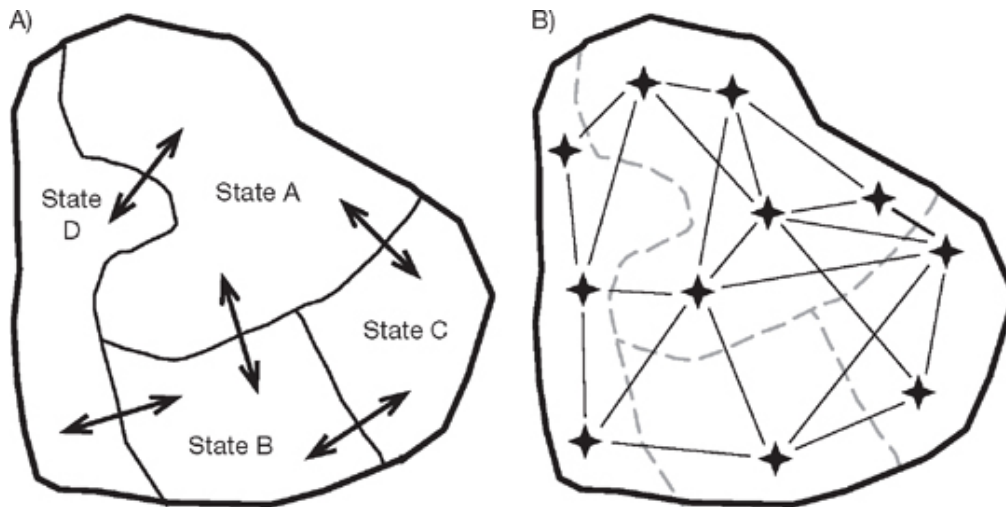


Figure 6.1 Metageography.

Globalization is the contemporary manifestation of what has been a constant trend in world history; the ever-closer integration of parts of the globe. There is a danger of thinking of globalization as a new manifestation of our age. Networks of communication (roads) have been essential in “tying together” state territories; the infrastructural power we introduced in [Chapter 4](#). Networks of diplomatic relations were essential in maintaining the new system of states that emerged after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Societies have constantly explored beyond their immediate horizons, and networks of exploration date back thousands of years. In the history of geopolitics the networks of exploration established by Western states were essential in the practice of colonialism and the representation of “New Worlds.” Networks of exploration enabled the establishment of territorial empires that, in turn, created flows of imperial trade and migration.

The current focus on globalization is a result of the intensification of these networks to such an extent that some see the construction of a global society; rather than an aggregation of national societies. Partially, this intensification is the product of technological improvements that have allowed for quicker movement across greater distances for more and more people: from sailing ships through steamships to jet passenger aircraft; from airmail through telephones to satellite technology; and from quite localized life experiences to global tourism and migration. The construction of economic networks that have destabilized the sense of a “national economy” has meant the end of interstate trade as goods are moved within intra-company networks that have plants and offices in numerous states. Financial markets are global in scale, hooked into the hubs of trading screens located in key financial centres (London, New York, Tokyo, Bahrain, etc.). States have tried to manage this integration by, for example, regulating domestic media markets to limit the number of outside broadcasters, and policing

the flow of legal and illegal immigrants. However, the internet and satellite TV have made it increasingly hard for states to manage the flow of information, and often the ability of states to manage international migration is also limited.

On the other hand, it would be wrong to think of a simple dichotomy between states and networks. In many ways, states have been active agents in promoting transnational networks. Free trade and international investment is just one example of states negotiating to allow for the movement of goods and money across their boundaries. Increasingly, states are giving decision-making power to transnational organizations that have a direct impact upon the well-being of their population. For example, the WTO creates and adjudicates trade rules that have an impact upon jobs in particular states. The War on Terror has promoted a military network of cooperation between national police forces and armies across the globe (see [Box 6.2](#)).

Box 6.2 Special Forces: the network power of the world leader

Networks of military power project the influence of the world leader across the globe. The increased role of US Special Forces since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 has been a mixture of covert military actions, but also “diplomatic” contacts with military forces across the globe. The former are militarized responses by the world leader to violent challenges, the latter are militarized attempts to maintain the US’s global influence. The members of the Special Forces are highly trained and well-equipped killers, who have sought out the most dangerous form of modern combat. Ironically, much of their contemporary role consists of acting as “policeman,” “diplomat,” or, perhaps, “mayor” in conflict and post-conflict situations. Armed to the teeth, they are the visible expression of the global geopolitical code of the US in the “hottest” conflict spots across the globe.

For example, beginning in 1981, Special Forces Sergeant Rick Turcotte trained Fijian forces for peace-keeping missions, operated covertly in the Honduran jungle to help US-sponsored guerillas in Nicaragua, and supervised military training in Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore (Priest, 2003, p. 124). The training missions fell within:

the bread-and-butter mission of Army Special Forces ... “foreign internal defense,” a concept refined in successive campaigns

against communism but yet to be fully adapted for the post-Cold War period. This task calls for special forces to “organize, train, advise, and assist” a foreign military so that it can “free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency,” according to Field Manual 31-20, “Doctrine for Special Forces Operations,” issued in April 1990.

(Priest, 2003, pp.128–129)

This quote contains clues to the interaction between the agency of the world leader and the metageographies of nation-states and networks. The definitions of “subversion, lawlessness and insurgency” are made within the world leader’s geopolitical code. “Society” is used here as another term for state; it is particular countries that are being assisted. However, the assistance is provided through a network of military units that are under less political supervision, within the US and abroad, than regular units (Priest, 2003, p. 139). As conflict continues in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Libya, attempts by President Obama to decrease the amount of “active” or “combat” troops have also seen the deployment of “advisors” as the network of Special Forces continues to play a key geopolitical role.

The geopolitics of transnational business

In [Chapter 1](#) we defined geopolitics as the *struggle over the control of geographical entities with an international and global dimension, and the use of such geographical entities for political advantage*. In this chapter we have emphasized the interaction between two geographical entities, networks and territory. Businesses have been important agents in creating networks across the globe with the goal of making profit. In pursuing this goal, businesses have interacted with, and changed, places, states, and regions. The geopolitics of the contemporary world is the outcome of what we call globalization, but this is just one particular expression of a historical and ongoing interaction between economically motivated agents that make networks (businesses) and politically motivated agents that make territories (states). Separating out geopolitical agents as simply either economic or political, and creating either networks or territories, is far too simple. As we will see, businesses need states and vice versa. The metageography of our world has always been an interaction between networks and territories. In fact, the global trade networks that we rely upon require violence to operate; whether that be slave labour harvesting the food we eat, the

policing of sea lanes to prevent piracy, or coups and private military forces to protect foreign-owned industrial facilities from excluded and disgruntled local populations (Cowen, 2014).

Living today, it is easy to assume that the world has always been organized through the interaction between states and economic markets (Schwartz, 1994). However, as we have discussed, modern territorial states did not appear until the 1600s. Similarly, capitalism and making things for profit to be sold in economic markets did not become part of the way humans interacted until the mid-1400s (Wallerstein, 1979). Admittedly, it has been a long time since the existence of work and politics in a form other than states and capitalist markets. The world in which we live is shaped by businesses and states, and a Gramscian “common sense” exists that makes these socially constructed political entities appear “natural.” The fact that other forms of geopolitical organization existed should make us consider how states and businesses grew together and that the way they interact can change over time. In other words, like other aspects of geopolitics they are social constructs; things made by human activity and hence open to change.

The geographic scope, or reach, of business has expanded over the centuries. Beginning around 1450, capitalism evolved out of the European feudal system. At first, trade was very local with a much smaller amount of long-distance trade in luxury items, such as spices and silk (Dicken, 1998, p. 19). Over time, all trade became international so that businesses were referred to as multinational and then, in contemporary language, transnational. The switch from multinational to transnational shows the changing connection between the metageography of networks and states. Describing companies as transnational suggests something more than the fact that they have operations in two or more countries, such as a headquarters in France and a factory in Thailand. Instead, the transnational nature of business highlights the strategy employed by businesses to coordinate a variety of assets located in different countries so that they maximize their profits. The bookkeeping exercises of companies such as Google, Amazon, and Starbucks that move profits from an asset in one country to another asset in another country to avoid taxes has created a lot of criticism, and suggests that businesses can use networks to avoid the demands of states.

Contemporary geopolitics tends to emphasize the importance of states. On the other hand, we should recognize that there have been important geopolitical events initiated by businesses. In the mid-1800s the brinksmanship of businessmen eager to expand a market in China for opium led Queen Victoria to sanction the use of the British military to force China to accept the drug. Though the opium trade made money for British business, and helped put tax revenues in British coffers, it had devastating consequences for Chinese society. Another

example are the “Boer Wars” in the late 1800s, which the British Army fought in southern Africa in a conflict catalysed by the actions of Cecil Rhodes, who wanted to profit from gold- and diamond-mining, and needed the help of the British government to annex territory. In the twentieth century businesses continued to convince governments to use force on their behalf. For example, in 1953, the CIA instigated a coup in Iran to overthrow Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh’s government that was nationalizing Western oil interests. Another example is the 1954 CIA-led coup in Guatemala to prevent land reform that would have harmed the United Fruit Company, a private business with close ties to serving President Eisenhower, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA.

These examples from history illustrate the interaction between states and businesses. Today the lines between these two types of geopolitical agents are much more blurred. The very nature of states as geopolitical agents is a blend of territorial politics and economic networks. The US military increasingly uses private military contractors (PMCs) alongside its regular soldiers. The Defense and State Departments (the latter for protection of its diplomatic staff) are the main employers of PMCs, though all 16 intelligence agencies plus the Departments of Homeland Security and Energy hire PMCs. Critics label PMCs “mercenaries” (Scahill, 2007). However, though gun-toting guys in sunglasses may be the most invigorating image of a PMC employee, many of them do humdrum duties such as weapons maintenance and monitoring convoy movements (Isenberg, 2009). The use of PMCs has seen a dramatic increase in recent years. The US employed them in Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and continues to do so in Iraq and Afghanistan. PMCs have also been used in civil wars in Angola and Sierra Leone; “from 1990 to 2000 they were involved in around 80 conflicts (compared to 15 during the period 1950–1989)” (Isenberg, 2009, p. 13). Private contractors have been part of military operations for much of modern history, but their increased use, especially by the US, is seen as a cost-saving strategy. Though whether money is actually saved and the loss of public oversight makes the trend towards PMCs a good thing is debatable (Isenberg, 2009). Also, the need to outsource military activity also raises questions about the ability of the US to sustain its global reach, something we will discuss in the next chapter.

In some states the symbiosis between state and business is tighter. In Pakistan, the military runs a business empire valued at GBP10 billion, making everything from cement to cornflakes through a network of enterprises (Siddiqua, 2007). The Pakistan military controls about one-third of all heavy manufacturing. Enterprises such as shops, banks, and universities in Pakistan are all controlled by the military. The Pakistani military’s business assets often benefit from loans and free

land provided by the state, making any clear distinction between business, the military, and the state meaningless (Siddiq, 2007). The Pakistan state is an aggregate of political, economic, and military agents – many of them with roles that cross such simple distinctions.

The interaction between global business networks and states facilitating economic activity has an impact at the local level. People who live near the assets of transnational businesses may experience the combination of economic and military power. For example, Shell, the oil company, is believed to have spent over \$383 million between 2007 and 2010 protecting its staff in Nigeria. The company gave millions of dollars to the government to pay for Nigerian security forces, while also maintaining its own police force of 1,200 people plus a network of informants (Hirsch and Vidal, 2012). The bulk of this money was spent in the Niger Delta where an insurgency has protested Shell's presence and the lack of economic development opportunities for locals. In other words, Shell is spending money, and with the assistance of the Nigerian government, to make sure profit is made with the minimum of benefit for the local people. The region has also suffered from pollution coming from Shell's facilities. In the words of Celestine Nkabari: "This proves what we in the Niger Delta have known for years – that the air force, the army, the police, they are paid for with Shell money and they are all at the disposal of the company for it to use anyhow it likes" (Hirsch and Vidal, 2012).

It helps to begin thinking about businesses and states as primarily creating different metageographies: economic networks and political territories. However, there has always been an interaction between the two types of geopolitical agents and the geographies they create. Businesses have relied upon states to create internal political order that allows businesses to operate, as well as patrolling sea lanes to make sure trade is possible (Cowen, 2014). On the other hand, states need businesses to create the economic activity that provides for their populations and provides tax revenues. Many types of geographies are created in this interaction.

Networks are neither inherently good nor bad; they are political constructs used for political ends. We rely on networks of global trade, and tend to ignore the violence that allows them to operate (Cowen, 2014). There are other forms of networks relevant to contemporary geopolitics, and we will focus on two. First, we will discuss transnational social movements and their attempts to forge a "progressive" politics that transcends the scale of the state. Second, we will discuss terrorism, and the way it has changed over time to be identified as a transnational threat to states.

Activity

Newspapers, whether online or in print, are usually organized to include a separate “business” section. Look at some stories in this section of a newspaper and see if you can identify aspects of the story that show the operation of networks, other aspects of the story that are about states or places within states, and consider the interaction between networks and territory.

Transnational social movements

A social movement is a group of people organized, as groups of individuals and/or combinations of different groups, to pursue political goals in venues other than state institutions (such as voting). They may come together to promote the interests of certain groups (such as immigrants), or to focus upon a particular issue and goal (e.g. nuclear disarmament), or to challenge societal norms (such as sexuality). Beginning in the 1960s two important changes in social movements have occurred. There has been a growth in transnational social movements, or the organization of social movements to make connections across state boundaries. In addition, and related to the transnationalism of social movements, is a change in the issues that are being addressed, with environmentalism and peace movements being pre-eminent.

The establishment of organized transnational social movements is the result of four related changes or trends (Kriesberg, 1997). A growing trend towards democratization; increasing global integration in economic, political, and social spheres; converging and diffusing values that in turn bring people together in the name of a shared concern or issue that may be seen to be in opposition to other values and goals (e.g. environmentalism versus capitalism); and a proliferation of transnational institutions that facilitate social organization beyond state boundaries. These trends are not necessarily new, but are seen as components of contemporary globalization that have intensified in recent decades. The trends should not be seen in isolation from each other, and are just as much trends creating globalization as they are outcomes of globalization.

Transnational social movements continue globalization trends not only through providing an institutional infrastructure of communications and activity that links people in different states and with different political agendas. It is also a matter of creating identities that focus on the transnational or the global, rather than the national (Kriesberg, 1997, p. 14). But why is such identity formation a form of

geopolitics? Kriesberg identifies five ways in which transnational social movements are able to alter the existing political landscape:

1. Mobilize support for particular policies.
2. Increase participation in the decision-making process.
3. Maintain the public's attention on critical issues.
4. Represent or frame the issues in a particular way.
5. Enact certain policies, or make such policies come about.

In combination, these five themes construct geopolitics as a product and process of mass activity, rather than the purview of elites, politicize many issues other than traditional definitions of "national security," and create scales of political activity that transcend states, creating global connections.

The geopolitics of transnational social movements identified by Kriesberg (1997) explicitly recognizes the importance of geographic scale. Smith (1997) identifies three scales that are targeted, though these should not be seen as being mutually exclusive: individual, state governments, and intergovernmental institutions. The individual is seen as being a geopolitical scale in that their attitudes and behaviour may be changed by the activities of the social movement. For example, eating preferences may be changed by environmental groups who highlight factory farming; or some campaigns ask consumers to boycott products from certain countries because of their political behaviours. Social movements also target states. For example, Greenpeace has sustained a long campaign against Japan because of its whaling practices. Anti-war protestors usually target a particular state to change its geopolitical code. Finally, transnational social movements engage international organizations. The targets may be private companies (such as oil companies) or inter-governmental organizations such as the WTO.

So then what is an act of geopolitics? Smith (1997) identifies particular strategies that are used for the three different scales. At the individual scale, a simple act such as holding a rally in which people are made aware of a particular issue and the impact of their actions is an act of geopolitics. Writing letters to state leaders and politicians is a geopolitical act targeting the state scale. At the scale of intergovernmental institutions, participating in the construction of an international convention would be an example in which a social movement works with formal institutions.

One good example of a social movement playing a role in a formal international institution is the politics behind the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III). The conference ran from 1973 to 1982 and was the basis for the international laws of 1994 that established the territorial seas and

economic resource zones we discussed as the territoriality of the sea in the previous chapter. UNCLOS III ran for so long because each country in the world had some particular concern or issue. In general, the richer countries wanted to ensure the global operation of their navies and fishing fleets, while the poorer countries wanted to make sure they had access to the ocean resources off their coasts. Levering (1997) provides an interesting account of how the conference was facilitated by the actions of two concerned social movements: the Ocean Education Project and the United Methodist Law of the Sea Project, that collectively became known as the Neptune Group.

Both of the social movements in the Neptune Group had a commitment to world governance and came from a liberal Methodist background that promoted US engagement with the world to promote peace and international cooperation (Levering, 1997). The Neptune Group played a crucial role in UNCLOS, acting as “honest broker” between the negotiating states. Specifically, the Neptune Group was able to bring together experts and negotiators and was seen as a source of neutral and objective information. In the words of the Conference president, the Neptune Group:

brought independent experts to meet with delegations, thus enabling us to have an independent source of information on technical issues. They assisted representatives from developing countries to narrow the technical gap between them and their counterparts from developed countries. They also provided us with opportunities to meet away from the Conference, in a more relaxed atmosphere, to discuss some of the most difficult issues confronted by the Conference.

(United Nations, 1982; quoted in Levering, 1997)

In sum, the simple acts of providing objective views and facilitating conversations enabled states to come to an agreement to produce a law of the sea that continues to fundamentally shape the territoriality of our planet.

Globalization and social movements

The anti-globalization movement provides a strong example of the diversity and fluidity of transnational social movements. It has no territorial centre or stable agenda, but is continually changing its methods and goals as a result of the interaction between the diverse number of groups of which it is comprised. Reflecting this lack of hierarchy and its eclecticism, the anti-globalization movement is also known as the Movement of Movements. The anti-globalization movement addresses a range of issues that range from ecological concerns to

protests over economic neo-liberalism, to feminism. Such eclecticism produces no single and stable goal, leading to ridicule from those on the right of the political perspective, and criticism from those with a more traditional and state-centric left-wing agenda. However, its proponents claim that the fluidity of the movement is its very strength; enabling it to continually adjust to the dynamics of economic globalization and simultaneously showing the connections between issues of biodiversity, economic growth, democracy, and social marginalization. Furthermore, its lack of loyalty to a central organization prevents it from compromising on underlying beliefs; a multitude of movements will provide continual criticism, even of the movement itself. The number and diversity of movements creates connections across the globe to promote awareness of the way people in different places are connected by transnational economic and political networks. The movement has come together, though, in the World Social Forum conferences.

The eclectic nature of the World Social Forum (WSF) has been captured by an analysis of the way in which participants self-identify themselves with particular causes and actions. By surveying attendees of the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, sociologists Christopher Chase-Dunn and Matheu Kaneshiro (2009) identified eighteen movements within the movement (see [Table 6.1](#)). A total of 560 respondents identified the types of groups they were most active in, and could list more than one type of group, to show the connection between group-types: human rights/anti-racism (12 per cent), environmental (11 per cent), alternative media/culture (10 per cent), and peace (9 per cent) were the movements with the most activity. By exploring the connectivity of cross-membership a social network map of the interaction between different groups in the WSF can be created (Chase-Dunn and Kaneshiro, 2009) that shows which movements are most central, or form the hub, of the WSF's activity ([Figure 6.2](#)). This map indicates that human rights/anti-racism, environmental, and peace movements form a core of the WSF's activity and agenda. Also, this pattern was found to be stable through the 2007 WSF meeting (Chase-Dunn and Kaneshiro, 2009). (For more information regarding the content of past and future World Social Forums see <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/>, accessed 20 April 2011.)

Table 6.1 *Types of activism at 2005 World Social Forum*

<i>Type of group</i>	<i>Number of selections by respondents (total of 1,298 responses from 560 respondents)</i>	<i>Percentage of total selections</i>
Anti-corporate	43	3

<i>Type of group</i>	<i>Number of selections by respondents (total of 1,298 responses from 560 respondents)</i>	<i>Percentage of total selections</i>
Anti-globalization	68	5
Human rights/anti-racism	161	12
Environmental	144	11
Fair trade	67	5
Peace	113	9
Queer rights	37	3
Feminist	66	5

Adapted from Chase-Dunn and Kaneshiro (2009).

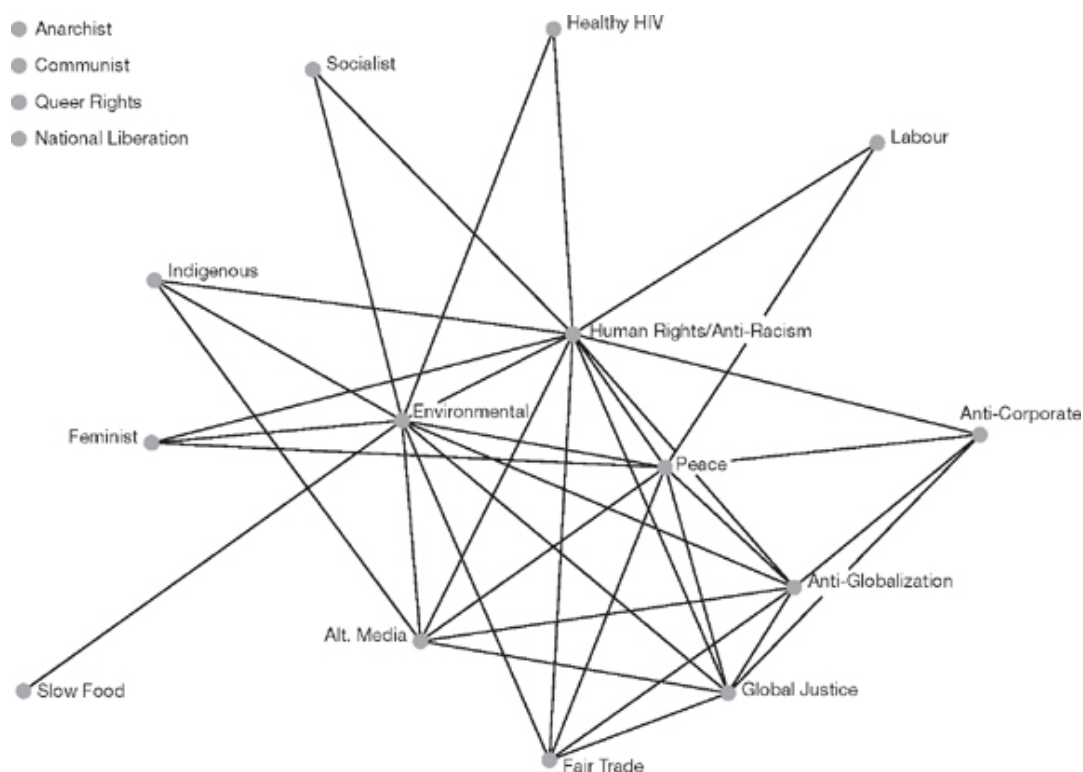


Figure 6.2 Group network connectivity in the World Social Forum.

Box 6.3 Geopolitics of apology and forgiveness

Classic geopolitics is based upon mutual mistrust between states, and national identities that constantly look at past wars as the basis for continued militaristic foreign policies. Military history is all about past glories and failures that serve as “lessons” for continued preparation for war. An

alternative geopolitics is one based upon apology or forgiveness that recognizes the legacy of past geopolitics and the benefits of recognizing their contemporary cost and impact.

British geographer Nick Megoran (2010) has studied the Reconciliation Walk, a grassroots US Evangelical Christian project that retraced the route of the First Crusade. Its purpose was to apologize for the Crusades that took place hundreds of years ago. The actions of this social movement must be understood within the context of President George W. Bush's reference to the war in Iraq against Saddam Hussein as a "crusade" and the fierce reaction that created within Muslim countries. The Reconciliation Walk aimed to address what its own organizers identified as "deep mutual hatred" between Christians and Muslims stemming from a geopolitical event, the Crusades, that took place around 900 years ago. The Walk attempted to follow the geography of the Crusades, stopping for reflection and interaction with the community at key sites, such as battles field.

Megoran's study is part of a broader attempt to change the way geopolitics is conducted, as an academic and a practical exercise. He calls for a pacific geopolitics that would explore:

the ways in which spatialising and ordering the world in imaginative geographies can contribute towards more harmonious relations between states and other human groupings. Pacific geopolitics is thus the study of how ways of thinking geographically about international relations can promote peaceful and mutually enriching human coexistence. Whereas critical geopolitics' focus has been a critique of war, pacific geopolitics would conduct theoretically informed empirical research on peace.

(Megoran, 2010, p. 385)



Figure 6.3 Reconciliation Walk participants praying in Jerusalem.

The geopolitics of apology and forgiveness, in the form of the Reconciliation Walk, is a practical action of a social movement, though one with its own agenda to promote Christian fundamentalism (Megoran, 2010, p. 389). The very notion of forgiveness requires geopolitical thinking that connects people across time and space and builds mutual recognition of the costs of hatred and violence.

The importance of peace movements to the WSF is an indication of resistance to the dominance of geopolitical codes of states that advocate and practice militarism and violent force. By looking at the geopolitics of social movements we can address how peace movements challenge state-based militaristic geopolitics. The ability of contemporary social movements to connect individuals through transnational networks with the goal of challenging states is an example of a politics of scale that opposes the assumptions of classic geopolitics. Also, noting how peace movements are strongly tied to human rights, anti-racist, and environmental movements forces us to contemplate what is meant by “peace” and how peace activism may create a radically different global geopolitical imagination. We will discuss peace movements in greater detail in [Chapter 9](#).

Transnational social movements are an example of the social construction of a geographic feature, a network, that is the means by which politics takes place and, at the same time, the result (or even goal) of that politics. Transnational social networks illustrate the interaction between states and networks. Another form of network that is frequently in the news is the terrorist network, especially those created by al-Qaeda and, later, ISIS. Before exploring terrorism as networked

geopolitics we must discuss the politics of defining terrorism and show how it has changed over time to become transnational.

Definitions of terrorism

The challenge to define terrorism is an impossible one for two reasons. First, terrorism has varied across history and geographical settings to make any one definition an inadequate description of the diversity of reasons for and forms of terrorist activity (Crenshaw, 1981; Laqueur, 1987, pp. 149–150). Second, the definition of terrorism is in itself an act of politics: defining certain acts as terrorist acts makes certain forms of violence, political goals and geopolitical agency illegitimate and so, in reverse, legitimates other forms of violence, politics, and agency. Defining a group as “terrorist” credits the form of violence that they inflict as being somehow “improper,” “horrific,” and “uncivilized.” Calling these terms into question by no means condones the murder of people in the name of politics. Instead, the purpose is to think about how the category “terrorist” helps us to accept other forms of violence as “proper,” “reasonable,” and “civilized.”

Box 6.4 War crimes?

In the documentary *The Fog of War*, former US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara talks of his role as a strategist in the World War II fire-bombing of Japan that killed hundreds of thousands of civilians. In February 1945 one firebombing raid on the German city of Dresden destroyed 15 square kilometers of the inner city. Casualty estimates vary wildly, but recent scholarship puts the figure between 25,000 and 30,000; though some claim the total to be as high as 300,000. Overall, Anglo-American bombing of Germany in World War II killed approximately 400,000 people, about nine times the 43,000 British citizens killed by German raids. Japan also suffered firebombing. Beginning in February 1945, the four conurbations of Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe were targeted. One attack on Tokyo in March destroyed 41 square kilometers and killed an estimated 100,000 people.

In the documentary interview *The Fog of War*, McNamara says that if the US had lost the war he would likely have been tried as a war criminal for his part in the bombing. Was the shared Axis and Allied policy of bombing towns in World War II an act of terrorism? Give an answer now, and reconsider it in light of the discussion of definitions of terrorism below.

Undefined terrorism

In Bruce Hoffman's (1998) accessible introduction to the topic of terrorism he takes great care to describe the diversity of definitions of terrorism. Most telling is the table reproduced below ([Table 6.2](#)), which is a summary analysis of the predominance of particular terms or concepts in 109 definitions of terrorism (Hoffman, 1998, p. 40). I draw attention to this analysis precisely because of the lack of agreement or consistency that it illustrates. The most agreed-upon aspect of terrorism is violence, which appeared in just 84 per cent of the definitions – in other words, 16 per cent of the definitions did not emphasize violence as an important component of terrorism!

The definition of terrorism is, at best, contested and, perhaps more fairly, unclear. However, we can still discern some important geographical elements of terrorism from the features listed in [Table 6.2](#). First, the symbolic nature of terrorist actions that promote the targeting of particular places or buildings. The Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was, for Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, the local physical embodiment of the federal government that they viewed as an “occupying force” violating the freedoms of the American people. Less specifically, Palestinian terrorists target restaurants and buses in a brutal message that says that the public spaces of the state of Israel will never be safe until the rights of the Palestinian people to their own state are recognized (Falah and Flint, 2004).

Second, the goal of terrorism is to expand the geographic scope of a particular conflict in a manner that will, the terrorists hope, benefit their cause. Osama bin Laden made the presence of US troops on the Saudi peninsula a matter that we must all consider, and something that becomes a part of electoral campaigns in Australia, Spain, Great Britain, the US, and beyond. ISIS attacks mean that the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Iraq become an everyday matter for people in the US and European countries. The terrorist's perceived need to reach a broader audience, or expand the scope of “interested” or at least “implicated” parties relates to the marginalization of some groups to the extent that they resort to violence in order to place their situation on the political agenda. However, for marginalized groups to be heard, they must often change the scale at which their situation is discussed or decided. Dominant groups in a particular state may well have no interest in hearing the complaints of the marginalized. Through acts of terrorism, marginalized groups may change the scope of the political debate, making it a regional or global issue, and so forcing the dominant group in the state to at least talk and maybe even address the situation.



Figure 6.4 Dresden after Allied bombing.

Table 6.2 *The problem of defining terrorism*

<i>Definitional element</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
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<i>Definitional element</i>		<i>Frequency (%)</i>
1	Violence, force	83.5
2	Political	65
3	Fear, terror emphasized	51
4	Threat	47
5	(Psychological) effects and (anticipated) reactions	41.5
6	Victim–target differentiation	37.5
7	Purposive, planned, systematic, organized action	32
8	Method of combat, strategy, tactic	30.5
9	Extranormality, in breach of accepted rules, without humanitarian constraints	30
10	Coercion, extortion, induction of compliance	28
11	Publicity aspect	21.5
12	Arbitrariness; impersonal, random character; indiscrimination	21
13	Civilians, non-combatants, neutrals, outsiders as victims	17.5
14	Intimidation	17
15	Innocence of victims emphasized	15.5
16	Group, movement, organization as perpetrator	14
17	Symbolic aspect, demonstration to others	13.5
18	Incalculability, unpredictability, unexpectedness of occurrence of violence	9
19	Clandestine, covert nature	9
20	Repetitiveness; serial or campaign character of violence	7
21	Criminal	6
22	Demands made on third parties	4

Source: Bruce Hoffman (1998, p. 40), Schmid et al. (1988, pp. 5–6).

Third, terrorist groups claim, in the words of Hoffman (1998, p. 43), to be performing political altruism. In other words, terrorists believe they are serving or speaking for a group who have been marginalized or oppressed and deserve a better political deal. A more exact understanding of the terrorist would be as a political geographic altruist. The motivation for terrorism is perceived political injustices, but these are inseparable from particular geographic organizations of power relations (see [Chapter 1](#), for a reminder). This is most clear in the case of terrorism motivated by nationalism; the goal is a reorganization of space to create a new independent nation-state. The emergence of al-Qaeda rested upon the marginalization of Arab influence in the world: specifically, for them, the violence meted out by Israel upon the Palestinians, the exploitation of oil reserves by Western companies, and the presence of US forces across the Arab world. The

geographic problem was, broadly speaking, a “colonial” relationship that, al-Qaeda argued, could be relieved by removing the US presence and eradicating the state of Israel. The killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011 did not change the fundamental basis for al-Qaeda’s existence. Instead, the rise of ISIS, with the relative waning of al-Qaeda’s influence, made territorial control even more of an issue. The stated aim of ISIS to form a new caliphate is a desire to create a territorial political entity (Figure 6.5). The areas of territory they do control in Syria and Iraq are venues for ISIS killings in order to establish control over laws and behaviour. Such brutality may be called terrorism, but it is also just another political expression of violence by a group to assert its influence over a piece of territory. Classic theories and definitions of the state emphasize that it is an institution that allows a dominant group to use violence to control the people living in a certain territory. In most states only the recognized government has the right to use force, for example by arresting people or controlling the ability to demonstrate. Though it is not a formal recognized state, the use of violence to control territory is part of the strategy of ISIS. For them, the goal of territorial control is a form of altruism – the creation of a new Islamic state that defeats both Western influence and apostates. The motivation behind terrorism, and hence the possibility for lasting resolution, can only be fully understood through a recognition of the territorial expression of the politics at hand.

Though no single definition of terrorism is possible, the features of the definitions reflect the geography of the causes, and means of terrorism. Terrorism is an act of geopolitics that is motivated by the spatial manifestation of power, uses geography (in terms of symbolic places and expanding the scope of the conflict) in its tactics, and requires a rearrangement of existing political geographies if it is to be successful or peacefully resolved.

You’re a terrorist ... I’m not

In Chapter 3 we introduced the role of the representations of people, places, and states as an important part of geopolitics. Defining terrorism is also an act of representation that, by restricting the label “terrorist” to a few, creates a wider set of actions and agents that are “non-terrorist.” The key question in these acts of representation is the state: some definitions of terrorism are purposeful in emphasizing “non-state” or “sub-national” agents as those who commit terrorism, hence excluding the state as an agent of terrorism (Flint, 2005). Criticizing the omission of consideration of some state actions as terrorism does not imply that every state, throughout history, is a “terrorist.” However, restricting terrorism to “sub-national” groups does prevent certain state actions at particular times being designated as acts of violence aimed at instilling fear into the population for

political reasons. Such state repression is usually undertaken to establish and maintain control by throttling political opposition. History would, it seems, allow for certain state actions to be seen as the use of violence to create a climate of fear and political compliance.

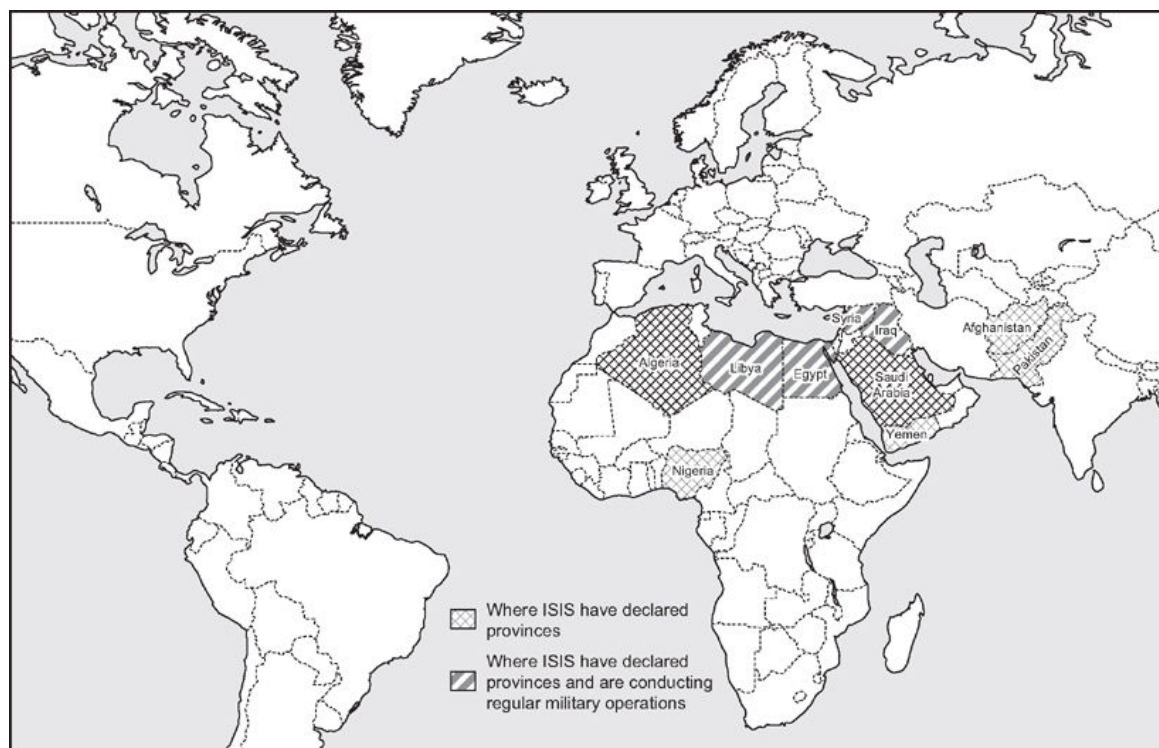


Figure 6.5 ISIS territorial control.

Adolf Hitler’s actions in establishing Nazi Germany and Josef Stalin’s political purges are seen as “classic” examples of the state becoming a “police state” to squash any political dissent and opposition. The early example of these states was continued as part of the domestic aspect of the geopolitical codes of states within the Cold War: from the McCarthy trials in the US in the 1950s which brought the power of the state judiciary to bear upon anyone proclaiming a left-wing political agenda and forced people to fear for their careers and reputations, to the secret police forces of the Communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe. The geopolitics of the Cold War constructed domestic “threats” or “enemies within” who were hunted by the state and often tortured and killed, one of the goals being to create a public atmosphere of fear that it was believed would prevent political opposition (see [Box 6.5](#)). Contemporary regimes in North Korea, Syria, and many others, some defined as “allies” in the US War on Terror, are guilty of the same actions for the same goals, to varying degrees.

Box 6.5 The School of the Americas

During the Cold War the US established the innocuous-sounding International Military Education and Training Program (IMET). The Program trained over 500,000 foreign officers and enlisted personnel. The main campus, the School of the Americas, was relocated to Fort Benning, Georgia in 1984. The title of the outfit illustrates that much of the program's regional focus was Central and South America. Defenders of the program claim that it disseminated "American values" through trips to Disneyland and sporting events. However, the product of the school is far from the images of Disney. The school trained soldiers in "low- intensity conflict." In other words, not how to fight an invading or hostile army, but how to prevent counter-insurgency in some of the poorest and most polarized countries in the world ruled by undemocratic and brutal military regimes, such as Honduras, Haiti, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Panama, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The School of Americas includes a "Hall of Fame" displaying portraits of "successful" graduates. Infamous would be a more accurate description. To quote Chuck Call of the Washington Office on Latin America, "In El Salvador, 48 of 69 people named in the UN Truth Commission Report as human rights violators, [were] graduates of the school. Half of the people named in a recent report done by NGOs of alleged human rights violators in Columbia, 128 of 247, [were] graduates of the School of the Americas. This is at such a level that you can't ignore it. And what's important about that is that it associates the US military with these abusive forces." Defenders of IMET admit a "few bad apples." Critics of the program argue that the US trains torturers and killers targeting groups and people who support social reform.

The quotes and information in this box are from a video put out by the American Defense Monitor in 1994 entitled *School of the Americas: At War with Democracy?* The transcript is available at <http://webarchive.loc.gov/all/20111211050138>.

In what way does state sponsored torture and oppression fit the definition of terrorism, and in what way can it be argued to be something other than terrorism? How are your answers moulded not by what is done but by who (a government agency) is doing it?

Ahmad's (2000, pp. 94–100) definition of terrorism, purposefully constructed to allow for the inclusion of state actions, has another type of state violence in

mind. Ahmad is referring to the actions of Israel, against the Palestinians, and India and Pakistan in the conflict over Kashmir. In these instances the military wing of the state is using violence in a purposeful and systematic manner to quash nationalist movements that would alter the current boundaries of the state; and in the case of some of the rhetoric and interpretations of the Palestine–Israel conflict, the very existence of the state of Israel. Accusations, inquiries and revelations still remain over the illegal use of force by the British government against the Irish Republican Army (IRA). When the territorial integrity of the state is challenged, the state may go beyond the realms of legality to counter national separatism. In these situations, violence, diffusing fear through a wider population, and political goals (all common features of definitions of terrorism) are part of the calculations and actions of states. Terrorism? Finally, what of the deliberate and sustained bombing of civilian targets in World War II, as discussed earlier? The goal of these displays of military might was to sap civilian morale and cause surrender. Terrorism?

History of modern terrorism: waves of terrorism and their geography

In a useful though necessarily simplified exercise, Rapoport (2001) has identified four separate but connected “waves” or periods of modern terrorism. Describing these waves offers not only a brief history of terrorism, but also highlights the changing geography of terrorism (Flint, 2005), a change that has important implications for the contemporary politics of the War on Terror (see [Table 6.3](#)).

Table 6.3 Geography of waves of terrorism

<i>Period</i>	<i>Terrorist groups</i>	<i>Geography</i>
1880–1914	Anarchists	Within states
1920–1960	Nationalists	Within states decolonization
1960–1990	Nationalist ideological	Internationalization
1990–present	Religious	Transnational “cosmic”?

The goals and arena of the first two waves of terrorism were focused upon one particular geopolitical scale, the nation-state. The first wave occurred between, roughly, the 1880s and the beginning of World War I in 1914 and was motivated by the piecemeal political reforms of the Russian Tsar hoping to preclude more radical and revolutionary change. The goal of the terrorists, loosely defined as “anarchists,” was to mobilize the citizens of Russia towards revolution as they

feared the population would be placated by the reforms: in other words, the terrorists wanted to change the way that the Russian state was governed. These “anarchist” politics diffused, with limited success, to other parts of Europe. The geography of this first wave was framed by an understanding that the state was the source of political change and so bounded the scope of action. Though the ideology of the terrorists, and the way they conducted terrorism, diffused from Russia into parts of Europe, the geography of the first wave of terrorism was restricted to within state boundaries.

To a lesser degree, the first wave of terrorism also reflected an increase in nationalist politics. The assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo by a nationalist sparked World War I that in turn catalysed many political and social changes. One of these changes was the explosion of demands for national self-determination, or the desire for people to create and belong to national communities synonymous with independent and sovereign states.

The second wave of terrorism (approximately 1920–1960) was dominated by the political geography of ending imperialism, or decolonization, and the establishment of nation-states. Terrorism was, in some cases, deemed a necessary and useful strategy to force colonial powers to leave and, in a related politics, define which social and ethnic groups would play the key roles in defining the new state. Examples of this type of terrorism include the Irgun in Israel, angry towards the British government’s restrictions on Jewish in-migration, and the Mau Mau in Kenya. The geography of this wave was similar to that of the first; the arena and goal of terrorism was the nation-state, in this case to establish a new one rather than change the politics of existing states. However, more so than the first wave, the impetus towards national self-determination was an agenda that spanned the globe.

The third wave of terrorism (1960s–1990s) maintained a nationalist anti-colonial agenda, but with an additional ideological twist. Nationalist groups who saw the project of decolonization and national self-determination as incomplete and unfair resorted to terrorism. Two prominent examples are the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Northern Ireland conflict, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its claims for a Palestinian state. The IRA had witnessed the decline of the British Empire across the globe, but called for the process to continue and allow for a united Ireland free of British rule. The PLO had witnessed the establishment of a new nation-state on the territory of Palestine, but it was the state of Israel. In addition to the politics of nationalism was a new component of radicalism, especially in the emergence of terrorist groups in Western Europe and the US motivated by Marxist ideology. For example, the Baader-Meinhof gang in Germany, the Red Brigade in Italy, and the Weather Underground in the US were all motivated by left-wing ideology.

However, the geography of terrorist activity was significantly different from the second wave. In the third wave a greater internationalization of terrorist activity became evident. Terrorist groups were still predominantly based within particular states, and were focused upon change at the scale of the state, but they began to operate and cooperate across state boundaries. The PLO is a good example, using the tactic of hijacking international passenger flights to increase the geographical scope of its activity and generate an international audience for its political message. As aircraft run by British companies sat on the tarmac of foreign airports under the control of Palestinian terrorists and surrounded by non-British security forces, the issue of Palestinian self-determination became more than a problem for Israel and the Arabs. Perhaps the most poignant act was the 1972 Munich Olympic Games when Palestinian terrorists entered the Olympic village, a symbol of international respect and peace, and killed eleven Israeli athletes. Claims of the “whole world watching” were exactly the geographical outcome the terrorists were aiming for, the Palestine–Israel conflict became a matter of international importance and diplomacy.

The second form of internationalization in the third wave was the growing cooperation between terrorist groups based in, and identified with, different states. Training and weapons exchanges became a part of terrorism, and the networks of terrorism became an international rather than national phenomenon. Laqueur (1987) relates the internationalization of terrorism to the Cold War, and the growth in the 1970s of state sponsorship of groups originally defined by their territorial and nationalist demands. Terrorist groups perceived internationalization as a means of widening the scope of the conflict and hence increasing the “audience” for their cause. However, it also facilitated state-versus-state conflict. Various governments attempted to gain influence in a particular dispute by supporting different factions of the same cause; such as Syria, Libya, Iraq, and other states funding separate Palestinian groups. The outcome of state sponsorship was to make terrorism “almost respectable,” with a sufficient majority of states at the UN preventing any effective international coordination of counter-terrorist actions (Laqueur, 1987, p. 269). The Soviet Union and Libya were significant suppliers of weapons and funds to terrorist groups, but in the 1980s Syria and Iran became increasingly important (Laqueur, 1987, p. 295). Despite the nuclear agreement with Iran, the US and its allies still accuse Iran of supporting Hezbollah.

The fourth wave of terrorism (1990s–present) portends a much more dramatic geographical change with severe implications for both acts of terrorism and the effectiveness and implications of counterterrorism. For Rapoport, the fourth wave of terrorism is the period of religious terrorism, though terrorism motivated by nationalism is far from gone. The geography of goals and beliefs of religious

terrorists goes beyond international connections. Instead, Rapoport believes that religious terrorism is creating a new geography that “transcends the state.” The argument suggests that the state, as a political agent, is irrelevant to this form of terrorism. Religious terrorist groups are not seeking control of the state (as ideological terrorists were) or seeking to create a new state (as terrorists motivated by nationalism were). Instead, religious terrorists are transcending or bypassing the state in their belief that they are acting out the wishes of a spiritual deity, rather than performing a form of violent politics centred upon the control of a secular institution, the state.

Groups who utilize a fundamentalist view of the belief system to justify acts of terrorism have tainted all the major religions – Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Buddhist (Juergensmeyer, 2000). In other words, religious terrorism is a contemporary global phenomenon, and not limited to one particular religion, as politically motivated claims against Islam, especially, suggest. Religious terrorists are fighting a “cosmic war;” a war of good against evil in which the adjudicator is God or another form of supreme being, and the terrorists are merely the soldiers conducting God’s will (Juergensmeyer, 2000). The battle, in the case of religious terrorism, is for people’s souls and not a secular political agenda. The state may be the source of acts deemed “evil” but the state is not the answer, for that one has to turn to salvation and a different world.

Terrorism motivated by religious fundamentalism is a particularly dangerous form of terrorism. It is more likely to invoke terrorist acts that produce a large number of casualties and be less sympathetic to overtures of conflict resolution than the previous waves of terrorism (Juergensmeyer, 2000). Why? To understand this dreary prediction, we have to consider the way the state has dominated both geopolitical practice and analysis throughout the twentieth century. Geopolitical actors have seen the state to be the key structure that both constrains or motivates their actions, but it has also been seen as the key “prize:” the geopolitical structure that, if controlled or changed, will reap political benefits. By waging a “cosmic war” religious terrorists have shattered this essential geopolitical assumption of the twentieth century, confounding policy makers and academics in the process.

Religious terrorism, by fighting a “cosmic war,” transcends the state as an arena for politics: the goal is to serve God’s will and fight “evil;” essentially, the battle is of a spiritual nature and not secular. If that is the case, then victims are “infidels” or “sinners” whose death will, in the minds of the terrorists, please God. With these beliefs, religious terrorists do not need to make the political calculations of secular terrorists in which the number and type of casualties have to be balanced – enough to “shock” but not too many to alienate “sympathizers.” For religious terrorists, their actions are part of one sort of Armageddon or

another, and not the bloody part of a wider political process hence the lack of constraint on the number of casualties.

The second implication of the “cosmic war” thesis is that the state is no longer seen as the key geopolitical arbiter. The state as a structure that could enable terrorists and their sympathizers by providing political concessions, or even conceding defeat, is deemed irrelevant by religious terrorists. The question no longer becomes a matter of harassing politicians to address terrorists’ concerns, as is usually the goal of nationalist-separatist terrorists. Instead, the belief is that the state is the embodiment of the evil that, following God’s will, needs to be destroyed. Again, restraint is not an issue, and the likelihood of large-scale horrifying attacks is increased. For example, Timothy McVeigh did not blow up the Murrah Federal Building, including the day-care centre, to bring representatives of the US government to the negotiating table. He killed what he saw as agents of evil destroying a “way of life” defined, if loosely, by religious beliefs. For religious terrorists, the state is an actor that needs to be destroyed and not negotiated with. The structure is spiritual and “cosmic,” enabling acts of “martyrdom” beyond constraint, if you perceive yourself to be acting on God’s will. In the case of ISIS, the regular use of beheadings and the destruction of religious artifacts are both examples in which international norms and laws are seen as irrelevant to their religious agenda.

But wait a minute. Does religious terrorism really “transcend” the state? There are good reasons to qualify such a claim. Two strands of argument can be made: religious terrorists still use or need states, and the goals of religious terrorism are still related to the state as the key geopolitical structure. The identification of Afghanistan as the “home” or “base” of al-Qaeda immediately after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 is testimony to the relationship between some terrorist groups using religion as their motivation and the need for the protection and sponsorship that can be offered by territorially sovereign states. The ability of ISIS to recruit people from European countries through a network of communication and transport is also made feasible by its control of territory in Iraq and Syria where, they claim, young Muslims can find a better life. In the next section we will discuss the relationship between terrorist networks and sovereign states at length. At the moment, it is enough to refer to ISIS’s twin strategy of controlling territory and using a network to commit terrorism across the globe.

The second question is whether the goals of religiously motivated terrorism transcend the state. For example, interviews with Jewish settlers in the West Bank, with their recourse to scripture for motivation and justification, make for compelling reading (Juergensmeyer, 2000). The belief that the land of Israel was “given” to the Jews by God is clearly part of the consciousness that motivates the killing of both secular Jews and Arabs who are deemed to betray or threaten this

“return” of Israel to the Jews. But what of the goal? The goal is the establishment of state sovereignty across a particular territory, known as the West Bank or Judaea-Samaria depending on the perspective and agenda. In the British Isles, the conflict in Northern Ireland is usually portrayed as a nationalist struggle, yet Juergensmeyer (2000) emphasizes the religious vitriol between the Protestant unionists and the Catholic republicans. Again, perhaps motivation is being confused with goals. Both sides have agendas regarding the territorial extent of Irish and British sovereignty.

The final issue in discussing whether religious terrorism transcends the state refers to the role of state as arbiter in political disputes. The thesis of “cosmic war” rests upon the terrorist’s perception that God is judging their actions and will provide the subsequent rewards (Juergensmeyer, 2000). But, in some cases, the state has a role to play in evaluating and delivering the terrorist’s demands. This is most evident, perhaps, in the case of the United States where the assassination of doctors performing legal abortions is the extreme manifestation of Christian-right lobbying and protest to change the laws of the land and ban abortions. With an increasing number of senators and representatives in Washington supporting a ban on abortion it is not inconceivable that access to abortion will be restricted further and even banned. Whether this would be a “victory for terrorism” is a matter of debate. The point is that if such a change in government policy was to be legislated, the goals of terrorists motivated by Christian fundamentalism would have been achieved by the actions of the state.

In summary, terrorism motivated by religious beliefs does appear to be experiencing a surge in activity across the globe and all the major religions. Religious terrorism is creating a geography that is different from those of the previous waves, as the state plays a less central role. Resort to the scale of a “cosmic war” makes religious terrorists less chained to the opportunities and constraints that exist when the state is seen as the key geopolitical structure. This new geography of structure and agency has implications for the severity of terrorist acts and the possibilities for conflict resolution. However, the state is still an essential scale in the calculations of religious terrorists, whether as a strategic territorial haven or as the target of political goals. To understand religious terrorism it is useful to think of two separate but closely related geographies: motivation is sought at the “cosmic scale” while goals and actions are still tied to the scale of the state.

Activity

Return to bin Laden's *fatwa*, described in [Chapter 2](#) as a geopolitical code. Define the "spiritual" elements of the code. In what sense do they relate to Juergensmeyer's notion of a "cosmic war"? In what sense is the code focused upon territorial issues that can be interpreted through the political geography of state sovereignty? In what ways, if any, do the spiritual and territorial elements of the code interact? Can you find statements that show similarities or differences between bin Laden's *fatwa* and contemporary ISIS leaders?

The importance of religious terrorism in contemporary geopolitics has forced policy-makers and academics to rethink the taken-for-granted understanding of geopolitics as interstate politics. Hence, it requires us to focus upon terrorism and counterterrorism as involving two, perhaps incongruous, understandings of the world. So, we turn to the metageographies of terrorism and counterterrorism in the next section to show how geopolitics is the interaction between territoriality and the construction of networks.

Metageographies of terrorism

We have already discussed the metageography of nation-states in [Chapter 4](#). The metageography of a network contains two important components, nodes and conduits. The political outcomes of the network are a product of the actions of the people located at different nodes and the way they facilitate flows between nodes. For example, for a terrorist network to function, money, people, weapons, explosives and other equipment, and information must move from node to node. The different nodes in a network will have different functions: training, gathering information, planning, finance, and execution of terrorist acts, for example. Terrorist networks are organized to minimize the amount of contact between nodes so that if one node is identified and engaged by counter-terrorist forces the whole network is not disrupted (Flint, 2003a). Terrorist groups have developed networks in this way over a number of years. For example, the IRA operated different cells of bombers on the British mainland without them knowing of each others' existence. Al-Qaeda was a different model, a network of loosely affiliated movements; perhaps best thought of as an "idea" or common cause rather than as an "organization" with its implications of centralized control and bureaucratic hierarchy. The connections between those who actually commit attacks in the US and Europe, for example, in the name of ISIS, and the leaders of the organization, seem even looser than in the case of al-Qaeda.

An abstract model of a terrorist network requires the definition of particular nodes (commonly referred to as “cells”) and the connections (or flows) between them. A terrorist attack requires successful cooperation between cells located across the globe. What are the types of cells in a terrorist network? In what types of places are different types of cells located? How are the cells connected? These questions require the combination of the architecture of networks and the geography of places.

First, the structure of the network must be understood. What may be called “core nodes” are the cells that provide the highest level of planning and purpose of the network. “Peripheral nodes” are the cells that undertake the attacks, the bombers, hijackers, kidnappers, etc. In between are “junction nodes” that translate the plans into action by coordinating funding, training, recruitment, and equipping of the “peripheral nodes.” Identifying and destroying the “junction nodes” will maximize the disruption of the network (Hoffman, 2002) because they are the most connected of all the nodes.

To target “junction nodes” they must first be located. The intersection of networks and territory determines particular categories of places that are most suitable for the different types of nodes. Core nodes may be located in territories where state authority is either weak or sympathetic to the terrorists’ ideology: ISIS control of areas of Syria and Iraq, for example. On the other hand, peripheral nodes must exist and operate in relatively exposed spaces, or those where security is high: airports, borders, secure government and public buildings, etc. The nature of peripheral nodes and the environment in which they must operate makes their “appearance” brief. Also, though destroying a peripheral node will prevent a terrorist attack, the impact on the whole network is limited.

The junction nodes are not only the most connected in the network but also the most exposed; they must have a degree of permanence in relatively exposed spaces. Junction nodes must coordinate the logistics of the network, contacting forgers, arms salesmen, smugglers, financiers, etc. To maintain such contacts requires a relatively stable presence in border zones and cities where security forces may be able to establish surveillance and enforcement presence. In other words, they are the most vulnerable and most important nodes in the network.

Terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman’s (2002) identification of a hierarchy of al-Qaeda operatives does not explicitly address the geography of the network, but does point to the differential role of particular nodes. Hoffman identifies four levels of “operational styles.” First is the professional cadre: the well-funded and “most dedicated, committed and professional element” of the group who are tasked with the most important missions. Second are the “trained amateurs” who may well be recruited from other terrorist organizations and have received some training. Their funding is limited and they are charged with “open-ended”

missions, e.g. target US commercial aviation rather than a specific target. Third, are the local walk-ins: locally based individuals and groups who claim they are acting in the name of ISIS. Fourth are the “like-minded” insurgents, guerillas and terrorists: the beneficiaries of financial support or “spiritual guidance” from ISIS leaders.

Hoffman’s hierarchy provides clues to the spatial organization of a terrorist network. Key operatives are trained at particular nodes, and have access to money generated and distributed through another set of nodes. The “trained amateurs” have access to some training nodes but are denied the support of other nodes, especially finance, and so display less connectivity than the “professional cadre.” Local logistical support can also be “outsourced” to the “like-minded,” preventing the need for all support to come from what could be termed an ISIS network.

What are the implications of such a network organization for counterterrorism? Hoffman’s recommendations reflect an implicit recognition of a hierarchy of nodes in a network. The first recommendation is to target “mid-level leaders” as “Policies aimed at removing these mid-level leaders more effectively disrupt control, communications, and operations up and down the chain of command” (Hoffman, 2002, p. 21). In other words, these leaders staff important nodes in the network, that facilitate the combination of plans and resources that make a terrorist attack happen. In network terms, Hoffman is proposing the targeting of a junction node that once gone negates the efficacy of all other nodes.

Hoffman’s second recommendation is to “De-legitimize – do not just arrest or kill – the top leaders of terrorist groups” (Hoffman, 2002, p. 22). The argument being that leaders do more than coordinate a network: they give ideological purpose to its existence. By portraying the leader as corrupt or hypocritical, the ideological glue binding the network together may loosen. For example, in addition to killing bin Laden, the US repeatedly showed images of him “unkempt” and questioned the nature of his arranged marriages. He was still being delegitimized after his death. ISIS leaders are often portrayed as corrupt and vicious thugs who violate the teachings of Islam.

The third recommendation is to “Focus on disrupting support networks and trafficking activities” (Hoffman, 2002, p. 22). The terrorist requires a network of support; if these supporting connections are disrupted (and they may be easier to identify and arrest) then the final node of the network is starved of what it needs. ISIS was able to support its activities by seizing territory in Syria that housed oil production facilities. It then created a network of truck routes to supply countries with the oil. While terrorist attacks are cheap (the multiple bomb attacks in London in July 2005 are estimated to have cost just \$15,000), funding an insurgency is more expensive (Crane, 2015). Estimates for the number of ISIS

fighters range from about 30,000 to 80,000, with members being paid on average an estimated \$100 a month (Crane, 2015). ISIS also has the costs of supporting police, health, and education functions within the territory it controls. Where does this money come from? One estimate is that ISIS earned around \$480 million in 2015 from oil sales (Crane, 2015). In addition, it raises money through the standard state practice of “taxation,” though in this case it takes the form of extortion by ISIS members. Who buys the oil? This is disputed. Countries do not want to admit buying from ISIS. However, the Syrian government bought an estimated 20,000 barrels per day from ISIS in 2015. It is also suspected that Turkey, the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and parts of Syria not controlled by ISIS are in the market (Crane, 2015). Air strikes targeting production facilities and supply routes, as well as political pressure on buyers, have been used to disrupt the oil component of ISIS’s financial network.

Hoffman’s fourth recommendation is to “Establish a dedicated counter-intelligence center specifically to engage terrorist reconnaissance” (Hoffman, 2002, p. 23). Reconnaissance may either be the sole task of a particular node or one of the tasks of the ultimate perpetrators, but it requires a degree of visibility at what is likely to be a well-policed location. These last two counterterrorism recommendations recognize that certain nodes are more vulnerable than others, and make for more profitable counter-terrorism.

It is not just the function or type of node that is crucial; it is also the geographic context in which it operates. For example, Hoffman’s (2002) recognition of reconnaissance activities is given further import because of the need for a terrorist to spend time in a well-policed location. The coordinating role of mid-level leaders may require a certain fixity and visibility at a particular location that abets counterterrorism. On the flip side, the ideological function of leaders allows them to retreat to geographical areas that are hard to police; the tribal areas of Pakistan, for example. Finally, the merging of terrorist networks with other criminal activities, such as smuggling, requires terrorist networks to operate in border zones that may facilitate counterterrorism. The geography of the terrorist network is laid over maps of policed territories, and the variation in the level of policing across space. Terrorists try to locate nodes with this geography of policing in mind. Counterterrorist agencies try to identify where nodes are forced to become the most visible.

Terrorists have created a metageography of the terrorist network in order to fight power organized in a different and established metageography, territorial sovereign states (Flint, 2003a, 2003b). In the first three waves of terrorism, networks were mainly organized within a particular state, hence the jurisdiction of counterterrorist forces overlay the spatial extent of the network. However, during the third wave of terrorism this geographical relationship began to change

as training, especially, was conducted in foreign countries. Cooperation between states (such as that between France and Spain to counter ETA) was relatively easy as they were neighbours with a common interest against the terrorist group. The internationalization of the PLO was a different matter, operating in either states or territories that did not facilitate cooperation between states. The current War on Terror has made the situation much harder for states. The goals of al-Qaeda and ISIS are hard to discern and the geography of the network has been difficult to identify. Even when it appeared that operating cells within the US were identified, some of these allegations have not stood up to judicial scrutiny.



Figure 6.6 War on Terror.

Incongruous geographies?

The larger metageographic point is that in order to counter a terrorist network, the United States has had to conquer sovereign territory (Flint, 2003b); the geopolitics of state territoriality and networks clash. The methods of terrorism and counterterrorism construct very different, even incongruous, geographies that have implications for the success of counterterrorism. States must challenge networks by controlling sovereign territory. More than just being inefficient, this may actually be a counter-productive counterterrorism as it increases the presence of US forces in other countries. As a result, bin Laden's *fatwa* becomes prophetic, and ISIS gains the ability to portray itself as the "defender of Islam."

The primary purpose of the invasion of Afghanistan and the overthrow of the Taliban regime was the disruption of al-Qaeda bases: a sovereign state was invaded to destroy the nodes of a network. The US's territorially based response to the attacks of 11 September 2001 reinforced the rhetoric of al-Qaeda that views the United States as conducting a global "crusade" against Muslims. The strategy of controlling territory to combat a network not only reinforced the perceptions of al-Qaeda sympathizers that the US is on a global mission, but has also relocated US troops and made them potential targets (refer back to al-Qaeda's geopolitical code on p. 73). Figure 6.7 shows the extension of US bases into central Asia immediately after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and the subsequent increased presence in Africa.

The same strategy was used to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq, though subsequently President George Bush's administration admitted there were no connections between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein was portrayed as a ruler who was using the territorial sovereignty of Iraq to facilitate the maintenance of the al-Qaeda network. Justification for the war rested upon the need to invade the sovereign territory of Iraq to disrupt a network that had some poorly defined connection with Iraq, and that may use those connections to conduct further attacks within the sovereign territory of the United States. Simply put, the US argued that disrupting a terrorist network required the military invasion and occupation of sovereign territory. The idea of Iraq as a single sovereign space collapsed through an insurgency that ultimately resulted in the rise of ISIS. The US plan of occupation leading to a new government, and hence control over an existing sovereign space, has been shattered, and now multiple groups, including ISIS, vie for control of segments of Iraq's territory.

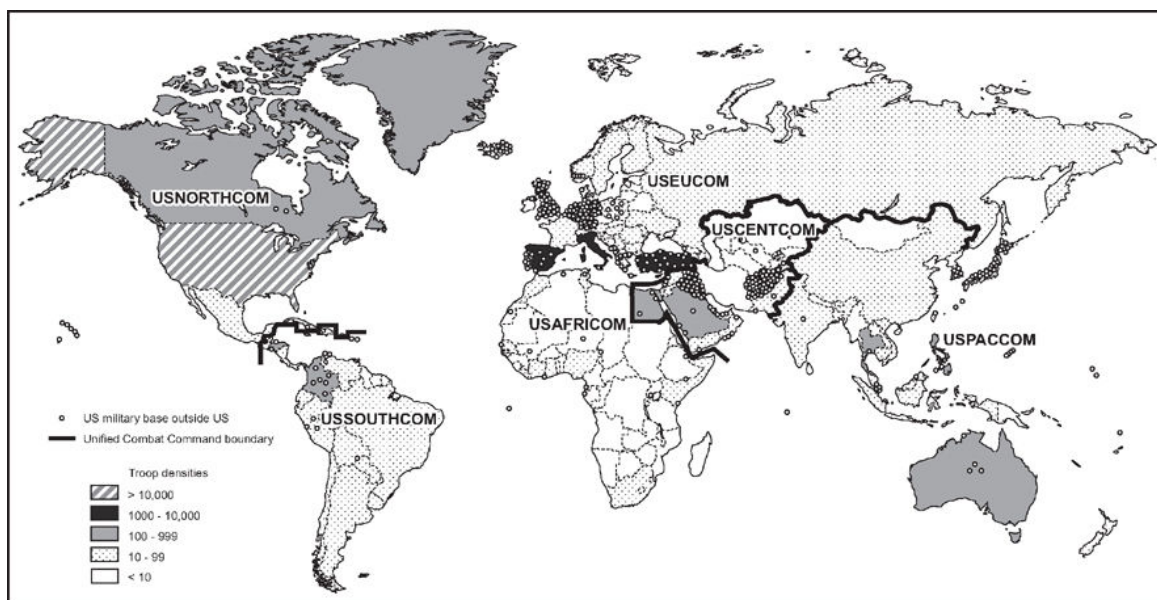


Figure 6.7 Geography of US bases.

Invading a country is a counterterrorism strategy based on the metageography of territory. It is also evident that the War on Terror is using less territorial tactics to counter the terrorist networks of al-Qaeda and, later, ISIS. First, cooperation with other countries has met with some success as arrests of alleged terrorists have been made in Pakistan and Indonesia, for example. In the wake of the November 2015 ISIS attacks in Paris, cooperation between the security agencies of different European police forces led to a series of arrests in Belgium. Less conventional, and with greater geopolitical implications, is the use of aterritorial weaponry to target alleged terrorists in other sovereign spaces. However, the operation to kill bin Laden exposed the geopolitical complexity of such an approach. Supporters of bin Laden and some other groups in Pakistan have criticized the US for breaching Pakistan's territorial sovereignty. The weaponry of drones, both to observe but also to attack, has allowed the United States to be "present" in accessible areas without a physical military capability "on the ground." Though initiated by President George W. Bush, the rate of drone attacks, especially in Pakistan, increased during President Barack Obama's administration. Drones are operated from afar, often the control room is in the United States, and they rely upon the judgment of an observer seeing remote images on a screen. The use of drone or remote weapons suggests that warfare has reached a new threshold in which traditional territorial constraints are increasingly irrelevant. This is most obvious in the case of cyberwarfare, the last form of network geopolitics we will discuss.

Box 6.6 Sovereignty and counterterrorism

The stunning news on 1 May 2011 that Osama bin Laden had been killed in a house in Abbottabad, Pakistan soon turned into a series of geopolitical questions that centered upon territory and sovereignty. The government of Pakistan was embarrassed by the fact that bin Laden had been "hiding in broad daylight," though in reality behind the walls of a compound, in a town that was also the site of the Pakistani Military Academy. Questions were asked about the extent of bin Laden's "support network," or who in Pakistan knew of his presence. Allegations about the complicity of the Pakistani state, especially the Pakistan intelligence service (Inter-services Intelligence or ISI), were made. The suggestion being that, at best, Pakistan was unable to effectively police its territory or, at worst, was providing territorial sanctuary to the world's most wanted terrorist.

Protest in Pakistan revolved around the question of the violation of sovereignty that the US had enacted in an operation that involved a helicopter attack by special forces. For a sense of Pakistani discontent imagine the reverse situation: a Pakistani helicopter landing in a US or European suburb and commandos conducting a killing with no consideration that they may be brought before the law. To reduce popular protest the Pakistani government made some claims that it was not informed about the operation, though former President Musharraf stated that he had made an agreement with the US that such an attack was permissible if and when bin Laden's location was identified. Greater questions regarding sovereignty were raised when some reports claimed that a supporting US force was on hand in case the operational team needed to "fight its way out," presumably including a potential confrontation with the Pakistani military.

The picture has changed with the emergence of ISIS. Their ability to control relatively large areas of territory has limited the possibilities for military action. In response, the US is using its political and financial power to encourage and enable the weak government of Iraq to create a viable fighting force. In January 2016 the Iraq Army, with support from the US, liberated the city of Ramadi from ISIS control. In addition, the US and its allies, as well as Russia with its contrary goals, have continued to use drone and fighter-bomber airstrikes. However, despite the issue becoming a matter of US partisan politics, the likelihood of launching a ground war of the size of the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions is remote. ISIS's de facto control of territory, and the lingering cost of US military interventions in the wake of the September 2001 attacks, has meant that networks of political and military influence are the current means of the US's anti-ISIS geopolitical code. ISIS may not be a sovereign power as it is not recognized by the international community of states, but its control of territory has complicated the ability of the US and European powers at risk from terrorist attacks to reach to the centre of its network.

As we shall see in the next chapter, the geopolitical code of the US is particularly focused upon "global reach" or the ability to operate within the sovereign spaces of others. This tendency has been intensified as part of the War on Terror, and its limitations in fighting ISIS have become clear.

Geopolitics of netwar and cyberwarfare

The pervasiveness of networks, surveillance, and various forms of knowledge have promoted a new form of warfare and the geopolitics of security that is framed around the capabilities and vulnerabilities of networks. The term *netwar* (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001) has been adopted to refer broadly to the role of networks in conflict, and includes the actions of social movements, terrorist organizations, and computer systems. Cyberwarfare has a more specific focus: the use of computers to attack other computers and networks through electronic, rather than physical, means (Billo and Chang, 2004). The increasing relevance of cyberwarfare is a result of the growth of “information” in the operation of society, economics, and the conduct of warfare. Information stored, organized, and analysed by computers is necessary infrastructure in the contemporary world and if its usage can be disrupted then it may be interpreted as an attack on a country or business.

National security institutions, private companies, and a variety of “experts” have readily identified threats and actual incidents of cyberwarfare (Clarke, 2010). Numerous examples exist. One example was the bout of tit-for-tat hacking of Pakistani websites by an Indian group and vice versa in November and December 2010. Another example was the May 2008 hacking incident in a US military installation in the Middle East that led to the diffusion of computer code that provided a “beachhead” for the continued transfer of data from US military computers (Lynn, 2010). William J. Lynn, III, US Deputy Secretary of Defense, boldly claimed that 100 foreign intelligence agencies are actively attempting to hack into the US’s military and intelligence computers (Lynn, 2010). The form of conflict also, allegedly, involves states versus private companies. Especially, there have been allegations of attacks emanating from China against Google and other companies. The Chinese government has denied responsibility.

Countries began making cyberwarfare a central part of their geopolitical codes in the 2000s. Arguably, it was a very material, rather than virtual, action in a particular place that was the catalyst for cyberwar. On 26 April 2007, the government removed a bronze statue commemorating the Red Army’s liberation of Tallinn in World War II from a park in the Estonian capital of Tallinn. The removal led to the “Bronze” riots as Estonian nationalists and those self-identifying as Russians clashed. This geopolitical event seemed to be very “old school” – as legacies of the Cold War met with contemporary tensions between Russia and one of its Baltic ex-republics, now an independent country. The act was also very place-specific and centred on the visibility of an old geopolitical representation (the statue) in a public space at the heart of a capital city: so far all so very “territorial geopolitics in a particular place.” However, what was to follow changed geopolitical practices fundamentally.

The day after the statue was removed a series of cyberattacks were launched against Estonian government, media, political party and banking websites. Suspicion fell upon Russia, as well as those of Russian identity living in Estonia, probably acting with the Russian government's approval and support (Kaiser, 2015, p. 13). The attacks took the form of denial of service (DOS) and coordinated distributed denial of service (DDOS) attacks that required the operation of botnets hosted in a number of countries (Kaiser, 2015, p. 11). As a result of these attacks, security analysts began to claim that cyberwarfare had to be at the heart of new geopolitical codes. The geopolitical narrative of connectivity as a form of vulnerability soon seemed to focus on a country's position within cyberspace. For example:

Estonia as a small, modern, technology-savvy country was an ideal test-ground for cyberattackers with political motivations... . Estonia happened to experience the first large-scale attacks, but ... vulnerabilities are growing in both the developed and developing world.
(Tiirmaa-Klaar, 2011, pp. 1–2; quoted in Kaiser, 2015, p. 13)

However, the territorial nature of geopolitics still played an important role, and the memories of the Cold War were used to situate Estonia in today's tensions between Russia and NATO:

We are still living between the East and the West – we are a playground for bad guys... . We are looking to increase cooperation with the US. Why should the US cooperate with us? Because we are on the border. If something happens, we can give you a warning that something is coming.

(Interview with Cyber Defense League, Tallinn, reported in Kaiser, 2015, p. 14)

The new network geopolitics of cyberwarfare may well be played out in cyberspace, but its motivations, practices, and goals are just one component of geopolitical codes that are still based upon competition between states and concerns over territory, power, and boundaries.

Vulnerability became central to the representation of cyberwarfare in geopolitical codes, with transport, energy, and financial infrastructure seen as being especially vulnerable (Kaiser, 2015). Example scenarios include blackouts as the electrical grid is hacked, or the collapse of the banking system. These scenarios were given some credence by the Stuxnet attacks on the Iranian nuclear facility at Natanz in September 2010, allegedly severely disrupting Iran's nuclear

programme. Stuxnet is a form of malware that enters industrial systems, can transfer information out of the system (or “spy”) and disrupt its commands. Iran, and the facilities involved in uranium enrichment, have been the focus of Stuxnet attacks. Kaspersky Labs believe that the attacks could only have been done by, or with the assistance of, a state, with suspicion falling upon Israel given its fears of a nuclear-armed Iran (Maclean, 2010).

The state-versus-state nature of cyberwarfare is evident in negotiations between the US and China that would echo the language used in nuclear weapons agreements. The two countries talked about a commitment in which each country would adopt a code of conduct: promises were made not to adopt “first use” strategies of attacks on a country’s critical infrastructure and, adopting UN language, not to start a cyberwar “that intentionally damages critical infrastructure or otherwise impairs the use and operation of critical infrastructure to provide services to the public” (Sanger, 2015). Though this may seem a positive step, its foundation in the language of interstate war ignores the pressing reality of cyberwar. Cyberattacks primarily concern the theft of intellectual property and other forms of industrial espionage. Also, both countries have made statements that suggest any “cyberwar arms deal” would not prevent states from preparing for war by inserting “beacons” or “implants” into the computer networks of other countries that monitor their operation (Sanger, 2015). As the seriousness of cyberwarfare was being recognized in diplomatic relations, intellectual espionage was rife, and security agencies in the US and China were making sure their ability to act in a future war was not being limited.

Another form of cyberwarfare has been the influence of Wikileaks, or the ready dissemination of information deemed secret and private by states and businesses that reveal allegedly criminal and immoral acts, or just episodes of diplomatic ineptitude and ineffectiveness. The ability of Wikileaks to obtain and spread information has had an impact upon the sense of privacy that states have held in their conduct of foreign policy. Though states have always been the victim of spies, information gained through espionage has rarely been disseminated through the public realm. Now states are aware that the nature of their activity can become public, and diplomacy may have to be adjusted accordingly. Journalist Glenn Greenwald established a website, *The Intercept*, dedicated to disseminating information gleaned from government archives, including a report in January 2016 that the US and Britain had direct access to live video from Israeli drones (Currier and Moltke, 2016).

The contemporary geopolitics of surveillance is one of ability and vulnerability. The ability to track through drones and computer surveillance enhances the geographic reach of states. Debates about privacy of information and the necessity of governments to be able to monitor people’s data and

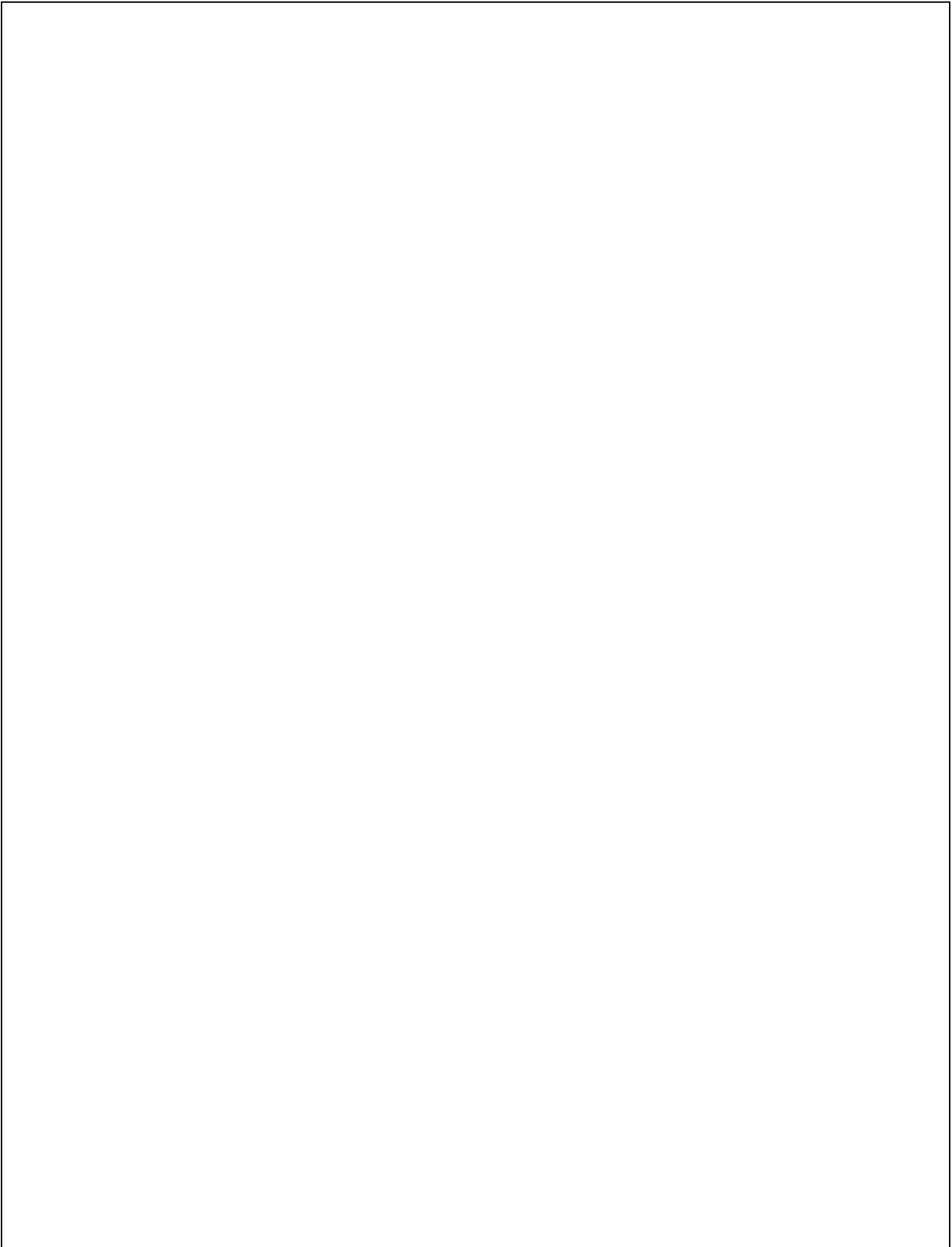
activities, including phone conversations, occurred within the context of ISIS attacks in Europe and the US. Security agencies called for greater monitoring, while civil rights activists worried about the growing power of government surveillance. Encryption became a key topic, as Apple, Google, Facebook, and Yahoo, amongst others, touted messaging systems that would allow senders and recipients to code their communications in a way that would prevent others reading them. Security agencies believed this would allow terrorists to communicate without fear of interception by spy agencies. A report from Harvard University (Berkman Center, 2016) suggested that fears of widespread encryption were overstated as software systems were too fragmented; encrypted data would not pass interconnected arenas of “software ecosystems.” Intriguingly, the report also noted that the growing “Internet of Things,” from TVs to light bulbs, and even toothbrushes is likely to become pervasive and enable monitoring that should diminish fears about the ability of terrorists to use encryption to “go dark.”

As the ability of states to manage and control their territorially based populations is increasingly dependent upon computer networks, a hacker using a global network of servers makes disruption increasingly likely and hard to pinpoint geographically. The geography of nodes and networks intersects with territory and state sovereignty to produce a multidimensional geopolitics of cyberspace. Hacking and intellectual espionage are one form of geopolitics, but it is linked to the actions of states through the sponsorship of hacking activities (for example, allegations against Russia and China), as well as emerging formal agreements about the rules of cyberwar.

Summary and segue

Our discussion of the geopolitics of transnational social movements, terrorism and counterterrorism, and cyberwarfare has illuminated some key points. The main point of emphasis being that geopolitics involves the dynamic interaction between territories, most notably states, and networks. Perhaps increasingly, if the intensification of globalization continues, the opportunities for political action and the threats posed by network activity will come to the fore. States have traditionally identified their allies and enemies, or opportunities and threats, in terms of other states. But this calculation may well become increasingly irrelevant or incomplete as various forms of networks come to the fore. However, states are not about to disappear entirely. Geopolitics will need to develop ways of critically assessing how and why territory and networks interact to form new political circumstances. Such a re-evaluation of security requires an understanding of the

context or structure within which change is occurring. In the next chapter we investigate one way to think of geopolitical structure.



Having read this chapter you will be able to:

- Consider the geopolitics of globalization
- Identify geopolitics as an interaction between territorial and network metageographies
- Understand the activity of social movements as a form of geopolitics
- Interpret peace movements as geographically situated actors
- Identify the geography of contemporary terrorism
- Identify the geography of contemporary counterterrorism
- Consider the geographic mismatch of terrorism and counterterrorism
- Consider the geopolitical implications of cyberwarfare.

Further reading

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A thorough and accessible introduction to the way the global economy works, the features of contemporary globalization, and the operation of transnational businesses.

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A discussion of terrorism and the War on Terror emphasizing the interaction between network and nation-state metageographies.

Hoffman, B. (1998) *Inside Terrorism*, New York: Columbia University Press.

An excellent and accessible introduction to the study of terrorism.

Juergensmeyer, M. (2000) *Terror in the Mind of God*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

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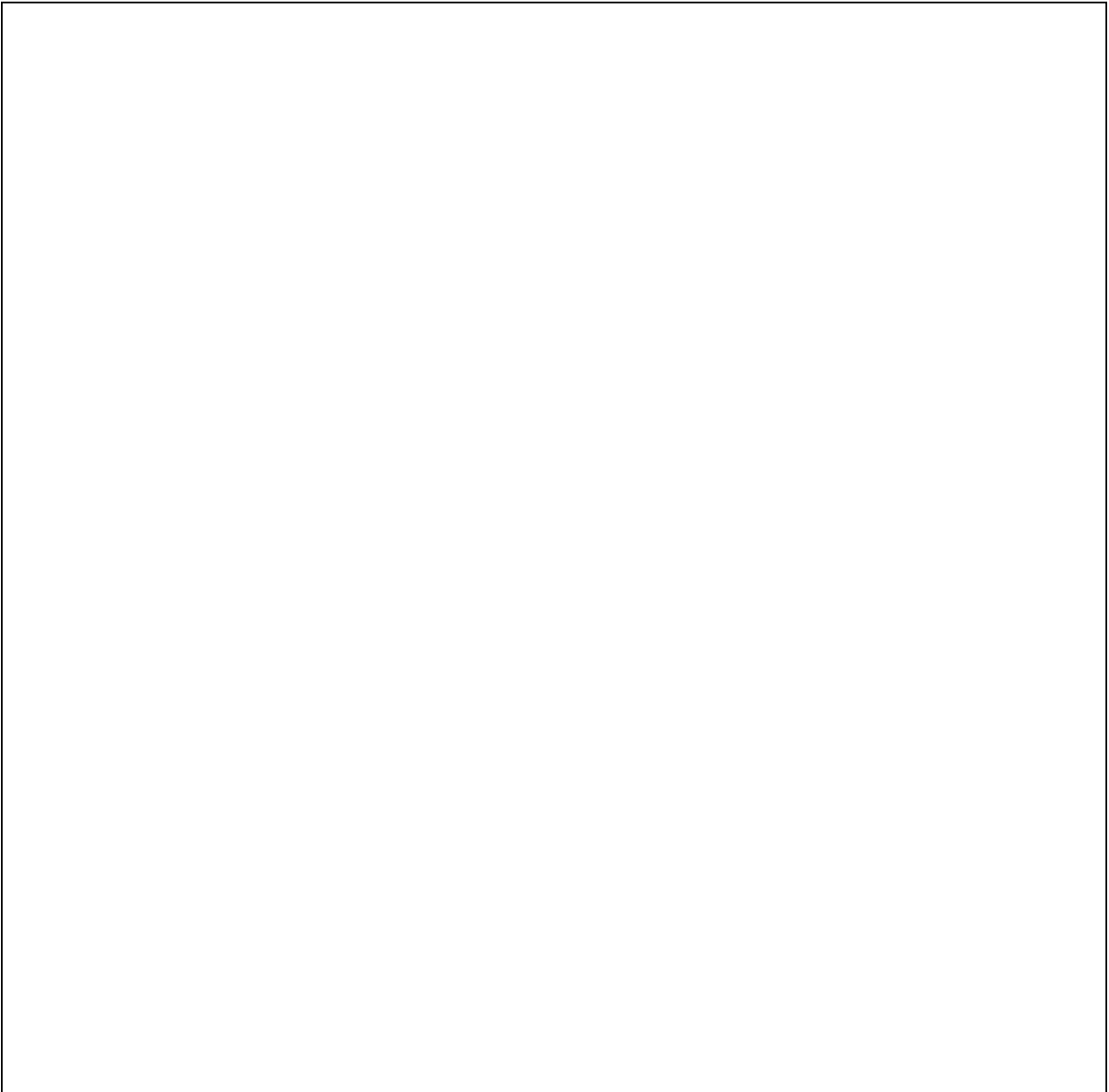
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7

GLOBAL GEOPOLITICAL STRUCTURE: FRAMING AGENCY



In this chapter we will:

- **Introduce a geopolitical model to provide an understanding of the global geopolitical structure**
- **Discuss the different components of this model**
- **Interrogate the validity of the model**
- **Note how the model is both similar and different to “classic” geopolitical frameworks**
- **Emphasize how we can use the model to provide a structure or context to understand geopolitical agency**

Let us take some time to consider how we began this book and our exploration of geopolitics. In the Prologue we learned about the traditional practices of classic geopolitics and its claim to be able to paint neutral and complete pictures of “how the world works:” what drives historical changes, what causes countries to fight, what determines whether a country will become a great power or not. In [Chapter 1](#) we introduced a framework to analyse geopolitics objectively through the use of geographic concepts and a consideration of structure and agency. The bulk of this book has focused on agency by introducing the term geopolitical codes, and showing how it is related to nationalism, and the geography of territory and networks.

In this chapter we begin to discuss geopolitical structure, or the context within which geopolitical agency takes place. We do so by discussing George Modelski’s model of cycles of world leadership. One of the benefits of this model is an understanding of global politics that is based on empirical observation. In contrast, the classical geopoliticians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries invoked a “God’s-eye view of the world,” providing simple histories or theories that, they claimed, not only explained what had happened in the past, but suggested particular policies to inform the actions of their own country in a global competition with others (Parker, 1985). In other words, geopoliticians made dubious claims of historical and theoretical “objectivity” to support their own biased view of how their own country should compete in the world.

Such a view of geopolitics is no longer in vogue. Any claim to be able to “see” a pattern of global politics is immediately challenged as being limited and biased; rightly so – because it is situated knowledge. Instead, attention is drawn to how geopolitical agents make strategic choices, and how choices are made complicated by competing goals and changing circumstances. In other words, increasing attention is given to agency over structure. However, decisions are not made within a social and political vacuum. As discussed in [Chapter 1](#), agents are

both enabled and constrained by structures. Countries make geopolitical choices, to go to war for example, while considering the wider geopolitical context. For example, China's increasing political and economic power has led to greater influence within East and Southeast Asia. The Chinese government, on the other hand, is being very careful not to provoke the dominant world power, the United States (see [Box 7.1](#)).

As this example suggests, another benefit of Modelski's model is its ability to aid our interpretation of the role of the United States in the world. In other words, we can understand the US as a particular type of geopolitical agent, a world leader. Furthermore, the model suggests that the world leader plays a key role in creating a global geopolitical structure and that the way that structure changes over time is a way to interpret, or place into context, the geopolitical codes of the US, other states, and non-state actors. Geopolitical decisions are made with an eye towards the global geopolitical context, and especially the ability of a dominant power to set the agenda.

In this chapter, we will introduce Modelski's model of geopolitics to define a global geopolitical structure. We will see that this structure is dynamic and use it to discuss how the global geopolitical context frames the actions of different countries. Though the chapter ends with a guide that allows for critique of the model, it may be useful to provide some cautionary notes here. Modelski's model of geopolitics is **not** capable of *predicting* events. It is a historical model that interprets a wealth of historic data in a simplified framework. In other words, it is a *descriptive* model. Also, Modelski's model is useful, but only within certain parameters. His view of geopolitics is limited to conflicts between the major powers; smaller countries and geopolitical actors that are not countries are not included in his model. However, the model is useful for introducing the idea of a geopolitical structure and offering a context for current geopolitical events. We will discuss the pros and cons of the model in greater depth at the end of the chapter.

Defining a global geopolitical structure: using and interrogating Modelski's model of world leadership

The classic geopoliticians we introduced in the Prologue (such as Mahan in the US, Mackinder in Britain, as well as Ratzel and Kjellen in Germany) exemplified the state-centric perspective of geopolitics, and geographical determinism (as discussed in the Prologue). From their perspective, geographic size and location,

and the internal make-up of a country determined power. Subsequent, and purportedly more scientific, calculations of power have rested upon the economic, military, and demographic elements of a particular country. To understand state power and global geopolitical context, however, these ingredients must be related to the ability of a state to define the global geopolitical agenda. In other words, the Gramscian notion of power within a country that we introduced in [Chapter 1](#) has relevance for global geopolitics. Following Gramsci, we would expect the most powerful countries to wield (or at least attempt to wield) an ideological power over the other countries: the most powerful country would try to set a political agenda that the rest of the world would, more or less, follow. Two theories have been particularly influential in the discussion of this type of global agenda-setting: Wallerstein's concept of hegemony (see [Box 7.2](#)) and, the one with which we will engage, Modelski's (1987) concept of world leadership.

Box 7.1 Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: a challenge to the US?

As World War II was coming to an end the United States created the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These financial institutions were intended to help US world leadership by channelling investment across the globe in a way that would reward political allies, and introducing an economic model of free trade and minimal state subsidies favourable to US businesses. Fast forward to 2015, and China has created its own, and rival, institution: the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The stated purpose of the AIIB, “a modern knowledge-based institution,” is to “focus on the development of infrastructure and other productive sectors in Asia, including energy and power, transportation and telecommunications, rural infrastructure and agricultural development, water supply and sanitation, environmental protection, urban development, and logistics” (see www.aiib.org). The bank promises to be “lean, clean, and green;” in other words, efficient, free of corruption, and “built on respect for the environment.”

The appointment of Sir Danny Alexander, once chief secretary to the British Treasury, to the AIIB's Board of Directors makes apparent the bank's attempts to have a global reach and influence. His job will be to represent other European countries, including Poland, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland. Sir Danny is quoted as saying the bank will emerge as

“a crucial part of the multilateral landscape, supporting growth, tackling climate change, and helping drive up living standards in Asia” (Allen and Mitchell, 2016). Countries from all over the world have joined the AIIB. With the notable exception of Japan, allies of the US have joined the bank, despite President Obama’s disapproval of allied countries becoming involved in the AIIB, a rival financial institution to the World Bank.

The reference to multilateralism and economic growth echo the mandates of the World Bank. Is China assuming the task of global economic management that has long been assumed as the role of the US? Does the inclusion of climate change in the AIIB’s list of concerns suggest that China is able to lead a new global agenda? What does the rush of European countries and other US allies, such as Australia, to join the AIIB against the wishes of the US tell us about the trajectory of global politics?

Box 7.2 Wallerstein’s world-system theory

The sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1979 and 1984) profoundly challenged modern social science through his concept of the historical social system. His argument was that society should not be equated with a particular country, but rather at a larger scale of the social system. According to Wallerstein, since approximately 1450 the social system has been the capitalist world-economy. Within this theory, primary geopolitical powers are called hegemonies or hegemonic powers. Since the twentieth century, the United States has acted as the hegemonic power. The basis for hegemony is economic strength that translates into a dominant influence in global trade and finance. Maintenance of the capitalist world-economy in a form that benefits the hegemonic power requires, at times, military force. Hegemony is seen as an economic process for selfish goals, and not as the global political benevolence of Modelski’s world leadership. Similar to Modelski’s model, the hegemonic power emerges from a period of global conflict, but Wallerstein is adamant that the United States is currently experiencing a relative decline in its global dominance. One other important difference is that in Modelski’s model there is always a world leader, though its strength is cyclical. For Wallerstein, periods of hegemony are rare. So, if the US’s hegemony does decline, according to Modelski a new leader should emerge after a period of war, whereas Wallerstein’s model suggests that other political scenarios, without one dominant state, may emerge.

Modelski's model of world leadership is a historically based theory, founded upon his interest in naval history. Power, for Modelski, is a function of global reach – the ability to influence events across the world. Historically, such power has required control of the oceans. Hence, for Modelski, world power rests upon the ability of one country to concentrate the world's maritime power under its own control. Maritime power is measured by the combined tonnage of a country's military and merchant navies that shows the ability of one country to dominate the world's oceans – both through naval military power as well as dominance of trade by sea. In this sense, Modelski echoes Mahan's insistence on the important role of sea power. However, most significantly, for our understanding of the contemporary world, world leadership is not defined solely by this material measure of power. Indeed, it is important to reflect upon the name Modelski gives to dominant and powerful countries – they are identified as world leaders, not hegemonies or superpowers. Remember, a crucial component of geopolitics is representation. Modelski portrays the world's most powerful country as a “leader,” implying willing followers, rather than a hegemony or superpower with its allusions to dominance and force.

Table 7.1 Cycles of world leadership

<i>World leader</i>	<i>Century</i>	<i>Global war</i>	<i>Challenger</i>	<i>Coalition partners</i>
Portugal	1500s	1494–1516	Spain	Netherlands
Netherlands	1600s	1580–1609	France	England
Great Britain	1700s	1688– 1713	France	Russia
Great Britain	1800s	1792– 1815	Germany	US plus allies
United States	1900s	1914–1945	Soviet Union/al-Qaeda	NATO/coalition of willing

Source: George Modelski (1987).

Obviously, Modelski's definition of power is of the ilk that is strongly criticized by feminists (see [Chapter 1](#)). Though he talks of world leadership, and power through influence, the empirical measures Modelski uses reflect power as strength and dominance; it is about the ability to exercise military force across the globe. This is another way in which Modelski follows the “classic” geopoliticians. This notion of power leads to an uncritical belief that the militarization of foreign policy is inevitable and beneficial. It also ignores gender relations within states and global economic inequities. In other words, Modelski's notion of power is unidimensional. We may agree that a feminist critique of Modelski's power index is valid, and yet still find value in the model. In fact, we have seen in the previous chapters that geopolitics is represented in certain

gender-specific ways for the power relations Modelski identifies to be sustained. By bringing a feminist critique to bear upon Modelski we can get more out of the model than was originally intended by its author.

Activity

Is it more accurate to think of the United States from the early twentieth century to today as a hegemonic power or as world leader? To answer the question, think about the relative weight given to economics versus politics, and self-interest and political duty in the different models. Perhaps you may be able to find examples of both. Is the global “responsibility” of the US as either world leader or hegemonic power solely a matter of rhetoric, or can you also point to particular actions?

A world leader is a country that is able to offer the world an “innovation” to provide geopolitical order and security. By innovation, Modelski means a bundle of institutions, ideas, and practices that establish the geopolitical agenda for the world. The power of the world leader rests in its ability to define a “big idea” for how countries should exist and interact with each other; an idea that it is able to put into practice through its material power or naval capabilities. The power of the world leader rests in its agenda-setting capacity and its ability to enforce it.

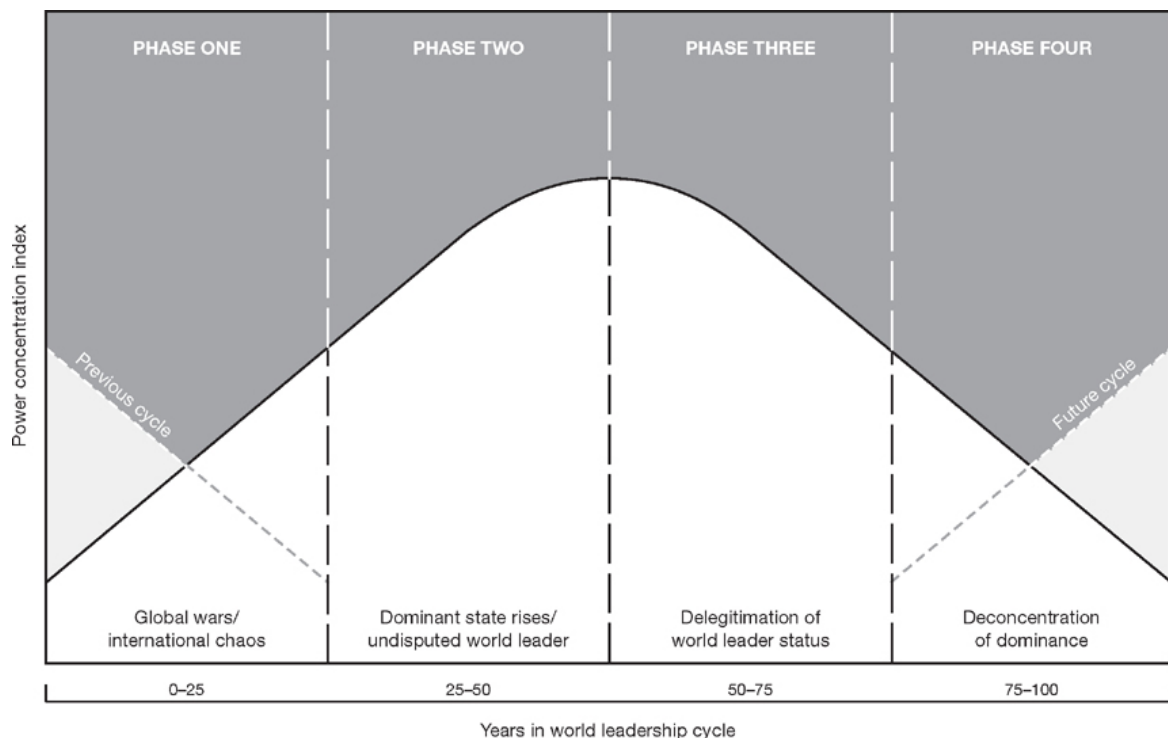


Figure 7.1 Modelski's world leadership cycle.

Modelski's model of world leadership is dynamic. The strength of the world leader rises and falls. Over the course of centuries the mantle of world leadership has passed from one country to another in a sequence of cycles of world leadership (Table 7.1). Each cycle of world leadership (Figure 7.1) lasts approximately one hundred years and is made up of four roughly equal phases of about 25 years:

- *Phase of global war:* The ability, or perceived right, to act as world leader is decided through a period of global war. The declining world leader is challenged by countries believing they should inherit the mantle. Coalitions are constructed and over the 25-year period, which may include a number of different wars and conflicts, one country emerges as having both the material capacity and ideological message to impose global order.
- *Phase of world power:* Once victory has been achieved the geopolitical project of the new world leader is enacted. New institutions are established to apply and enforce the new agenda. On the whole, the new agenda is welcomed and followed.
- *Phase of delegitimation:* At the outset of the establishment of a new period of world leadership, the imposed "order" is, overall, welcomed. But over time dissent grows. The benevolence of the world leader can be questioned; its actions seen increasingly as self-serving. Alternative agendas are given greater weight. The challenge to the world leader has begun, but the world leader is still relatively strong.
- *Phase of deconcentration:* The challenges beginning in the previous phase become stronger. The world leader expends its material and ideological capacity in reacting to these challenges, making it weaker and more vulnerable to more attacks, in a spiral of challenge and reaction that leads to the phase of global war. Challenges are more frequently, but not exclusively, violent and organized campaigns. The world leader is called upon to react militarily, exhausting its material base of power and highlighting contradictions between its actions and its rhetoric. In combination, its legitimacy is increasingly questioned, and challenge intensifies.

The War on Terror illustrates how the material and ideological power of the world leader are both challenged in the last phase of the cycle. In terms of material power, ISIS and al-Qaeda have challenged the US through actual force, in the form of terrorist attacks, which provoked a military response. Simultaneously, the US attempted to use its ideological power by representing its military actions as necessary in the name of "peace" and "humanity." As part of that military action

atrocities have come to light that add fuel to the fire of those opposed to the US presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. A prominent part of the War on Terror was the detention of people suspected to have ties to terrorist groups at the Guantanamo Bay US military base. Detention without trial, and practices many believed to be torture, provided a sharp contrast to the occupation of Iraq represented as a “civilizing mission” of world leadership and actual events that challenge the leader’s authority (see [Box 7.4](#)). The response by the world leader to the material challenge of terrorism has exposed the US to criticisms that threaten its ideological power.

Using the ideal conceptual framework we have discussed, Modelski paints a particular picture of history – one defined by the cycles of world leadership. The role of representation in his model is most important. In a cold use of language, global wars are defined as “systemic decisions” – they are instrumental in deciding who will be the next world leader (see [Box 7.3](#)). For Modelski, a leader is seen as acting benevolently – carrying the burden of maintaining global security for the benefit of all rather than acting for narrow national self-interest. The order defined by the “innovation” is portrayed as neutral; it is seen as being obviously good for all, rather than benefitting some countries or groups over others. Perhaps most significant is the pattern of history Modelski identifies from the application of his model. Great Britain was able to have two consecutive cycles of world leadership. The geopolitics of the model is clear, if the Brits had two shots then there is nothing stopping the United States doing the same thing; the twenty-first century can be an American century too!

Box 7.3 World Wars I and II in historical context

Both Modelski and Wallerstein view the two world wars as twin episodes in one conflict, the one that decided who would succeed Great Britain as world leader/hegemonic power. Modelski is also guilty of representing these two (or is it one?) conflicts in cold language. Together, they are identified as a “systemic decision” of world leadership succession – a very instrumental way to view the deaths of millions of soldiers and citizens across the globe.

Within the phase of global war, the emerging world leader has a “good war,” in the sense that it avoids much of the physical destruction of its homeland suffered by other fighting countries. Hence, its relative economic power increases dramatically. In the case of World War II, bombing flattened German, Japanese, and British factories, while those in the United States were expanding their capacity. The emerging leader also enters the conflict relatively late – using its relative power to dictate the terms of peace

to its liking. For further reading see Peter Taylor's use of Wallerstein's framework to analyse how Great Britain faced opportunities and constraints in creating its post World War II foreign policy in his book *Britain and the Cold War*.

The geopolitics of the rise and fall of world leaders: the context of contemporary geopolitics?

Modelski's model helps us to interpret the major contemporary global geopolitical issue: the attempt by the United States to maintain its pre-eminent power status in the face of challenges to its leadership. To do this we can consider the dynamics of two separate but related concerns. First, is there a country willing and able to act, Modelski may well say "serve," as world leader? In other words, is there an availability of order, the possibility of one country, the world leader, offering and enforcing a geopolitical innovation? Second, does the rest of the world, or at least a significant majority, want that order? In other words, is there a preference for the world leader's imposed order, or would countries rather face the "chaos" or "insecurity" of competing agendas? Note the role of representation here again – as "insecurity" and "security" are often based upon the degree of acceptance of the world leader's agenda.

For each of the four phases of a cycle, we can compare the balance of preference and availability of order (Figure 7.2). In a period of global war, no one country is strong enough, relative to others, to establish a global geopolitical order. After the emergence of a world leader, there is a desire for order and the world leader's agenda is followed, more or less. By the next phase, delegitimation, the order being provided by the world leader is beginning to be questioned. However, the world leader still retains its relative power advantage, and hence challenges to the world leader rest, on the whole, in the realm of diplomatic and verbal protest; though some sporadic military resistance may be witnessed. During the deconcentration phase of the cycle, not only has dissent towards the world leader's order heightened, but the world leader's ability to enforce its agenda has declined too. In this phase, there is an increased challenge to the world leader, not only in terms of diplomatic and political agendas, but also in the form of organized military challenges.

Modelski phase	Preference for world order	Availability of world order
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Global war	High	Low
World power	High	High
Delegitimation	Low	High
Deconcentration	Low	Low

Figure 7.2 Preference and availability of world leadership.

Imperial overstretch

Global opinion is only one factor in explaining the process of the decline of world leadership. Emphasis has also been focused upon the relationship between the demands placed upon the cost of the world leader's military and its economic strength, or the ability to pay. During the world leadership phase of the cycle, where the new global agenda is mostly accepted, enforcement can be attained by a global naval capacity – the strategy of gunboat diplomacy whereby the mere presence of the world leader's navy is enough to keep potentially dissenting countries in line. Such a strategy is relatively cheap as the very costly undertaking of protracted military conflict is largely avoided. However, as the cycle progresses, and challenges to the world leader's authority increase in frequency and intensity, then the world leader is drawn increasingly into conflicts on land. Associated rising costs further drain the world leader's power and invite more challenges. The tendency for the world leader to be drawn into land conflicts leads to an expectation that the proportion of military expenditure going towards the navy would decrease over the course of the cycle and the proportion going towards the army would increase (see [Figure 7.3](#)). In addition, the ghastliness of warfare provokes specific incidents that are used by opponents to challenge the moral authority of the world leader (see [Box 7.4](#)). In other words, the resort to increased land conflict is costly in both economic and ideological terms.

Great Britain's military expenditures

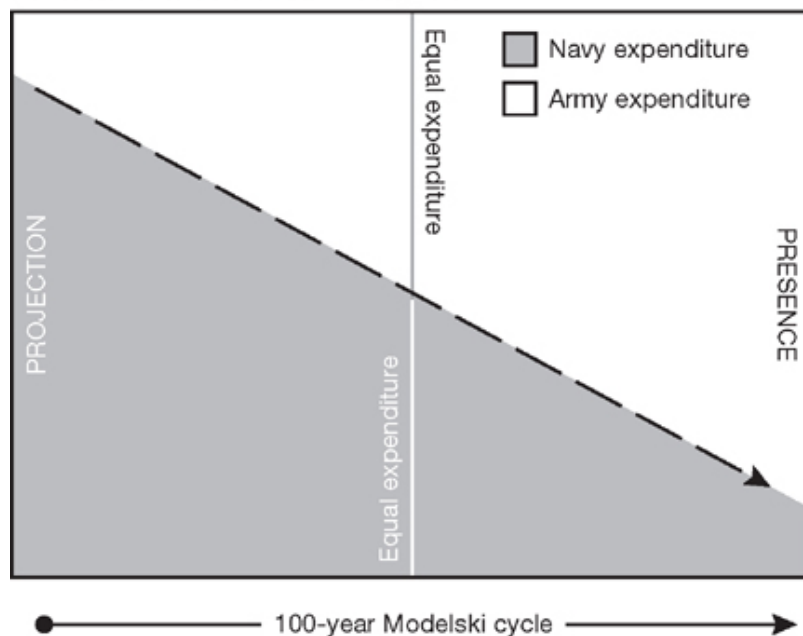


Figure 7.3 Imperial overstretch.

Box 7.4 Guantanamo and the consequences for world leadership

Established in 1903, the US Navy base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba was becoming an anachronism of the Cold War. It was repurposed in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and became world-famous, with the nickname “Gitmo.” It became the location of a number of detention sites (with names like Camp X-Ray, Camp Delta, and Camp No) for people detained in the War on Terror – people “rendered” from Afghanistan and other countries and flown across the world in repurposed executive jets. From the initial roundup of people in the war in Afghanistan, the camps soon also contained people from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan, and Algeria. In total, people of 50 nationalities were held at Guantanamo. The US government identified the inmates as detainees and resisted attempts by legal activists to have them charged and appear in front of a US court. The attempt to represent the prisoners as “the worst of the worst” was soon exposed as incorrect. The image of the US suffered further when the conditions in the camps became public. It was soon clear that torture and suicide were regular features of life in Gitmo.

One inmate, Mohamedou Slahi (accused of recruiting the 9/11 hijackers, but never brought to trial) describes isolation, being chained to the floor in positions designed to produce excruciating pain, food and sleep deprivation, being forced to wear sensory deprivation goggles, and a specific incident in which he was dragged into a boat and forced to drink seawater, “It was so nasty I threw up. . . . They stuffed the air between my clothes and me with ice cubes from my neck to my ankles . . . every once in a while one of the guards smashed me, most of the time in my face” (quoted in Davey-Attlee, 2015). In response to Slahi’s claims a Pentagon spokesman dryly noted that there is official recognition of the types of incidents described and that “Slahi is eligible to appear before a Periodic Review Board to assess whether his continued detention at Guantanamo remains necessary.” He has been held without trial, never charged, and at times tortured, since 2002.

President Barack Obama came to power with a pledge to close down Guantanamo Bay. In total, 779 men have been imprisoned at the camp since January 2002. Despite President Obama’s pledge, in October 2015 104 men remained there, including 46 cleared for release, and 28 that the government claims cannot be prosecuted because of lack of evidence, but are too dangerous for release (see <https://www.aclu.org/infographic/guantanamo-numbers>).

Torture and detention without trial are hardly what one thinks of when hearing the words “freedom,” “democracy,” and “civilization.” Yet these are the words often used by the US to represent itself as world leader. The Guantanamo detainees are a product of the world leader’s self-imposed policing mission. Knowledge of torture and imprisonment without trial or hope of release undermines the ideological authority underlying the US’s position as world leader. In other words, the actions of the world leader contradict its rhetoric. The continued prosecution of the War on Terror continues to raise questions about the morality of the actions of the world leader.

Evidence of imperial overstretch?

The idea of imperial overstretch is a useful framework to evaluate the policies of the US, as world leader. The choice of a policy of military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as a response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 put great stress on the US military. The Department of Defense underestimated the number of troops necessary for the post-war phase of the operation, despite warnings from the generals. The resulting insurgency in Iraq and the difficulty of

creating peace in Afghanistan led to mobilization of the National Guard and a series of deployments that stretched the military's resources and put great get stress on service personnel and their families. The number of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan was reduced, but the decreased US military presence in Iraq is seen by some as creating a vacuum that assisted in the rise of ISIS. The legacy of the costs of the Iraq and Afghanistan deployments resonates in a US geopolitical code trying to respond to ISIS in Syria and Iraq and its diffusion to Libya. While there is a sense of ISIS as threat in the political and military establishment, and the public, there is also great resistance to another round of troop deployments.

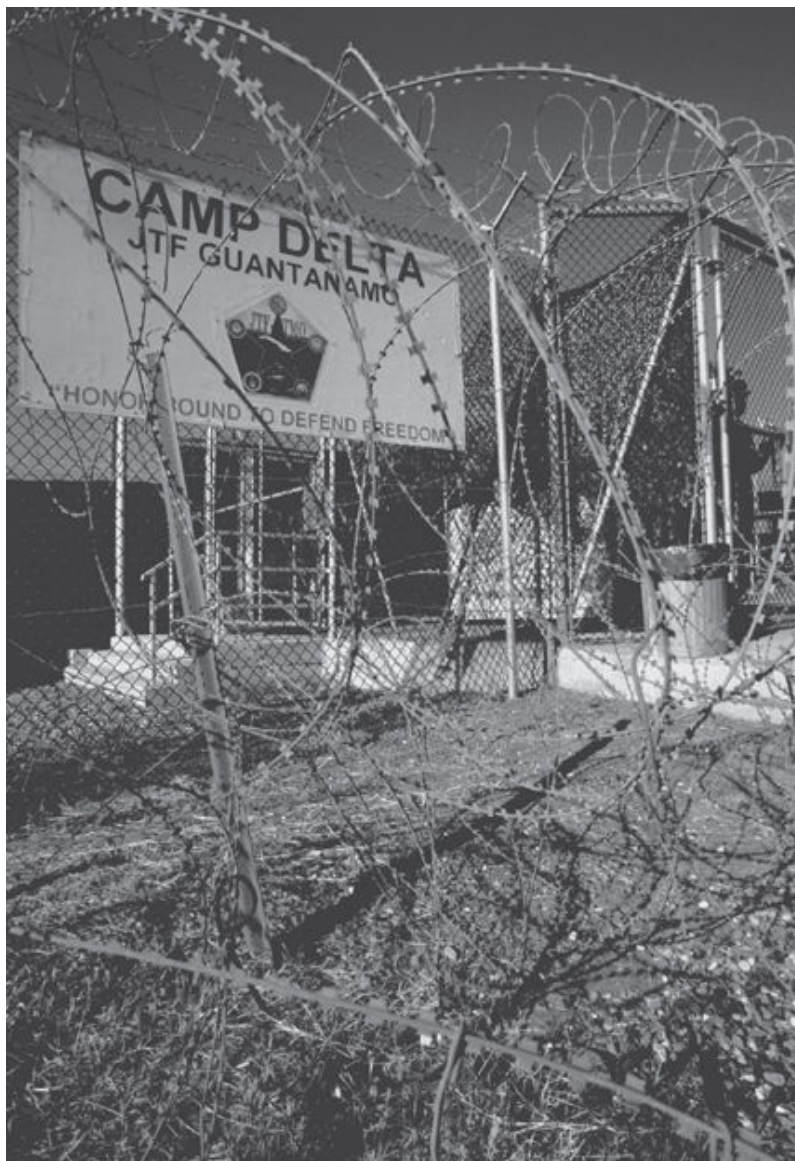


Figure 7.4 Camp Delta.

The lack of political will to deploy ground troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, or Libya has been partially mitigated by an increase in the deployment of Special Forces troops as “advisors.” Hence, the decreased US military presence in North Africa, the Middle East, and Afghanistan may be a matter of *fatigue* rather than *overstretch*, meaning that the reluctance to act is not just because of lack of economic and military capacity but also public weariness of continual overseas military actions and the costs to military personnel and their families. However, if we consider the big picture, the multiple challenges facing the US become clear. We see a situation in which the US is responding to many threats at the same time, and is struggling to find the best way to deploy troops in different strategic arenas. Around 2011 an announced US “pivot to Asia” signalled a commitment to allies in the Asia-Pacific concerned about the growing political and military power of China. The announcement of the pivot suggested that troop reductions in Iraq and Afghanistan would allow for greater focus upon China’s military ambitions. Also implied in this “pivot” was an assumption that the security situation in Europe had changed and the presence of the US was less important. The US had to quickly change this particular attitude in its geopolitical code after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its role in the conflict over the Ukraine-Russia border region. The result was a move in January 2016 to put personnel and equipment in Eastern Europe to act as a deterrent against Russia making similar aggressive moves towards the US’s NATO allies. In summary, instead of avoiding overstretch by bringing troops back from Iraq and Afghanistan, the US is now facing pressure to increase its presence in those countries, plus Syria and Libya. In addition, there are pressures to return to Cold War policies in Europe. A further geopolitical calculation for the world leader is how to respond to China’s increased naval reach.

The dynamics of US troop deployment may also shed light upon the dynamics of world leadership. [Table 7.2](#) shows both stability and change in the geography of US global troop deployments. The numbers of 2015 cannot be directly compared with previous years, as they are just counting army personnel. However, the relatively equal size of the commitment to Europe and the Middle East can be compared to the larger presence in the Pacific. The 2015 Army Posture Statement, an official publication of the US Army, begins by noting that “Now more than ever, in today’s uncertain and dynamic security environment, we must be prepared to meet multiple, wide-ranging requirements across the globe simultaneously while retaining the ability to react to the unknown” (McHugh and Odierno, 2015, p. 1) The report goes on to say the Army is “fully engaged and our operational tempo will not subside for the foreseeable future” (McHugh and Odierno, 2015, p. 1). An estimated need of 980,000 troops is given, made up of 450,000 in the Regular Army, 335,000 in the Army National Guard, and 195,000

in the Army Reserve. Despite these numbers there is some concern in the report: “Although we can meet the primary missions of the Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG) today, our ability to do so has become tenuous. There is a growing divide between the Budget Control Act’s (BCA) arbitrary funding mechanism – that has seen the Army budget drop in nominal terms every year since enacted in 2011 – and the emerging geopolitical realities confronting us now across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Pacific, along with the growing threats to our homeland” (McHugh and Odierno, 2015, p. 2). Despite the acknowledged stress on army manpower a global mission is still seen as necessary, but there is concern whether the US is willing and able to afford it. If these statements were to be interpreted through Modelski’s model, it would appear that the US military was once organized to police an established “order,” but in the face of challenge the nature and location of threat has become less predictable, and even confronts US territory rather than foreign arenas.

Table 7.2a US global troop deployments 1950–2005

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2003	2005
Japan	136,554	83,387	82,264	46,004	46,593	40,159	40,519	35,571
Korea	510	55,864	52,197	38,780	41,344	36,565	41,145	30,983
Germany	97,820	232,256	202,935	244,320	227,586	69,203	74,796	66,418
United States	941,231	1,565,763	1,573,500	1,266,125	1,138,627	938,753	974,571	894,430
Afghanistan	4	23	7	6	–	–	9,700	19,500

Table 7.2b US global troop deployments 2015

Southern Command (including Guantanamo)	2,000
European Command	27,270 – plus 710 in the Balkans and 960 in the Baltics
Africa Command	2,000
Central Command (includes Middle East and Afghanistan)	24,780
Pacific Command	56,110

Sources: Heritage Foundation, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2006/05/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2005> (accessed June 1, 2011); McHugh and Odierno (2015).

Let us remind ourselves that Modelski’s model is not a crystal ball. We cannot utilize its simplification of history to predict the future. However, it can be used as a framework to interpret events. The political debate over the global extent of US military commitments and whether a “rebalancing” to Asia is necessary, in combination with fiscal pressures, suggests that the military component of the world leader’s geopolitical code is as geographically diverse as ever. Is the idea

that the US may suffer from imperial overstretch passé? If the United States were to follow the same cyclical pattern as previous world leaders, we would expect it to be an increasing problem.

Interpreting agency within Modelski's world leadership structure: contextualizing geopolitical codes

The purpose of introducing Modelski's model is to provide a structure within which we can situate or contextualize geopolitical agency. To do so, and in the process evaluate how effective or useful Modelski's model is, we will interpret the geopolitical codes of different states within the dynamics of the US cycle of world leadership.

The United States, the Cold War, and Modelski's model

A sketch of American history is useful to help you relate the abstract model to the "real world." The period of global war in this particular cycle ran from about 1914–1945, the beginning of World War I to the end of World War II. The US played a minor role in the former conflict while it came in late and decisively in the latter. At the end of World War II, the US was able to set a global agenda around the twin themes of national self-determinism and development that established its position as world leader. Institutions such as the IMF, UN, and NATO were established to enforce and legitimize the new world leader's agenda. However, dissent towards the US's leadership emerged, and much quicker than in previous cycles. The Soviet Union provided an immediate ideological and military challenge. The Vietnam War exposed the world leader to allegations that it supported continued European-style control of the poor ex-colonies in the world, and illustrated the limitations of its military capabilities. The Korean War and the Vietnam War are evidence that the US suffered from violent coordinated military challenge much earlier than Modelski's model would suggest. As the twentieth century drew to a close, a different form of challenge emerged at about the same time Modelski would say the US was entering the phase of deconcentration. The anti-US terrorism of al-Qaeda had sporadic successes in Africa and the Middle East prior to the devastation of 9/11 and the heralded "War on Terror." The terrorist threat has evolved, with ISIS becoming the main

challenge. As we saw in the previous section, Russia and China also pose security questions.

Broadly, the twentieth-century history of the United States fits the pattern expected from Modelski's model. Though it is interesting to note that challenges to the United States's leadership came much earlier than expected, and it is a matter of both interpretation and geopolitical guesswork whether the "War on Terror" is a period of deconcentration preceding a new phase of global war, or whether we should look towards challenges by other states.

How can we interpret the Cold War within Modelski's model? On the one hand, the Cold War shows that the US was challenged strongly much earlier than Modelski's model would expect. The ideology of Communism, under the guise of Marxism–Leninism, offered an alternative to the liberal capitalist model proposed by the world leader. The world leader was unable to extend its influence globally, being excluded from the Soviet Bloc and facing competition from socialist movements in Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

A key event in the era of the United States's world leadership was the demise of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Iron Curtain. In a series of events through 1989 and 1991 that took commentators and policy analysts by complete surprise, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that had been under the control of the Soviet Union since the end of World War II were allowed to renounce the Communist system. In 1989, jubilant people who were eager to make contact with the West tore down with their bare hands the physical barriers of the "Iron Curtain," most notably the Berlin Wall. In 1991, the Soviet Union became Russia and spoke of creating a democratic political system with a market economy in place of a Communist one-party state. How should what commentators in the US describe as the "victory over Communism" be interpreted? One argument is that the US's first cycle of world leadership was truncated and successful. The Cold War represents a victory in a Modelski-style global war that has ushered in a second consecutive cycle of world leadership for the US, under the guise of President George H.W. Bush's "new world order." However, both the lack of overt conflict with the Soviet Union and the current challenges being faced by the US undermine an interpretation that we are within the US's second cycle of leadership.

Alternative views of the Cold War may help us interpret it within Modelski's perspective. For analysts such as E.P. Thompson (1985) and György Konrád (1984), the Cold War was a mutually beneficial geopolitical drama that served the Soviet Union and the US, rather than a potential global nuclear holocaust. The Cold War provided the grounds for both major protagonists to control their allies in Western and Eastern Europe respectively. It provided the reason for the military occupation of Europe by both the Americans and the Soviets. In addition,

the Cold War included a consensus that the poorer parts of the world were to be dominated by the big powers. Though both sides claimed the mantle of anti-imperialism, the Cold War provided the excuse for political and military control of the newly independent countries.

The most likely interpretation is that the Cold War signified a limited but significant challenge to the US's world leadership. In other words, the period of world leadership was muted and the period of delegitimation amplified. The argument that the Cold War was of mutual benefit to the Soviet Union and the US is supported by an interpretation that the beginning of the period of deconcentration (and not a period of stability) was marked by the collapse of the Soviet Union. All of a sudden, the certainties that the world leader had known were gone, and a violent challenge that was hard to pinpoint and counter emerged. It is to that challenge we now turn.

The War on Terror and Modelski's model

We have already spoken about terrorism and the War on Terror in the previous chapter. In this short section we will simply interpret the initial challenge by al-Qaeda, and the subsequent one by ISIS, and the US's response in terms of Modelski's model. The interpretation revolves around two questions (neither of which can be answered): 1) are al-Qaeda and ISIS the challengers to the United States that will drive the deconcentration and global war phases of the model, and 2) will the War on Terror weaken the US, promote imperial overstretch, and lead to its decline as world leader? The first question requires consideration that Modelski's model is about the agency of states, and if al-Qaeda and ISIS (non-state actors) were to be the challengers it would be an unprecedented development. However, the possibility should not be dismissed. The ideology of al-Qaeda and ISIS certainly provides a challenge to the institutions of the world leader and its internationalist agenda. The attacks on embassies in Africa and the USS Cole in Yemen prior to the attacks of 11 September 2001 (and of course the attacks on US forces since 2001) were clear illustrations of the material capacity of al-Qaeda to challenge the US. Since then, ISIS has been able to conduct terrorist attacks in the US, such as the incident in San Bernardino in December 2015 that left 14 people dead. ISIS also challenges the ideology of the US by its pervasive presence on social media decrying the US as a weakening and immoral empire.

The other side of the coin is the impact of the War on Terror on the US, and whether the way the conflict has evolved since the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan will drain the world leader's power in a process of imperial overstretch. The US has reduced the size of its troop deployments in Iraq and

Afghanistan, but faces pressure to reverse that trend, to a smaller degree, by deploying Special Forces. The US also faces political pressure from some quarters at home and amongst its allies to create a stronger presence in Iraq and Syria to negate ISIS and play a role in the latter's civil war. In early 2016, military advances by Syrian government forces, with the assistance of Russian airstrikes and Iranian-backed militias, have increased the pressure on the US to act. The increased relevance of ISIS, rather than al-Qaeda, has turned the War on Terror into a conflict with greater territorial expression, in which fronts dividing enemies and allies can be more clearly outlined. Whether the territorial nature of the War on Terror will draw the US into a conflict with troop deployments that will drain resources, or whether alliances and diplomacy can be effective, is an opportunity for policy changes that show the ability for agency within structural contexts.

The European Union and Modelski's model

How do we interpret the European Union (EU) within Modelski's model? First, the genesis of the EU was part of US plans to rebuild Western Europe after World War II. Though there have been political disagreements across the Atlantic since 1945, in general the US has supported the integration of Western Europe, because it helped counter the challenge of the Soviet Union and also reinforced economic and political ties with the world leader. The countries of Western Europe have, generally, followed the will of the US. One historic dispute was the British and French attempt to seize control of the Suez Canal in 1956. However, this episode met with strong US disapproval and Britain and France quickly complied with the world leader's wishes by retreating.

The EU is the product of a trend towards intensified integration of European countries, coupled with an expansion of the number of countries included. Now the EU contains the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that were once under the control of the Soviet Union. The intensification and expansion of the EU have resulted in discussions of its assumption of a global geopolitical role. In some cases this role has been visible, and in others it has been conspicuous by its absence. For example, the EU countries have been influential in international negotiations over global warming emissions. Alternatively, in the 1990s European countries stated that they would take the lead in resolving the war waging in the former Yugoslavia, but after embarrassing failures it was ultimately the US who intervened militarily and diplomatically. The inability to create a consensus over how to deal with the influx of refugees from Syria and Iraq is another example of the difficulty the EU has in forging foreign policy consensus.

On the one hand, the EU may be viewed as a form of delegitimation, in Modelski's terms. Its growing strength and confidence has allowed some countries, notably France, to be critical of US policy. Significantly, the EU has established a military force, the Eurocorps. This may also be viewed as delegitimation: it is a statement that NATO (the military expression of US influence over Europe) is no longer taken for granted and that purely European alternatives may one day replace the world leader's institution. In 1992, the EU described Eurocorps as "a European multinational army corps that does not belong to the integrated military structure of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO)."

On the other hand, the current Eurocorps website contains prominent discussions about the role of the force in NATO and, hence, its role in the Atlantic Alliance. The EU continues to situate the role of Eurocorps within both the geopolitical structures of the EU *and* NATO. In addition, when push comes to shove, the European countries have supported the global military role of the world leader; most notably regarding the US's decision to invade Iraq. The *potential* of the Eurocorps to allow the EU to project military power independent of, and even against the wishes of, the world leader is evidence of delegitimation. However, the subordination of Eurocorps within NATO, and the practical constraints on its ability to act independently of the US are evidence of the continued power of the world leader. The Eurocorps website creates a picture of a military force proud to be able to act within NATO and for a strategic mission still dominated by the US.

In summary, the current signals from the EU are mixed: there have been verbal protests against US actions. The political decisions of the EU and institutional developments such as Eurocorps may also be interpreted as discontent with the world leader's agenda. Additionally, there have been trade disputes between the EU and US. Significantly, however, the trade disputes and construction of Eurocorps do not undermine the general agreement over free-trade policies between the EU and US, or the inability of the EU to define and execute military operations free from the world leader's agenda. The EU is still the world leader's key ally; though some would say an increasingly reluctant one. The documents discussed above can be found at the Eurocorps website <http://www.eurocorps.org/>, accessed 6 February 2016.

The bureaucratic complexities and economic costs of developing a European army remain (Salmon and Shepherd, 2003). However, institutional developments have continued and the Eurocorps remains involved in NATO missions. On paper, and that qualification must be stressed, the development towards a European national army continues (though at a slow pace). It has also been posited that the United States will increase its focus upon Asia, leaving political space for

independent European developments, and that budget cuts for European countries will make integration and cooperation more attractive (Holworth, 2011). The November 2010 agreement between France and Great Britain for military nuclear cooperation is a significant move towards European security integration, but may also be interpreted as being driven by national financial constraints.

The European Union has been a key geopolitical ally for the US. However, there are signs that the EU is striving to gain independence from the US foreign policy agenda, while also remaining an active supporter of some elements of the world leader's geopolitical code. As the Modelski model predicts, even allies should show increasing dissent towards the leader's agenda – and one such manifestation is the tentative steps towards a European army. However, there remain many doubts as to whether such a force will actually emerge as part of the separate and collective geopolitical codes of European countries.

China and Modelski's model

The increasing global role of China has been a key feature of the changing geopolitical context in the past couple of decades. For the years immediately after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 the War on Terror dominated the geopolitical calculation of the US. Over time, increasing attention has been paid to the actions of China. Three developments are of particular interest: 1) the construction of military capability, especially naval strength that increases China's ability to project power, 2) the financial power that China has gained as a result of its economic growth, and 3) its involvement on the African continent.

For some in the US military, whose job it is to envision security challenges in the not-too-distant future, China has been identified as a threat to the ability of the US to project its power across the globe, a key aspect of world leadership. In the language of US defence planners, China is developing anti-access/area denial plans that would limit the ability of the US navy to operate freely near China's coast (Johnson and Long, 2007). Increased satellite, radar, missile, naval, and air-strike capabilities are identified as means to limit US access to part of the world's oceans. The construction of "islands" to act as bases is enabling China's greater maritime reach by acting as outposts for support aircraft, small ship, and even missile sites. In addition, China's creation of aircraft carrier capability has heightened the US's concerns. On the other hand, the US and China brokered a deal to cooperate over matters of nuclear security, with an eye to the actions of North Korea as well as potential nuclear terrorism. These two different security approaches are tangible manifestations of what President Obama called the "healthy competition" between the US and China.

In terms of Modelski's model, the discussions of "area denial" would point to China as a potential challenger to US world leadership. On the other hand, the move towards nuclear security cooperation suggests partnership that could develop into the coalition building that is another key part of the model. The ability for countries to develop their own agency (rather than being determined by the model's imperatives) suggests that China is not predestined to act as challenger, but that as China's power increases the US will be attempting to create both fruitful economic and diplomatic relations while, simultaneously, considering the changing security balance in East Asia.

China's rise to power is much more than a question of military might. Its staggering economic growth has meant that it has engaged with key global institutions, such as the WTO, in a dramatic shift from its traditional insular policies of the Cold War era (Moore, 2005). It has become a global financial player. Importantly it is the largest holder of US public debt, to the tune of around \$900 billion. This stark fact is a source of tension between the two countries, but also means that the US has to consider the influence China has over its economy when making (ostensibly) domestic economic decisions as well as diplomatic statements about, for example, China's human rights violations. However, the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a clear attempt to create new institutions, rather than be a compliant member of US-led organizations.

China's increasing global profile is clear in Africa. As part of the geopolitics of the Cold War China sent tens of thousands of workers to newly independent states. With increasing economic wealth China was able to send investment rather than just people. The value of trade between China and Africa has grown from \$6 billion in 1999 to an estimated \$100 billion in 2010. Raw materials, such as oil and minerals, are sent to China to fuel its manufacturing sector and the finished goods return to Africa. This economic relationship is assisted by official Chinese aid for infrastructure projects that will benefit Chinese companies. In some cases, the financial support offered by China is used to leverage diplomatic concessions; especially promises by African states to support Chinese efforts for Taiwan to be recognized as a Chinese province rather than an independent state (Afrol News, 2010).

China is also raising its global profile through public diplomacy. Aware of the cultural power of the US, notably the cultural influence of Hollywood and the role of US ideas and personnel in NGOs, China is developing ways to strengthen its national image. "Whether it is Chinese philosophy, literature, aesthetics, ethics, or ancient military warfare, Chinese scholars argue that these rich and diverse traditions from one of the world's greatest and oldest civilizations should be more widely shared with and appreciated by the rest of the world" (Siow, 2010, p. 1). Some Chinese diplomats are saying that China has a need to obtain

hua yu quan, or being given a position to assert one's voice (Siow, 2010). In other words, China is developing strategies to establish a global stage to pronounce its cultural and political qualities and achievements. The growing cultural influence of China is evident in its role as a market for Hollywood movies that will soon be larger than the US. Hollywood studios have responded by changing storylines and adding scenes in China to appeal to the Chinese market. Is Hollywood acknowledging, and facilitating, the greater global role of Chinese culture?

In summary, China has dramatically increased its military capability, and economic strength and influence over the past couple of decades. Is it pursuing strategies to project cultural power, too? Modelski's model would predict that at this time some states would be positioning themselves to challenge the world leader, and of course many of the more hawkish commentators in the US are eager to portray China in this way. But as the world leader declines and faces challenges, the model suggests that it also seeks coalition partners. The complexity of dependence and suspicion that defines US–China relations suggests that there is much geopolitical agency to occur before we see which, if either, of these scenarios happen.

North Korea, the NPT, and Modelski's model

North Korea has disrupted the geopolitical agenda of the United States since the end of the World War II. The Korean War (1950–1953), known as the 6/25 war in Korea because of its 25 June start date, was driven by North Korea's aim to control the whole of the peninsula and backed by the Soviet Union and China. It was the first major event of the Cold War. Since the ceasefire in 1953, North Korea has refused to compromise with the United States, providing both a justification for the United States to build up its military strength in Northeast Asia and a foil for North Korea to claim it is threatened by Western "imperialism."

The major challenge to US world leadership has been North Korea's development of a nuclear weapons programme. This is not simply a military challenge, through possession of a weapon of mass destruction, but a challenge to the institutional arrangements put in place by the world leader. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was designed to limit the possession of nuclear weapons to the US, Soviet Union/Russia, China, France, and Great Britain (the so-called P5 states and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council). The NPT aimed to limit nuclear weapons proliferation by allowing states (at the outset assumed to be the P5 states) to assist other states to develop nuclear power for domestic and peaceful purposes, such as energy and medicine, whilst stopping states developing weapons. The development of nuclear weapons

programmes by Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea is a failure of the NPT regime. On the other hand, proliferation has been limited to those states and South Africa abandoned the development of its nuclear weapons programme as part of its decision to sign the NPT in 1991. Hence, a positive interpretation is that the NPT has slowed the pace and extent of nuclear proliferation. Myanmar and Syria are suspected of trying to develop nuclear weapons programmes. However, the ability of the US to broker a deal with Iran to prevent the development of a nuclear weapons programme can be interpreted as a successful display of world leadership to counter proliferation.

To develop nuclear weapons is to challenge the ability of the US to act as world leader and enforce the NPT regime. North Korea has consistently violated the NPT by trading with other states and non-state actors to help them develop their own nuclear weapons programmes. North Korea's economy is in a terrible condition and cannot provide for its citizens, with recurring famines. It has earned money by selling narcotics and counterfeiting currency (Vaicikonas, 2011). Moreover, it has traded with Iran, Syria, and Pakistan to the advancement of the nuclear weapons programme of all four states. Sanctions imposed against North Korea have been breached through trading across the border with China (Vaicikonas, 2011). North Korea's first test of a nuclear bomb in 2006 and the testing of missiles that can reach Japan are certainly a challenge to the security regime the US established in Northeast Asia. In addition, its agency in creating a trading network in violation of the NPT, and despite a system of sanctions initiated by the US, has challenged one of the world leader's key security institutions.

Legacy, change, and world leadership: feedback systems in Modelski's model

The final feature of the model we will discuss is its feedback system. Modelski identifies two related feedback systems. The first, the developmental loop, notes that though the world leaders come and go the legacy of their innovation remains. In other words, the ideas and institutions established by the world leader do not disappear entirely from the geopolitical scene as a particular country loses its status as world leader. For example, if the US was replaced as world leader it is likely that the idea of national self-determination that was an ingredient of its "innovation" will still retain some role in global geopolitics. Also, the institutions of the UN and the World Bank, as entities managing global economics and

politics, are likely to remain, if perhaps in a different form. As support for this claim, the “ideas” of free-trade and freedom of movement in international waters established by world leaders hundreds of years ago remain essential political norms.

The second feedback system outlined by Modelski is the regulatory loop that examines the process of an emerging challenger and the establishment of a new world leader. The logic of Modelski’s model does not allow us to make predictions. It is difficult to consider this model without asking who the next challenger will be, and who will be the next world leader. Specific answers are not provided. However, recourse to Modelski’s model does raise some interesting historical patterns that help us interpret the current situation.

In Modelski’s history the next world leader has not been the challenger, but has been one of the countries in the coalition brought together by the world leader to fight the challenger. The case of the United States and Great Britain is a clear illustration of this process. Great Britain’s role as world leader was challenged by Germany, resulting in the two World Wars. To challenge the might of the world leader Germany realized it needed to form a coalition; it could not do it alone. However, given the process of decline identified by Modelski, Great Britain could not fight off challenges to its power alone either. It too needed to establish a coalition of forces. Crucially, it required the industrial might of the United States to support its war effort. Germany and Great Britain, challenger and leader, exhausted their material capacity for power in the long phase of global war. Remote from the domestic destruction suffered by Great Britain, continental Europe, the Soviet Union, and Japan, the United States gained ideological influence in relation to the relative and absolute increase in its material power. Both previous leader and challengers were spent forces, but the US, the increasingly prominent member of the world leader’s coalition, was able to assume the pre-eminent geopolitical position. If there is a lesson to be applied from Modelski’s model, it is that educated guesses about the next world leader should select from the coalition, the leader’s allies, and not its challengers.

The current geopolitical situation complicates the ability to learn from Modelski’s model. Modelski’s historic examples are from the period when geopolitical actors were identified as competing countries. Other geopolitical actors were ignored. What of now? If we focus solely on countries, then China, members of the EU, Russia, and to a lesser extent Japan are wheeled out every now and then as “threats” to the US. But, these countries are not the cause of the US’s current military mobilization. Has the geography of challenge changed? Is the network of al-Qaeda and ISIS the challenger to the US’s world leadership? If so, what does that mean for coalition building and the process of succession?

Pros and cons of Modelski's model

Modelski's model is helpful for putting particular events into a historical perspective. Current affairs are not singular unrelated events. Rather, they are moments in broader processes and trends. Greater understanding of the event, its significance and implications, is achieved if you evaluate it within an understanding of world politics such as is offered by Modelski. Moreover, events can also be thought of as "observations" or "data." They are the "test" of the model. In other words, do the events we see in the news counter or support the trends we expect from Modelski's cycle of world leadership? Of course, the model must be thought of broadly and as an abstract teaching tool. Nonetheless, too many deviations from the expected pattern of events should lead us to challenge the model.

The model itself is far from perfect either. But that should not force us to dismiss its value out of hand. Social scientists are well aware that the theoretical tools we work with are imperfect. One of the most important concerns about Modelski's model, and similar ones such as Wallerstein's world-systems theory, is philosophical. First is the logical problem of historical determinism. Just because Modelski has identified cyclical patterns of world leadership in the past does not allow us to predict that the demise of the US's world leadership role is inevitable or determined. Portugal's sixteenth-century history does not determine the US's twenty-first-century future. The reason for this lies in another philosophical concern, structural determinism. The US as world leader is a geopolitical agent; it has some degree of freedom to choose its own actions. A drift towards global war is not determined; it *partially* rests upon the actions of the US.

The key word here is "partially." Proponents of structural models tend to give emphasis to the constraints that structures place on agents; in this case the structural inability of the world leader to untangle itself from increased challenges to its authority. Researchers who are more focused upon agency place greater emphasis on, say, the foreign policy decisions made by successive US presidential administrations.

Another set of criticisms towards Modelski's model reside within his conception of what geopolitics is. First, his model follows the classic geopolitical tradition of being state-centric. The geopolitical agents (leaders, challengers, and coalition members) are all countries. Second, he focuses upon the rich and powerful countries; poorer countries of the "global south" are deemed irrelevant in his system of challenge, war, and leadership. The geography of Modelski's geopolitics is limited in two senses; it sees state territoriality as the only space of politics and it concentrates on just a part of the globe.

Power is central to any understanding of geopolitics. Hence, we should be especially critical of Modelski's measure of power. One obvious question is whether sea power is any longer relevant in an age of cruise missiles and satellite communication. In defence of Modelski, his long-term historical perspective requires a consistent measure of power, one that is as useful for understanding the sixteenth century as it is for comprehending the twenty-first century. Sea power seems to fit the bill. The essence of the model, and the definition of power, is global reach, the ability to influence the behaviour of other countries across the globe. At times this requires military muscle, and as we have seen in recent US-led conflicts that still requires a naval presence. Moreover, the US military has redefined the meaning of "global reach," utilizing weapons and surveillance systems that facilitate observation of the whole globe at all times, and the ability to remotely kill people and destroy targets across the globe (see [Box 7.5](#)). Unmanned drones carrying missiles and cameras may be a long way from sea galleons, but each identifies the world leader as the country with the dominant means of exerting its power across the globe in its respective historical period.

Box 7.5 The technology of global geopolitical reach

Research and development efforts within the US are aimed at enhancing the technological capacity of the military's global reach. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)/Air Force Falcon programme is developing hypersonic flying technology "that will enable prompt global reach missions and demonstrate affordable and responsive space lift" (DARPA, 2005). The unmanned reusable hypersonic cruise vehicle "would be capable of taking off from a conventional military runway, carrying a 12,000-pound payload, and reaching distances of 9,000 nautical miles in less than two hours. This hypersonic cruise vehicle will provide the country with a significant capability to conduct responsive missions with quick turnaround sortie rates while providing aircraft-like operability and mission-recall capability" (DARPA, 2005).



Figure 7.5 Unmanned military drone.

In everyday language, this military robot can fly very fast, reach across the globe, bomb a target at a moment's notice, and do it again soon afterwards, or be redirected while in flight.

A related form of global reach is geospatial intelligence (GEOINT), a form of military power in which the discipline of geography is heavily implicated. GEOINT is the “natural marriage” (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, 2004, p. 13) of satellite and rocket images with geographic information systems (GIS). “By combining remote sensing, precise geopositioning, digital processing, and dissemination, GEOINT enables combatant commanders to successfully employ advanced weapons on time and on target in all-weather day-night conditions around the world. Today’s warfighting capabilities represent quantum improvements in precision and targeting technologies” (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, 2004, p. 15). And the goal? Well, “by continuing to leverage innovative technology and processes with an increasingly agile workforce, NGA (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency) and NSG (National System for Geospatial-Intelligence) members are uniquely postured to contribute to information dominance and, ultimately, achieve the promise of a more certain world” (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, 2004, p. 17). Contemporary global reach requires “information dominance,” the goal of “knowing” the world that the world leader dominates. The purpose of GEOINT is more “efficient” military operations that will facilitate a

“certain” world: not necessarily “just” or even “peaceful” but “certain,” a synonym for the “order” the world leader says it can provide to justify its relative power.

Also interesting to note is the contradiction in the measure of power and the operation of the politics of world leadership. While the power index is based upon a material measure, sea tonnage, the process rests upon ideological power, the ability of the world leader to define and implement a political agenda that is perceived to be in the interest of all. Rather than focusing upon the number of aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines, the world leader’s authority rests upon the resonance of its political and cultural institutions and practices. The resort to arms is an admission that the political agenda is not being followed.

Another pertinent question that is often raised centres upon the “driving force” underlying the model’s dynamics. One attempt has been to relate the rise and fall of world powers to global changes in technology and economics (Modelski and Thompson, 1995). This raises the question of how to understand the material capacity and need to possess the sea tonnage that is an integral part of his model. Economic power requires a large merchant fleet to facilitate trade. Economic power provides the public funds needed to build a military naval capacity. In addition, Modelski forces us to look at some other processes. Most intriguing is the phasing of the preference for order. It implies a generational process of forgetting the horrors of warfare experienced by many during “global war” and an increasing truculence with an “imposed order:” the geopolitics of mass psychology rather than the imperatives of capitalism.

Finally, is Modelski a geopolitician or a social scientist? A social scientist should be gathering and interpreting data with an eye to avoiding the biases of their social position and nationality. Geopoliticians, on the other hand, are politicians with an eye towards advancing a particular foreign policy agenda which they believe will enhance the interests of their own country relative to others. For geopoliticians, data is collected and theories are written in order to provide a seemingly objective backdrop that makes their political agenda seem “obvious” and validated by “science.” Within which camp Modelski falls is a matter of interpretation. He does have a message for the geopolitical future of the US. He is also a skilled historical social scientist who has meshed impressive data collection with an intriguing theoretical model.

Summary and segue

This chapter has introduced a particular model of world politics in order to provide a means for identifying the global geopolitical context. Though Modelski's model is far from perfect, it does allow us to situate the actions of countries within a global picture of political cooperation and conflict. In other words, the model is a way to situate or contextualize the geopolitical code of states and non-state actors within a global structure. Though geopolitical agency is our focus, Modelski's model helps us consider the structural limits, and possibilities, faced by geopolitical actors. Perhaps the most important usage is in the interpretation of the role of the US, and why it appears to be facing increased and intensified opposition.

Now that we have introduced a way of thinking of a global geopolitical structure, the next chapter will focus upon environmental geopolitics as another way to consider how broad global processes relate to geopolitical agency.



Having read this chapter you will be able to:

- Define the key components of Modelski's model
- Understand the critiques of the model
- Use it to interpret US foreign policy, as a form of geopolitical agency
- Use it to interpret the geopolitical codes of other states and non-state actors

Further reading

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An in-depth and accessible discussion of US foreign policy decisions since the end of the Cold War. The book provides a wealth of information that may be interpreted within Modelski's model, or used to evaluate the model.

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The research manuscript that details the model used in this chapter and the historic data used to make the case.

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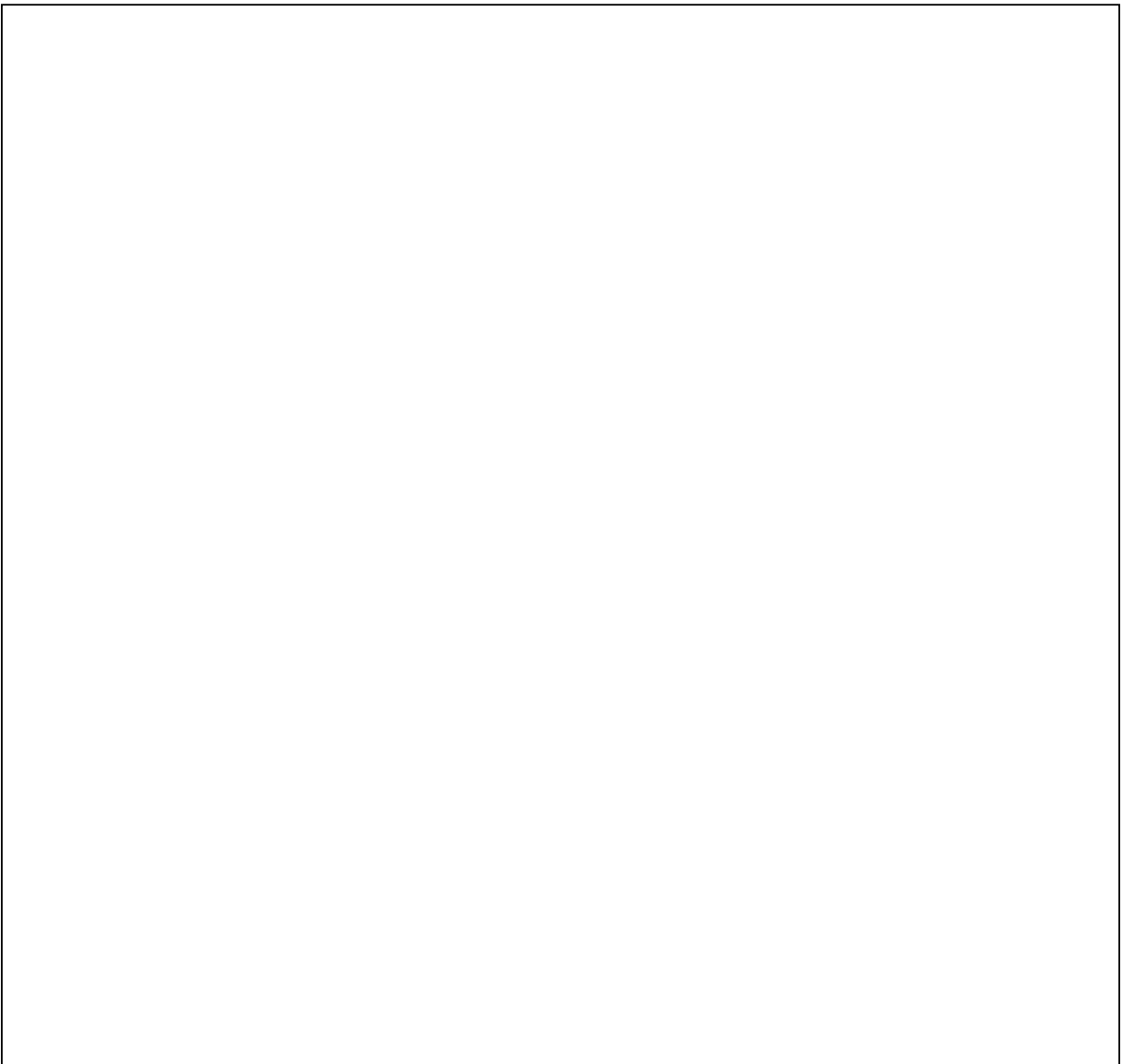
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8

ENVIRONMENTAL GEOPOLITICS: SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY



In this chapter we will:

- **Discuss the new topic of environmental geopolitics through the term securitization**
- **Identify different ways to understand environment–society relations**
- **Introduce the term Anthropocene to explain the current situation**
- **Explore how the environment has become a part of the geopolitical code of states**
- **Investigate the geography of resource conflicts**
- **Discuss the geopolitics of the Arctic**
- **Examine the geopolitics of water**
- **Examine the geopolitics of oil**
- **Understand how environmental threats are represented**

In the previous chapter we introduced a global geopolitical structure created by competition between states. Another global structure that frames geopolitical agency is the environment, or more accurately our planet or the biosphere that supports life. The environment has been made a topic of geopolitics by academics and social movements concerned about environmental degradation and the sustainability of the planet. Also, the environment has become “securitized” or seen as an object towards which state geopolitical codes must be targeted in order to provide security. Both of these approaches, by very different geopolitical actors with different goals, approach the environment as a global structure which influences geopolitical agency and is being changed by such actions. Both sets of geopolitical actors believe that their proposed actions provide “security,” but what is meant by security, for whom, and in what manner it is attained is hotly debated. The different approaches also have different visions of the necessary construction of spaces and places, and the way they are represented. Hence, the environment has become a global geopolitical structure framing the actions of a diversity of geopolitical agents.

The securitization of the environment involves a recasting of the geopolitical codes of states. However, the global extent of environmental change means inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) have come to the fore as geopolitical agents. We will see that contemporary environmental geopolitics is an inter-play between international cooperation and the self-interest of states. The geopolitics of, on the one hand, coping with global climate change, and, on the other hand, competing to control access to vital resources, illustrates that environmental geopolitics is a fascinating blend of established geopolitical practices and the necessary emergence of new ones.

Box 8.1 Climate change as a catalyst for changing geopolitical codes?

The Norwegian drama *Occupied* was broadcast globally through platforms such as Netflix. The political drama is an example of geopolitical representation in popular media. Its purpose is not just to entertain but also to provoke questions about geopolitical futures. Climate change is the main driving force behind the scenario of new and surprising fictional geopolitical codes. In the TV series, the near future is one in which climate change has altered weather patterns to the extent that a hurricane hits Norway claiming hundreds of lives. Conflict in the Middle East is so intense and pervasive that shipments of oil and gas from the region have been halted. The US has withdrawn from NATO (is that even imaginable without a popular geopolitics representation?) and is energy self-sufficient. In the wake of public shock after the devastating hurricane, and the growing concern about climate change, Norway elects a progressive leader who immediately shuts down Norway's oil and gas industry. The EU is alarmed, and recession results as a result of the lack of energy imports. After political pressure proves fruitless, Russia occupies Norway, with the backing of the EU, and restarts its oil and gas exports. I'll stop there, as anything more would be a spoiler!

Occupied, as a fictional account, is believable because policy makers across the world are changing the diplomatic, foreign aid, and military components of their geopolitical codes to take into consideration the impact of climate change. The TV show forces us to realize that we must think about the causes and consequences of geopolitical change in a completely new way. The exogenous impact of climate change is a new driver of geopolitical decisions; an additional factor to geopolitical code calculations for the existing, and somewhat known, processes of nationalism, boundary conflicts, and the rise and fall of great powers. As a result, the environment has become securitized: global climate change, drought, and other environmental processes have become part of the calculations made by states regarding the identification of enemies, allies, and the means to engage them.

Securitization and the environment

In [Chapter 4](#) we discussed the concept of militarism, the belief that military actions are the ultimate means of achieving the goals of geopolitical codes. Alternatively, it can be argued that the term “securitism” is more useful in understanding contemporary geopolitical codes (Bernazzoli and Flint, 2009). There has been a proliferation of all sorts of political and social issues that are seen as matters of “security.” Migration, inequality, drugs, pressures on prison systems, etc. have all been labelled by politicians and commentators as matters of security. The difference between securitism and militarism is that the former emphasizes how perceptions of existential threat and the need to react with some form of violence has been extended into political matters beyond what have traditionally been thought of as “military matters.” All aspects of life, such as the climate, drugs, and even poverty, are seen as security threats. For example, instead of only thinking of things such as nuclear proliferation or potential invasion as security matters, securitism identifies illegal migration as a concern to the state that warrants a potential use of force (Loyd and Burrige, 2007). Similar to our discussion of militarism, there are also processes in which securitism, as a belief system, becomes pervasive within a society. In other words, processes of securitization create the belief in political and popular circles that there are many, and largely non-military, threats out there that must be addressed with the use of potential and actual violence. Migration into the US, now met with the idea of the need and feasibility of a “fence” or “wall” along with a heavily armed border patrol that will prevent movement, has a long history of being seen as a military concern (Loyd et al., 2015). This is a form of violence. The refugee crisis in Europe has produced similar responses of fences, as well as calls to expel or monitor people already living in European countries.

Securitism means that almost any matter of public policy becomes an issue in which the military, intelligence, and other security forces have a stake. The language surrounding an issue changes so that politicians, think tanks, and the media talk of a variety of issues using terms such as “threat” or “risk.” Policy statements, newspaper and TV news reports, as well as movies, are expressions of the multi-faceted processes of securitization. If those processes are successful, the population of a state, and their political leaders, begin to see a whole new range of issues as matters of national security and tend to think of addressing them through military means, or related uses of force. The geopolitical code of a country can then become one in which a variety of risks or threats compete for attention and resources, with some of these concerns having been traditionally thought of as domestic (e.g. drugs).

The environment, especially the issue of climate change, has become one such policy focus that states now label as a matter of “national security.” The securitization of the environment is now a component of the geopolitical codes of all states. Before we discuss this more fully, we must first discuss the broader approaches towards understanding human relations with the environment. These approaches can be seen in two ways: as social science frameworks that help us explain political processes associated with the environment, and as the employment of intellectual frameworks to create Gramscian “common sense” which justify the goals and means of geopolitical codes.

Humans and the environment

Four approaches to understanding human–environment interactions will be introduced briefly. The introduction helps us to recognize two things: our generation is far from the first to wrestle with the issue of the environment, and the debate has always been a political one. The consistent theme is that humans have the ability to change the environment, and in doing so, different geopolitical representations are used to propose the causes of environmental problems and justify particular responses. In other words, the term “the environment” has been used as a vehicle for proposing different political agendas.

Humans are to blame I

The classic statement about humans and the environment is the treatise *An Essay on the Principle of Population* by the Reverend Thomas Malthus (1798), first published in 1798. Malthus claimed that while population tended to grow geometrically (i.e. 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 ...) the ability to extract resources from the environment grew at a slower arithmetic rate (i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ...). Hence, unchecked population growth would inevitably exhaust available resources. Malthus thought that the disparity would require checks on population growth. He saw two types of checks: preventative checks decreased the birth rate, and included policies such as abstinence, marrying at a later age, homosexuality, and forms of birth control. Positive checks increased the death rate and included war, disease, and famine. His social position led to firm convictions regarding who was being identified by the term “population” – it was the poor. The conclusion being that if the “poor” did not control their own population growth then “natural” checks, such as starvation, disease, and even war would check their growth, presumably as a benefit to society.

The Malthusian approach was given contemporary credence by the famous study *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1974) – basically an extrapolation of population, agricultural, and environmental resource usage trends that showed an impending planetary disaster. *Limits to Growth* is more often cited than Malthus by those who wish to impose controls on human activity in the name of the environment: probably because “science” has more authority than a politically driven eighteenth-century priest. The essence of the Malthusian approach that has implications for contemporary geopolitics is an identification of a social group, a “them,” that is to blame for environmental degradation or insecurity and that this group must somehow be controlled, including spatially.

Malthusian ideas have been challenged in a number of ways. One critique challenges the logic of exponential growth: we should not assume that the processes that have driven historic trends are going to continue to operate in the future (White et al., 2016, p. 58). Also, global models of environmental change do not take into consideration the place-specific politics we discussed in [Chapter 1](#); a global trend is one thing but experiences and political responses are quite another (White et al., 2016, p. 59). A very different critique comes from advocates of free-market capitalism who believe that entrepreneurs will react to the costs of environmental risk and identify investment opportunities to address them (White et al., 2016, p. 59). In sum, the critiques of Malthusian ideas emphasize the need to consider politics and economics rather than just demographic processes.

Humans are to blame II

The Malthusian approach was challenged at the time of writing. The most influential critique to emerge was that of Karl Marx, as part of his general criticism of capitalism. Marx noted that it was not the absolute size of population and the resource pool that was to blame but the manner in which resources were distributed across social groups. While Malthus drew attention to the actions of the poor, Marx redirected attention to the actions of the wealthiest and their role in consuming resources while simultaneously impoverishing the majority of the population. For Marx, Malthus was simply a representation that enabled the further exploitation of the poor working classes – to see their impoverishment (especially hunger and ill health) as a positive thing, and one that was self-inflicted. Instead, Marx argued that the exploitative nature of the capitalist system was to blame for the situation and behaviour of the poor: including high birth rates, which were a response to high infant mortality rates and the need to have large families to create more “breadwinners.”

Marx offered more than just a critique of Malthus. He also thought he had the solution in a new form of human society, communism. In this vision, population growth was actually seen to be a good thing. As long as the population was organized along the lines of communist theory then a bigger population would be productive and provide more food, housing, and goods for the benefit of all. In the twentieth century, with the establishment of the Soviet Union and socialist China, such an approach resulted in state-led industrialization in Communist countries that paid little heed to environmental costs as production targets to provide a new socialist society were sought. The environmental legacies still exist.

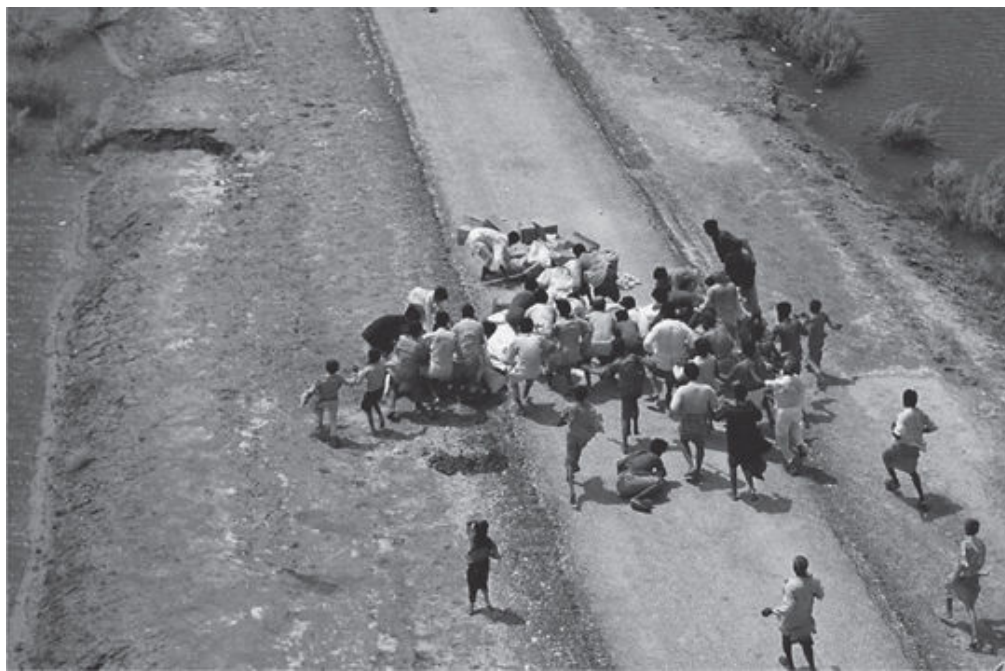


Figure 8.1 Flood relief in Pakistan.

In general, the message of Marx is that it is not population growth per se that should be seen as a problem but the unequal distribution of resources that allows for mass consumption by some and poor environmental practices by those just trying to survive. A starkly unequal society leads to practices of unsustainable resource exploitation and environmental practices at both ends of the social spectrum. Marxism as a practice that created centralized state communism, such as the Soviet Union, created its own host of environmental, let alone social, problems. However, Marxism as a theory that helps us understand the economic processes of capitalism should not be easily dismissed. The basic message that unequal and unjust resource use is at the heart of environmental degradation and

geopolitics is an essential component to understanding the contemporary issues we face.

The Marxist approach to the environment can be critiqued for ignoring the innovative capabilities of entrepreneurs within capitalism, the same critique levelled against Malthusians (White et al., 2016, p. 59). Julian Simon (1981) argues for the role of scientific and technological innovation in expanding our ability to identify and use resources. The prices of resources and food have all fallen in the long run of human history, suggesting that they have not become scarcer as Malthusians would suggest (see White et al., 2016, p. 61). In other words, we should be optimistic about the potential for humans to fix environmental problems.

Box 8.2 The geopolitics of environmental innovation

The message that can be taken from Ester Boserup's theory can be reassuring and hopeful. It is tempting to see the massive environmental issues facing our planet as being solvable as long as the right technological fix is applied; and applied it surely will be, seeing how innovative human beings are. However, innovation must be seen as a matter of geopolitics: questions must be asked about the politics behind the application of new technology. Who gets to benefit and what are the drawbacks? More precisely, we live in a capitalist world in which companies own innovations and restrict the usage of technology to maximize profit. Innovation is about profit and costs, and not, primarily, benevolent acts to save the planet. However, in the name of making money some good can be achieved, but at some costs.

The types of innovation Boserup identified were small-scale "hands-on" behaviours in which the innovator and the user were the same group. Now innovation is big business. Hence, Boserup's framework must be considered along with Marx's: innovation is embedded within power relations between businesses that own the technology and those that must pay to use it.

This power relation is very clear within the geopolitics of food. In the 1960s a wave of innovation known as the Green Revolution was touted to end global hunger. Irrigation systems, high-yield plants, fertilizers, and pesticides were seen as ways of increasing agricultural production. Though many people benefited, today billions of people still suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Some say that the Green Revolution benefited only a few

farmers and created dependencies upon water and chemicals that were bad for the environment and led to economic dependency upon big business.

With existing large-scale hunger and projected population growth, a new wave of innovation based on biotechnology, or the Gene Revolution is championed by some in an echo of the Green Revolution. However, there are certainly concerns about the Gene Revolution, discussed shortly, as laid out in a 2004 report *The State of World Food and Agriculture 2003–2004* by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN. On the plus side, genetic engineering may produce pest-resistant and drought-resistant crops, and crops that can be grown on marginal lands but contain a high nutrient level. Though the technology has changed, the promise of better crops reducing hunger is the same message heard during the Green Revolution.

There is one very important difference between the Green and Gene Revolutions. The innovations of the Green Revolution were largely led by the public sector, but in the Gene Revolution the technologies are being driven by the private sector with an eye to making profit in the large markets of the rich countries rather than addressing the needs of the very poor and hungry. The FAO's report notes that the new research is not considering the crops that constitute the bulk of the food supply of the world's poor: cowpea, millet, sorghum and teff, as well as key food crops such as wheat, rice, white maize, potato and cassava. More generally, biotechnological innovation is giving relatively low attention to traits with the greatest potential benefit to the poor, such as drought and salinity tolerance, disease resistance, and enhanced nutrition.

A critical analysis of the Gene Revolution raises questions about the geopolitics of new environmental technologies. Innovation is not geopolitically neutral. Political and economic power structures control how innovations are developed and applied, who gains access to them as users and who makes strategic decisions about their availability. Especially when the private sector is the driving force, economic questions of profit and monopoly will be imperative. Technological innovation must be considered as operating within existing geopolitical structures of power and inequity.

Humans may hold the solution

The optimistic approach that focuses on human innovation was developed by the anthropologist Ester Boserup who noted how the people she was studying in less developed countries made adaptations to their agricultural practices when faced with particular problems. In other words, human beings have the ability to

innovate and problem-solve. Boserup's (1965) findings have been applied more generally and we now see them in the search for new technologies that will ameliorate, or at best simply solve, a host of environmental problems. Contemporary optimists point to positive trends in human consumption and welfare (such as life expectancy, a reduction in disease, and increased standards of living) to counter Malthusian calls of impending environmental doom and Marxist arguments that capitalism destroys the environment. Instead, Matt Ridley (2010) says that capitalism fosters the exchange of goods and ideas that help humans solve problems (see White et al., 2016, p. 61). Interestingly, some optimistic thinkers have been forced to reconsider their positions given the overwhelming scientific evidence for global climate change. Innovation and economic growth may well have brought improvements in health and the standard of living, but it has also ushered in an era of rising sea levels and air pollution. The question as to whether new innovations will exacerbate or ameliorate these trends is an open one.

At its most extreme, and this is certainly not the original intent of Boserup, such an attitude fosters a belief in the “technical fix” – or the hope that some scientists somewhere will make all the problems humans have caused go away. Behind such an assumption is the hope, perhaps even faith is an appropriate term, that we will not have to change our lifestyles or the way we organize society – technology will be found to allow us to keep behaving the way we have been. Representations of technical fixes usually portray life as better in the future. Hence wind power and electric cars, for example, are portrayed as ways in which suburban lifestyles based around car usage are actually good for the environment. The danger of this usage is that the very real geopolitical structures and practices related to environmental change are seen to be irrelevant, and in fact consumption (done in the “right” way) is actually the solution.

The problem is a human one

The scientific identification of the increasing temperature of the atmosphere has refocused the way we think about the environment in general and environmental security in particular. The approaches of Malthus and Marx assumed a separation between humans (or society) and nature or the environment. The contemporary focus on global climate change, or, more commonly and inaccurately, global warming, has highlighted the fact that society is one of the mechanisms or components of nature. Humans are part of the environment and our actions are fundamental in rapid and dramatic environmental change. Society does not impact nature, and nature (in the form of hurricanes, for example) does not act upon society, but human society is one causal agent driving environmental

change. In other words, “*environmental problems are inescapably social problems*” (White et al., 2016, p. xviii, italics in original).

Though this has always been the case, it is poignant to reflect how and when the form of human action as part of the environment changed fundamentally to become a mechanism that is causing drastic change. The commonly held belief is that the Industrial Revolution of the late 1700s marked a threshold with humans’ mastering the ability to use carbon-based fuels (especially coal, initially) in mass quantities to create energy. The technology of coal, such as the steam engine and, subsequently, coal-based power stations, was followed by the ability to use oil. Oil not only fuelled industry but, with the invention of the internal combustion engine, led to the mass usage of the automobile and related processes of urbanization. This human usage of carbon fuels, and the effect of changing the nature of our atmosphere, with further implications of sea-level rise and changing rainfall patterns, is causing massive environmental change. Though environmental change at this scale has happened before (e.g. ice ages), the fact that it is human-made means that it is happening at an unprecedented pace with spiralling effects and thresholds of change that we are unable to predict at the moment. The central role of humans in this process of environmental change, beginning with the Industrial Revolution, has led to the labelling of our modern times as the Anthropocene (Crutzen, 2002; Dalby, 2011). Over time, there has been an interaction between the environment and economic and political structures that have combined to create both environmental problems and ways to resolve them. An academic approach called the *sociology of eco?logical modernization* explores these interactions, and a geographic approach emphasizes how social and environmental processes can come together differently in different places and regions (White et al., 2016, p. 109). Hence, we should not rush to conclusions such as the idea that climate change will increase the likelihood of conflict, as the geopolitical processes will play out differently across the world.

Box 8.3 What is global climate change?

The term global climate change is the scientific term used for what has become known as “global warming.” The premise rests upon the amount of carbon dioxide in emissions from the burning of carbon or fossil fuels (such as coal and oil). The carbon is released into the atmosphere where it prevents solar energy naturally bouncing off the earth from entering space. The energy is trapped and causes the temperature of the atmosphere to rise; hence carbon dioxide and other related emissions are known as “greenhouse gases.” Scientists have investigated a “carbon balance” in our biosphere – or

the way that carbon is captured or sequestered naturally – such as in the oceans and, importantly, the forests. Hence, deforestation is a key component of global climate change as it reduces the amount of trees able to “recycle” carbon dioxide into oxygen through photosynthesis, and destroys natural “carbon stores” and releases that carbon into the atmosphere as a gas.

Scientific analysis has indicated that the temperature of the planet has changed significantly in previous geological periods, but that such change has been gradual and not caused by humans; though it has led to severe environmental changes, such as species extinctions. However, scientists overwhelmingly agree, with high levels of confidence, that the temperature of the planet has risen quickly since the Industrial Revolution as a result of human usage of carbon-based fuels and the consequent release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Recognition of the Anthropocene epoch requires us to rethink relations between nature and society and, therefore, traditional mainstream approaches to security or geopolitics. Recognizing that humans are part of the environment nullifies the traditional resort to binaries that has dominated geopolitical thought. The basis of classical geopolitics was the labelling of parts of the world as “outside” or “foreign” and inherently dangerous, requiring in turn national security policies to provide protection for a particular state-defined population. Yet, in the Anthropocene epoch there is no meaningful role of inside/outside or external agents causing threats to a national group, and only that national group. Instead, “we” are part of the security issue; our own actions create what has become deemed a security threat. Dalby (2011) is more specific about the identity of the “we:” it is the most affluent and their consumption patterns that are the drivers of a security threat that creates risks and threats for all, but especially the poorest.

Despite the need to rethink security in the Anthropocene epoch, it is probably unsurprising that states and their military planners have been tempted to try and tackle the new and unprecedented problem within their existing frameworks. Some commentators have been glad to represent the situation in a way that would be familiar to classical geopoliticians. In other words, the environment has been “securitized” and it is to this development we now turn.

Geopolitical codes and the environment

The move towards seeing the environment as a matter of security – and national security, more accurately – was not just caused by recognition of global climate change and other planetary processes. The awareness of human-induced environmental change coincided with the end of the Cold War and the related search by states and their militaries to find new tasks or, to put it bluntly, reasons to exist. Though the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 were soon to catalyse the War on Terror and a focus on militarized foreign policy, the 1990s were a time when the military of Western countries were searching for things to do – summed up in the wonderful and telling phrase MOOTWA (military operations other than war).

The blend of scientific and political recognition of the implications of the Anthropocene epoch, a desire for the military establishment to be involved in this new arena of security, and consideration of how conflicts are, and will be, partially affected by environmental change combined to see the environment through the lens of security. Though there is certainly awareness that the processes of environmental change are different from those of conflict, the response has still been framed, largely, by different national security establishments and their ingrained ways of evaluating threats and responses to those threats.

The current situation is a mismatch between a very new form of threat and established ways of approaching security. Classical geopolitics usually equates threats with other states requiring a (military) response by the threatened state. This threat–response relationship has created what has become known as the “security dilemma;” or the actions of one state, deemed as being defensive from its perspective, seen as being threatening by another, requiring it to respond in a manner seen as threatening by the first state and hence creating insecurity rather than security. This is an established way of critiquing arms races between states. However, the situation is very different when considering the environment as a security matter. As Dalby notes:

In the case of climate change “our” actions in the developed affluent world, where security is studied, and books on security written and read in universities, are directly threatening to people in poor states who are more vulnerable, and directly threatening to future generations whose options will be drastically curtailed if nothing is done to alter existing trends in greenhouse gas production. But unlike traditional security studies, those whom we threaten – the poor in the global South, or our as yet unborn grandchildren and great-grandchildren – are not planning to defend themselves; nor do they have the ability to threaten affluent Northern states in any plausible manner. They don’t have armies that

can invade; they don't have navies or air forces to transport those non-existent armies either. In the long run, however, with sea-level rise, disasters increasing, and major disruptions to agriculture and the global economy, the affluent societies that have set these trends in motion will be directly affected too.

(Dalby, 2011, pp. 92–93)

These are sobering words, and ones that force us to consider our own daily behaviour with its environmental impacts as a form of geopolitical agency. The Anthropocene epoch also requires us to reflect upon whether securitizing the environment, or seeing it as an arena for national security agency, is likely to be beneficial. Daniel Deudney (1990 and 1999) is far from optimistic. In a series of articles he has argued that seeing the environment as a matter of national security is likely to be counterproductive because the issue is a global one, requiring international cooperation. Thinking about the environment through the lens of nationalism frames the matter in terms of the actions of specific “others” (e.g. China's economic growth) rather than seeing the Anthropocene epoch as being caused by and having implications for humanity as a whole.

Activity

Dalby's (2011, p. 50) discussion of the tension between national security and global environmental processes highlights a key quote from Deudney (1999, p. 214):

The movement to preserve the habitability of the planet for future generations must directly challenge the power of state centric nationalism and the chronic militarization of public discourse. Environmental degradation is not a threat to national security. Rather, environmentalism is a threat to the conceptual hegemony of state centered national security discourses and institutions. For environmentalists to dress their programs in the blood-soaked garments of the war system betrays their core values and creates confusion about the real tasks at hand.

To what extent is Deudney's criticism of environmentalists fair? Greenpeace is one of the most prominent environmental movements. A Google search quickly identifies two different websites: Greenpeace USA and Greenpeace International. In my home in the US, if I try to go to www.greenpeace.org my browser automatically takes me to the group's US site – or in other

words, by default it nationalizes my situation. Does this matter? Are there any significant differences between the US (or other national) site and the international one? Both sites use the word “we” to describe Greenpeace and its actions. Does the meaning of the word “we” alter depending upon whether you are reading the international or a national website? Is environmental action more or less effective if it is organized nationally? Is it inevitable or unavoidable for an environmentalist movement with a global perspective, such as Greenpeace, to organize as an aggregation of national groups?



Figure 8.2 Military response to environmental risk.

Environmentalism as geopolitical code

Though scholars such as Dalby and Deudney argue that national security is an inappropriate response to global environmental issues, states have included the environment as part of their national security calculations, or geopolitical codes. In other words, a national response to what are perceived as environmental threats has become a new form of geopolitical agency. Such calculations follow the same formula as geopolitical codes focused upon states: identifying threats, devising responses to them, and justifying both.

For the United States, the 2006 National Security Strategy began to talk about environmental issues that had “no borders.” Such a cliché was embedded within more traditional security concerns of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and regional conflicts between states. President George W. Bush’s administration was resistant to recognizing global climate change; hence the environment was identified as “natural disasters” such as hurricanes and tsunamis. Also, the US portrayed itself as a benevolent geopolitical agent that would send aid, in the form of an initial and emergency military response. This part of the geopolitical code reflected (and justified) the US’s global geopolitical presence while identifying other states as weak. President Barack Obama came to power with a very different vision for US foreign policy from his predecessor, including a commitment to address climate change. In the 2015 National Security Strategy, climate change was listed as one of eight “top strategic risks.” However, the strategy document gave much greater prominence to terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and interstate conflict in the US’s geopolitical code. Also, in 2015 the stress was placed upon alliances and partnerships in addressing climate change, a different role from the dominance put forward in 2006.

Since 2006 the foreign policy establishment in Washington DC has begun to take a more concerted approach to the environment. In 2009 the CIA launched the Center for Climate Change and National Security, a joint operation of the Directorates of Intelligence, on the one hand, and Science and Technology on the other; an example of securitization through combining scientific analysis of environmental processes with geopolitical evaluations. The press release claimed: “Its charter is not the science of climate change, but the national security impact of phenomena such as desertification, rising sea levels, population shifts, and heightened competition for natural resources. The Center will provide support to American policymakers as they negotiate, implement, and verify international agreements on environmental issues. That is something the CIA has done for years” (CIA, 2009). In other words, though the environment is recognized as a global issue, the role of the CIA is to translate it into national concerns and actions that are perceived to be for the benefit of the US. The traditional national-centric perspective of a geopolitical code is unchanged.

The CIA press release goes on to say that the Agency will be working with universities and think tanks to address issues of environmental security. One such collaboration was a report by the Center for Climate Change and National Security, the Center for American Progress, and the Stimson Center on *The Arab Spring and Climate Change* (Werrell and Femia, 2013). The report is “admirably cautious” about the role of climate change in the Arab Spring, and identifies environmental issues as “stressors,” meaning that climate change was not an isolated causal factor, but a context “that can ignite a volatile mix of underlying causes that erupt into a revolution” (Slaughter, 2013, p. 1). The report highlights the way environmental change provides a broader context for understanding the geopolitics of the interaction between networks and territory. For example, drought conditions in China were a factor in global wheat shortages that raised bread prices in Arab countries that may have been a contributing factor to the protests (Sternberg, 2013). Egypt is the world’s largest wheat importer and “the top nine importers are all in the Middle East; seven had political protests resulting in civilian deaths in 2011” (Sternberg, 2013, p. 12). The report is a short and readable report with vivid colour photographs that drive the argument home. It is aimed at policy makers rather than academics, and should be seen as a representation that is part of the effort to securitize the issue of climate change. It makes an argument that policy makers should consider climate change as a “stress” or “threat multiplier” in global geopolitics.

In the process, the CIA report attempts to create a new geopolitical imagination for the US geopolitical code, one in which “security in one place is irrevocably linked to stability in distant regions” (Werz and Hoffman, 2013, p. 33). The CIA’s attempt to get US policymakers to rethink geopolitics is in contrast to interventions in environmental geopolitics that remain in the tradition of classic geopolitics. For example, a recent volume entitled *Climate Change and National Security: A Country-Level Analysis* (Moran, 2011) focuses upon how “environmental stress may be translated into political, social, economic, and military challenges in the future.” In other words, the environment is just one more calculation to be plugged into a state-versus-state geopolitical analysis that is the building block of a geopolitical code. Tellingly, the editor, Daniel Moran, is a Professor at the Naval Postgraduate School. The CIA report and Moran’s book emphasize the role of environmental factors in geopolitical change. However, comparing and contrasting the views of how geopolitics should be seen suggests that different actors within the same state will attempt to securitize climate change and other environmental factors in different ways.

Of course, the United States is not the only country developing its geopolitical code with an eye towards the environment; though its status as world leader would, in Modelski’s (1987) view, lead to expectations that it will be attempting

to set the environmental security agenda. Other countries have included environmental issues in their agendas, meaning that the environment has become a ubiquitous issue in the construction of geopolitical codes. For example, environmental issues heighten tensions between India and Bangladesh that originate from the dissolution of British India in 1947 (Ali, 2005). Bangladesh has suffered from the impacts of deforestation, increased sediment loads in rivers, and the extraction of water from the Ganges River by India. The ongoing border dispute between India and Bangladesh, and its intersection with the environment around the issue of boundary demarcation, is a real-world example of the issues we saw in the Hypothetica case in [Chapter 5](#) (Ali, 2005). First, changes in river patterns led to newly available farmland in the Belonia area of the India-Bangladesh border. Under the protection of the Indian Border Security Force, Indian farmers grew crops on 50 acres of newly exposed land along the Muhuri River. The changing environment provided opportunities for farmers, but this became a matter of national competition and military action. Second, environmental change led to the appearance of a new island by the mouth of the Hariabhanga River in 1971. The island was claimed by both India and Bangladesh, compounding a long-running dispute over the course of their maritime boundary (Ali, 2005). Environmental change was a component of tensions over the geographic extent of India and Bangladesh.

The issues Ali (2005) identifies in the case of India–Bangladesh are applicable to a host of countries and regional contexts. They reflect a sense that environmental issues have security implications, and that traditional security concerns (such as the course of a boundary) are influenced by environmental change. However, such a geopolitical perspective does not reflect the changing understanding of human–environment relations in the Anthropocene epoch (Crutzen, 2002), nor the need to rethink security (Dalby, 2011). Instead, the analysis of the environment in this way leads to seeing the environment as just another element in a national security calculation, as if it were equivalent to a neighbouring country’s acquisition of a new aircraft carrier: the environment is just another issue the military needs to think about. However, though the inclusion of the environment in nationally based geopolitical codes is pervasive, it is not the only way states are acting geopolitically because of environmental concerns. States have included cooperation with other states as part of their geopolitical codes. It is to the means of intergovernmental cooperation and agreements that we now turn.

Climate change and the necessity of interstate geopolitics

Environmental issues have a long history of requiring, or facilitating, interstate cooperation. Though some traditions see the environment in terms of resources that are the focus for competition or conflict between states, interstate agreement is quite common. One of the best examples is the continent of Antarctica, recognized as a “natural reserve, devoted to peace and science” in a 1959 treaty. It is the one swathe of territory on the globe that has been deemed off limits to sole claims of national sovereignty. The establishment of international oceans rests on the same principle and has become a taken-for-granted part of our political world. Shared freshwater resources, or river basin management, are another example of interstate cooperation (Harris, 2005). However, regular warnings about the likelihood of future water conflicts show that interstate cooperation over environmental issues is a geopolitical *process*, constantly requiring negotiation.

The Anthropocene epoch has ushered in a series of conferences, workshops, protocols, and agreements between states. In this section we will emphasize the positives and potential of such interstate cooperation, with an emphasis upon global climate change, before introducing some critical reflections in the next section. The UN has acted as a framework to organize an interstate response to global climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established by a resolution of the UN General Assembly in 1988 after the establishment of the Panel by the UN Environmental Panel and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The IPCC came to global prominence when it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. The IPCC website (www.ipcc.ch/organization/organization.shtml) is pregnant with the language of interstate cooperation. For example, “The IPCC is an intergovernmental body. It is open to all member countries of the United Nations (UN) and WMO. Currently 195 countries are members of the IPCC. Governments participate in the review process and the plenary Sessions, where main decisions about the IPCC work programme are taken and reports are accepted, adopted and approved.” The website goes on to emphasize the support of governments for the scientific endeavours of the IPCC, but then makes one thing clear: “Because of its scientific and intergovernmental nature, the IPCC embodies a unique opportunity to provide rigorous and balanced scientific information to decision makers. By endorsing the IPCC reports, governments acknowledge the authority of their scientific content. The work of the organization is therefore policy-relevant and yet policy-neutral, never policy-prescriptive.”

The establishment and remit of the IPCC, and its award of a Nobel Peace Prize, are indicative of a number of key points. First, global climate change is recognized by individual governments and the UN as a problem requiring attention and action. Second, the issue of global climate change has produced inter-governmental action to staff and support the IPCC. Third, the actions of the IPCC, and therefore the issue of global climate change, has been given visibility and legitimacy as a “global good;” something that is a moral imperative of the international community. Fourth, despite these positives the impact of the IPCC has been, and will likely remain, limited. The key position of states as geopolitical actors means that action to combat global climate change will not take place unless states can reconcile this concern with other elements of their geopolitical code. There is also one other factor: engaging global climate change requires concerted global geopolitical action; a task that would appear to fall under the responsibility of the world leader. Is the United States willing and able to make global climate change an important part of its geopolitical code?

International responses and national geopolitical codes

Though an institution like the IPCC can act above states, produce knowledge, and make recommendations, it is states that must act to implement regulations and practices to limit fossil fuel emissions. A series of international conferences and workshops has produced protocols and targets for fossil fuel emissions by states. This has led to a battle in which the rich industrialized countries (the biggest emitters) are trying to minimize the reductions they must make, and the developing countries argue that they are most vulnerable to climate change and should not be punished for the behaviour of the major emitting states. In addition, rapidly growing countries, such as China and India, are wary that their trajectory will be delayed by having environmental conditions imposed upon them. In sum, competition between states and their position within the global economy produces a geopolitics of negotiation in which an international response to global climate change becomes a matter of state-based geopolitics.

The Kyoto Protocol is perhaps the best example of the tension between a global vision and the goals and imperatives of individual states. The Kyoto Protocol refers to an agreement stemming from a meeting in Kyoto in December 1997 under the umbrella of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC website has more details (http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php). The Protocol set binding targets for thirty-seven industrialized countries plus the EU, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The reduction amounted to a 5 per cent reduction from 1990 levels through the five-year period of 2008–2012. However, we can see the operation of

what we identified in [Chapter 1](#) as relational power in the actual operation of the Kyoto Protocol.

The agreement recognized the unequal power relations between the richest countries and the rest of the world in the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities.” The principle recognizes that global climate change is the result of the industrialization over the past two centuries of the world’s richest countries. Hence, they should carry the burden of reducing the process of climate change. The Kyoto Protocol identifies this burden or responsibility in two ways. First, by demanding that the industrialized countries reduce emissions. The second is through mechanisms of what has become known as carbon trading (so named because carbon is the most important element in greenhouse gases). The Protocol set emission amounts for each country. If a country emits less than the set amount it may sell the balance to a country that has exceeded its target of emissions. In other words, a dominant position in the network of global economic relations gives a country the ability, or power, to pay for emitting over its agreed limits.



Figure 8.3 Climate scientists conducting research.

Though the convention to establish the Kyoto Protocol occurred in 1997 it did not enter into force until 2005. However, the Protocol was shaken by the controversial decision of President George W. Bush in 2001 to withdraw from the agreement. He argued that the Protocol was flawed as it did not require developing countries to reduce their emissions, including relatively powerful and rapidly growing India and China. President Bush's overall conclusion was that the Protocol would harm the US economy. His argument was very state-centric; that a country's geopolitical code must be about narrow self-interest. In contrast, the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" takes into consideration the history of all states, how the challenges and insecurities of global climate change that affect everyone have been constructed over time by the actions of a minority of states, and how these very actions have produced their relative wealth and power. President Bush acted in a traditional geopolitical practice of state

competition and self-interest. But perhaps global climate change requires geopolitical codes that create common responsibilities and actions?

Under the administration of President Barack Obama, the attitude of the US to global climate change was a mixture of state-centrism and compromise within inter-governmental agreements. The 2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference was part of the UNFCCC program and was intended to come up with agreements to identify actions to mitigate climate change beyond 2012. The media claimed the conference ended in “disarray,” with an Accord (rather than a concrete agreement) that was not agreed upon unanimously. Subsequently, and through the channels of Wikileaks, it became evident that China and the US had acted in concert to ensure that no agreement was reached. In other words, a mutually convenient relationship of cooperation between two states was able to counteract attempts to act in a communal manner. At the time, it appeared that geopolitics of state interest, in which powerful states can attain their goals, trumped inter-governmental progress to face a challenge that will affect all of humanity.

However, at the end of 2015 the situation changed. Representatives from countries across the globe met in Paris and made a landmark and legal agreement to limit the increase in global temperature. The agreement made governments accountable in their pledges to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The ambitious goal of keeping climate warming to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels sets a high bar. The deal has legal force, but was designed in a way that did not require the approval of the US Congress. The Paris Agreement was the successful outcome of over 20 years of inter-governmental cooperation, but was also an international agreement that was understood to have little support from the elected Congressional representatives of the world leader, though it was strongly welcomed by President Obama. The Agreement pledges countries to net-zero emissions in the second half of the century, meaning that emissions would be balanced with the construction of carbon sinks. In early 2016, the US Supreme Court challenged some of President Obama’s decisions made after the Paris agreement, raising concerns that the US’s inability to act could lead other countries to renege on their commitments. The complexity of the state as a geopolitical agent, made up of different institutions with different agendas, means that a country’s geopolitical code is rarely stable.

Though the Paris Agreement was an inter-governmental agreement, it would not have been possible without the role of non-state geopolitical agents putting pressure on politicians. The switch from the failure of the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference to the success of the 2015 Paris Agreement is a matter of the changing geopolitical codes of individual countries. It should be noted that countries made such a change because of the actions of non-state geopolitical agents. Social movements concerned about the environment will also ensure that

states will be evaluated on the sincerity of their commitments to tackle global climate change.

Climate change and non-state geopolitical agents

The role of power politics in disrupting interstate agreements on global climate change suggests that non-state geopolitical agents may be more apt at identifying the needs and reaching the goals of those who will be most impacted by global climate change. Though the change is global the impact will fall disproportionately on the poorest within the poorest countries. The Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, was an unprecedented UN conference that brought together 2,400 representatives of NGOs, including delegates from groups representing indigenous and marginalized peoples in developing countries. The Summit produced agreements and frameworks, including the UNFCCC, the Statement of Forest Principles, and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. One significant geopolitical implication of the Earth Summit was the recognition of non-state agents as essential actors. The Summit enabled diverse groups from across the globe to forge connections and make joint statements and actions.

The geopolitical agency of NGOs has, of course, continued. Different NGOs illustrate different ways of conducting geopolitics. For example, the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC) is an organization that brings together European pension fund managers and asset managers who, collectively, manage 13 trillion Euros of investment. By managing these assets in a way that is sensitive to corporate policies that have an impact upon climate change, they believe they can alter the behaviour of multi-national companies. Specifically, after the 2015 Paris Agreement the IIGCC created a framework to make sure climate change risks are part of corporate decision-making, and guide the investments of their own funds accordingly (see www.iigcc.org). The management of investment flows has become an arena of environmental geopolitics.

The World Resources Institute (WRI) is an NGO that takes geopolitical agency regarding climate change to the arena of particular places. Its mission is to “assist vulnerable and marginalized populations in adapting to a warmer world” (World Resources Institute, n.d.). For example, the WRI supports electricity generation from renewable sources to vulnerable populations. A focus on vulnerable populations in particular places requires a feminist geopolitical analysis that highlights how local and national practices of patriarchy intersect with global geopolitical processes, such as climate change. For example, water scarcity is one outcome of global climate change in some parts of the world, and will have a particular impact on the livelihoods and status of women in Africa, where they

comprise the majority of the agricultural workforce. The same disproportionate impact on women is evident in access to energy, provoking outcomes such as the work of Grameen Shakti in Bangladesh to train women to become solar engineers and technicians (for more details of these two examples see the *Women and Climate Change* report described in Further Reading).

The success of the Paris Agreement, after many years of negotiation, shows that states can alter their geopolitical codes to reach international agreement on global environmental issues such as climate change. However, the geopolitical representation that states provide security is undermined when the threat is one common to humanity but generated, largely, by the most powerful. The delegitimation of states within the context of environmental change provides a context for the increasing role of the types of NGOs and social movements we discussed in [Chapter 6](#). An environmental geopolitics that considers the security of humanity is partially driven by geopolitical agents that challenge dominant geopolitical actors. Despite the successes of non-state geopolitical agents, states still dominate the agenda when they can make a claim that environmental change is a matter of national security. We turn next to one such example.

The geopolitics of the Arctic

The Northwest Passage is the sea route through the Arctic Ocean along the northern coastline of North America. The search for this sea route has been a feature of geopolitics since the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, when Pope Alexander XI divided the world between Spanish and Portuguese spheres of influence, leaving the rest of Europe searching for an ocean pathway to Asia with its promise of trade and new colonies. The belief was that access could be found through the ice-bound oceans at the fringe of the Arctic and on the northern coastline of the North American continent. Despite many attempts, often resulting in calamity, the Northwest Passage was not successfully travelled until Roald Amundsen's exploration of 1903–1906. The Arctic region came back into geopolitical prominence during the Cold War when it was discovered that nuclear submarines could travel under the polar icecap and position themselves for a nuclear strike.

The Northwest Passage is again a topic of geopolitical calculations, but this time the interest is driven by global climate change. The polar icecap is melting, reducing its spatial extent and the duration of the frozen winter season. The result is that the Northwest Passage has become a viable sea route and increased potential for resource exploration is being touted. Russia, the Scandinavian countries, the EU, as well as the United States and Canada are situating the

Northwest Passage within their geopolitical codes (Lundestad, 2009). Canada's concerns include the emergence of their northern coastline as a new entry point that requires more intensive boundary policing as well as the potential environmental consequences of shipping, including oil tankers, travelling through hazardous channels (Byers, 2009).

The Arctic has also become more important in countries' geopolitical codes because of the natural resources in the region. One issue is the question of access to new fishing grounds, and the consequences for further depletion of fish stocks, requiring concerted action. The most pertinent, and combustible, issue is access to oil and natural gas resources, existing and estimated, in the region. Russia raised the stakes, in a dramatic fashion, by using a submarine to plant a flag on the ocean floor in 2007 and made some dubious geological claims to the ocean floor and, therefore, the oil and other resources believed to be located there. In February 2016, the Russian Minister of Natural Resources, Sergei Donskoy, announced the formal claim to the United Nations "to the seabed beyond the 200-mile zone along the entire Russian polar sector including the zone under the North Pole" (Kramer, 2016). This claim uses the established UN Law of the Sea and the territoriality of the ocean discussed in [Chapter 5](#), but depends on a scientific argument over the geography of the continental shelf. Scientists and submarines become key geopolitical agents in claiming territory and the resources they contain.



Figure 8.4 US nuclear submarine in Arctic ice.

A 2008 US Geological Circum-Polar Resource Evaluation Survey (USGS, 2008) sparked excitement about the potential oil and gas resources that could now

be reaped (Dodds, 2009). The report showed significant oil and gas deposits, and outlined a distinct geographic distribution. The Arctic region is divided into thirty-three provinces. Arctic oil and gas deposits began to be developed in the 1960s. About sixty large oil and natural gas fields have been discovered in the Arctic Circle; fifteen have yet to be opened for production. Forty-three of these fields are in Russian provinces, with those remaining in Alaska and Canada, plus one in Norway (see [Figure 8.5](#)). Of particular interest to interstate geopolitics is the United States Geological Survey (USGS) estimates of undiscovered and technically recoverable oil and gas in the Arctic. These resources are even more geographically concentrated than the existing fields. Eurasia is estimated to hold about 63 per cent of the total Arctic resource base and North America about 36 per cent (see Budzik, 2009 for a further discussion of these numbers).

The existence and geographic location of oil and natural gas resources is one thing; being able to extract them in a way that is economically viable is another. The harsh weather conditions require specialized equipment, and can disrupt production. The location requires long supply lines that ratchet up the costs, as does the need to pay higher salaries to induce people to work under Arctic conditions (Budzik, 2009). In 2016, as oil prices fell to around \$40 a barrel and existing oil wells on the North American mainland stopped production, plans for costly Arctic oil production made little sense. Another factor impeding Arctic oil and gas exploration was the strong opposition of environmental groups. However, just as resources are not distributed evenly across geographic regions, nor are economic imperatives and political institutions. Russia, with its reliance upon energy for its economy and a centralized and non-democratic political system, is more able to direct resources into costly energy exploration than the US, Canada, and Norway and their reliance on private companies and a market economy.

The emergence of the Northwest Passage has also produced less belligerent geopolitics, with conventions and accords designed to manage and protect the fish and mineral resources of the area and diminish tensions between states. The Arctic Council was established in 1996 as a means of regional governance – though it is mainly a means of discussion: it does not consider military or security issues, and has no legislative powers (Dodds, 2009). Despite Russia's periodic sabre-rattling, it has also been a constructive participant in the Arctic Council (Lundestad, 2009). One more point: the actions of the indigenous Inuit population have made an impact upon the perspective and actions of the interested states (Byers, 2009), illustrating the significant role non-state actors are playing in the emergent environmental geopolitics of the twenty-first century.



Figure 8.5 Arctic provinces and oil and gas deposits.

In some ways the contemporary geopolitics of the Arctic illustrate established geopolitics of boundary demarcation, resource exploitation, and interstate cooperation and competition. However, the specific issue of the opening Northwest Passage also illustrates how contemporary geopolitical codes are being constructed in reaction to changing environmental conditions and how such codes are considering environmental risks and issues. Increasingly, geopolitics and the environment are intertwined, requiring a reconsideration of geopolitical codes. For some countries on some issues the means to achieve goals may be cooperative, but other instances have potential for conflict. In some cases, securitization of an issue means that both options can be seen as viable and necessary.

Water wars? Interstate and everyday geopolitics

One focus of environmental securitization has been water. In 2005 ex-UN General Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali made a statement in an interview with the BBC that competition for water resources in Africa and the Middle East could lead to war (BBC, 2005). This statement was one of a series that led to the idea of water wars, or conflict about access to potable water. The impact of water scarcity varies across different regions of the world. Physical water scarcity occurs when there is not enough water to meet demand. Economic water scarcity is the difficulty in having access to water because it is either too expensive or time-consuming to collect (see [Figure 8.6](#)). A consideration of the geopolitics of water requires us to think of a new geopolitical scale: the watershed. Rivers do not conform to international boundaries. Rivers connect countries but can also be a source of tension. An upstream state can halt or curtail the flow of water through dam projects and over-usage. It can also pollute the water to the further detriment of a downstream state. Usually upstream states have geopolitical power over downstream states, such as in the Mekong River basin (with Chinese dams allegedly causing water shortages to the downstream states of Thailand, Laos, Burma, Cambodia, and Vietnam). An interesting anomaly is the Nile River basin in which Egypt is a powerful downstream state that has threatened to bomb any dams that were to be built by upstream Sudan.

John Agnew (2011) has argued that the politics of water, especially the way that great rivers connect the various (and sometimes competing) interests of different states requires an application of politics that is not conflictual or based on zero-sum games but requires consideration of the opinions and needs of others. A positive view of the geopolitics of water is that rather than provoking wars, it will require a collaborative geopolitics. Furthermore, the work of Leila Harris (2005) shows that this geopolitics will require connections between local, regional, state, and international scales. Connecting scales in this way allows us to address a variety of power relations, including the role of patriarchy: hence, the geopolitics of water connects interstate geopolitical codes with everyday practices.

The importance of water in all aspects of our lives means that it can play a role in a variety of different conflicts involving different structures and agents. In 2010, wheat harvests declined across the world, which was a result of either too much or too little water, depending upon the geographic context. Drought, along with heat waves and fires, caused a 33 per cent decline in Russia's wheat harvest, and a 19 per cent loss in the Ukraine. In Canada, the weather was cold and rainy, leading to a 14 per cent decline, and excessive rain in Australia reduced production by 9 per cent (Sternberg, 2013, p. 7). In China, wheat production fell by just 0.5 per cent, but the country's consumption of the grain had increased by just under 2 per cent. The lack of water in the wheat producing region of China

interacted with global trade networks, political institutions, and national history. China had experienced devastating famines in the past, and the government was concerned about losing political legitimacy if there was a food shortage. Hence, the Chinese government bought wheat on the global market. Only 6–18 per cent of wheat is traded globally and so when one country intervenes in the market, prices can change dramatically (*ibid.*, p. 8). The poorer countries in the Middle East, who are the world's main wheat importers, felt the impact of China's intervention in the global wheat market; arguably making the decline of wheat production in China a factor in the Arab Spring (Sternberg, 2013). Drought in one region of the world, in a context of decreased global wheat production, had an impact that spanned the globe. The global ecosystem, regional agricultural production, trade networks, and national politics intersected to be a “stressor” in geopolitical change (Slaughter, 2013).

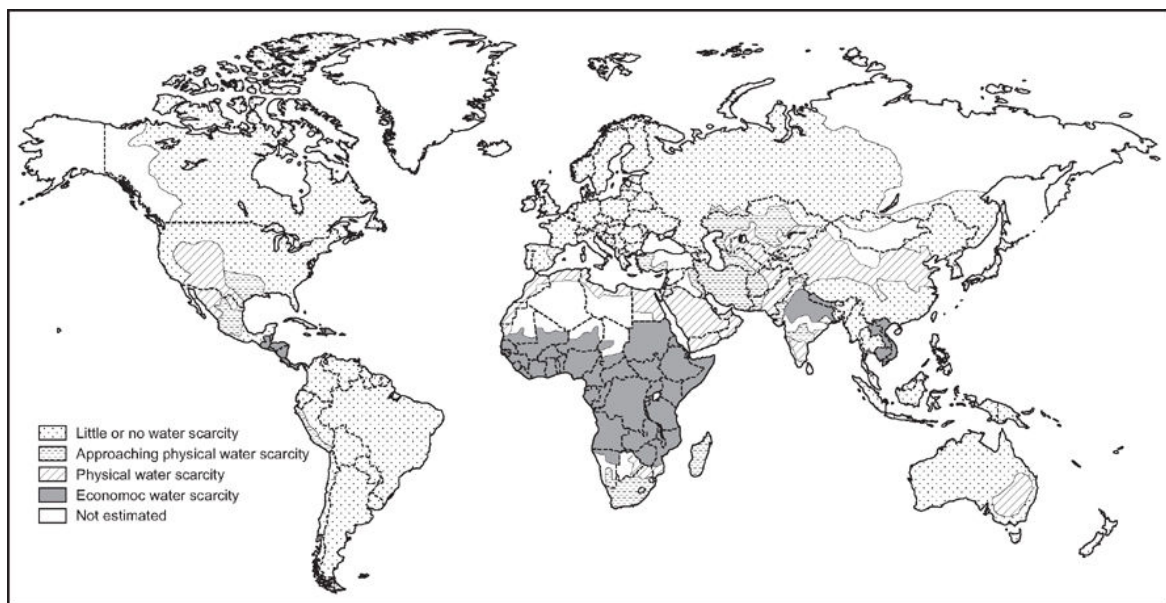


Figure 8.6 Water scarcity.

Though water issues may have a global reach, they stem from local conditions. Sudan is dependent on water with 80 per cent of the country's people working in agriculture, which accounts for 97 per cent of the country's water use (Barton, n.d.). However, most of Sudan's water comes from underground resources that are shared by surrounding countries. The agreement to share Nile River basin water was made in 1929, when Britain represented Sudan. The agreement suits Egypt, but Sudan and other Nile River countries see it as out of date, a relic of the colonial period. On the other hand, Egypt gives the agreement the same status and permanency on international boundaries, and believes the agreement should be recognized as international law (Raphaeli, 2004). Watersheds are physical

geographical features that require states to interact with each other. In the case of the Nile River, the upstream/downstream relations, with Egypt being a powerful downstream state, are given legitimacy and longevity by colonial-era agreements. The impact is felt on a daily basis, in particular in the up-stream countries like Sudan.

Whether the geopolitical future is one of water wars or collaborative watershed geopolitics is a matter of geopolitical agency. International agencies may provide an institutional context or structure to nurture cooperative agreements over water resources rather than wars. In other words, water can be seen as a conduit to peace rather than conflict if geopolitical actors can be guided towards such possibilities. The International Hydrological Programme within the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has established an initiative called From Potential Conflict to Co-operation Potential (PCCP) that “facilitates multi-level and interdisciplinary dialogues in order to foster peace, co-operation and development related to the management of shared water resources.” Rather than the dire prognosis of a neo-Malthusian viewpoint, institutional Boserupian innovation may foster peaceful collaboration around shared scarce resources. (See the PCCP website at <http://webworld.unesco.org/water/wwap/pccp/> for more details, accessed 10 February 2016.)

The work of the PCCP is useful in reminding us that the geopolitics of water, as with other environmental issues, is not just a matter of neo-Malthusian pessimism or Boserupian optimism. Instead, we have to consider a variety of political structures and agencies. The scale of the watershed, and interstate politics, can be very important – as in the case of the Nile. In addition, the feminist geopolitical perspective requires us to consider the politics of everyday experiences and how they determine access to water. In a November 2015 report entitled *Sex-disaggregated indicators for water assessment, monitoring and reporting* the PCCP highlighted the need to “mainstream” sex-disaggregated data to illustrate how patriarchy is one of the structures that has an impact on access to water. The importance of water in a country like Sudan is not just a matter of watershed-scale interstate politics, but also the differential access to water for households depending upon the sex of those responsible for water collection.

Territory, conflict and the environment

The state-centric geopolitical approach to the environment rests upon the classical geopolitical tradition that aimed to improve the relative position of one particular state. The national security agenda of geopolitics has always had an

environmental angle, usually the identification of key resources that need to be controlled by a particular state. The term resource becomes represented as a strategic resource, which implies it is something with more than simply financial or use value, but is necessary for the safety of the nation. A resource then becomes nationalized as something that a particular nation should control, either by ensuring access through the markets or by controlling the territory within which the resource is located.

The identification of something as a strategic resource will change over time. At the time of British naval power towards the end of the nineteenth century, the strategic need was for global access to coal to power the battleships of the Royal Navy. A network of coaling stations was established across the globe to ensure that the fleet could be refuelled and therefore enable the global reach of Britain (Harkavy, 2007). Through the twentieth century, coal was replaced by oil as the key strategic resource, to fuel both domestic economic production and the sophisticated war machines of the powerful states. Another trend is the increasing commodification of resources, or in other words making things that exist naturally into tradable things with financial value. Land and water are prime examples. Land has become real estate, something bounded and identified as belonging to a particular individual, business, or state. Water is a “natural resource” that is increasingly privatized, and hence access to it is controlled.

The geopolitical practice of resource control can be traced throughout history. In our engagement with modern geopolitics we can see the imperative in the early expeditionary activities of modern states, the way in which they sponsored expeditions to map out the “unknown” world and claim part of it as theirs. This imperative for territorial control underlay what Agnew (2003) called “civilizational” geopolitics – or the process by which powerful European countries extended control across the globe. Explorers reported back to their sponsors “new found” lands and the riches they contained, often resulting in the territory being claimed as a colonial possession. Through such a process, and the related process of state building, the environment became compartmentalized into territorial units claimed to be under the sovereignty of a particular political entity. The environment was not something under the stewardship of indigenous communities but controlled by state and external colonial powers. The environment became part of the calculations of global power politics and that is how it remains.

Exploration to control resources required a balance between private entrepreneurs seeking wealth through trade and states seeking power through territorial control. National royalty sponsored famous explorers, such as Sir Francis Drake and Christopher Columbus, with an eye to establishing trade that would enhance their personal wealth as well as the tax coffers of the royal court.

Though the form of both politics and enterprise has changed considerably, the same basic relationship exists today. For example, criticism of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 included claims that the purpose was to establish control of oil deposits that were to be tapped and controlled by multinational companies with particular links to national governments.

Attention has turned to resources as a cause of war, or so-called resource conflicts. If resources are something with monetary and strategic value then they will be the targets of attempts to control them through different forms of politics. More specifically, inquiry has focused upon the relationship between a country's dependence on resources and its tendency to experience conflict, usually civil wars. Using quantitative analysis, social scientists have shown a relationship between important resources and civil war (for a review see O'Loughlin and Raleigh, 2008). The geographic perspective raises caution about making such general claims. Instead, geographer Philippe Le Billon (2005) has stressed the importance of the role of geographic context in bringing together different causes and outcomes in different geographic settings. In other words, relationships surrounding resources that produce a civil war in one country might not produce conflict in another, and wars may be related to resources differently in different countries.

The general reasons for connecting wars with resources have led to the label "the resource curse" (Le Billon, 2005). Tracing the routes back to the time of early imperial conquest, Le Billon notes the connection between war, trade, and power centered upon overseas conquest for resources. By the end of the nineteenth century, industrialization had increased dependence on resources located overseas to such a degree that formal empires were thought necessary to ensure access. In the first half of the twentieth century the rapid increase in technologies dependent upon oil created new dependencies, and these were sometimes entwined with the politics of the Cold War as the US and the Soviet Union competed for access to states with oil reserves. Iran and Iraq are both good examples of states that were courted by the Cold War powers to be "client" states that would allow access, and favourable deals, for "national" oil companies.

With growing concern over the environmental health of the planet, a new linkage between resources and conflict was made and epitomized by the term "green wars." The idea being that processes of environmental degradation (such as soil erosion, deforestation, drought, etc.) would create high levels of social stress that would lead to the outbreak of war. The logic behind the idea of "green wars" comes from Malthusian thinking; especially the relationship between scarcity of resources and population growth. Marx's original critique of Malthus can be adapted to challenge a simple connection between scarcity and war. Markets for resources are global rather than local, and hence scarcity is a function

of where resources are consumed to satisfy a global consumer base. This is not a new phenomenon. Mike Davis (2001) has noted the existence of “late-Victorian holocausts” at the end of the nineteenth century; or famines in places that were simultaneously exporting food. The construction of scarcity is not a local matter, or one in which we can simply bound a “local” population and “their” resources that “they,” apparently, are degrading. Scarcity is a matter of being able to buy resources on a global commodity market. A related emerging issue is the increasing attention being paid to biofuels as an alternative source of energy to carbon, or fossil, fuels. The potential is for an increase in the price of corn as it becomes a fuel source rather than a food staple, decreasing the ability of some to afford to eat so that others can continue to drive.

The end of the Cold War led to a new approach to resources and conflict. Wars within and between what had been client states of the two Cold War superpowers broke out. This was particularly the case in Africa. States that had received support from either the United States or the Soviet Union for strategic reasons during the Cold War were left to their own devices. In response they turned to controlling resources within their borders in what became labelled “greed wars.” The key change here is that resources switched from being the reason for war to becoming the *means and ends* of war. The purpose of controlling resources, especially diamonds and timber, is to pay for waging war. The outcome of war is the ability to maintain control of the territory in which the resource is located. These “new wars” are about profit, and certainly not ideology or traditional causes of national liberation.

Le Billon (2005) recognizes the general trends identified in the terms “green wars” and “greed wars,” but when it comes to understanding specific wars he cautions against simple and universal explanations. Countries that rely on the export of primary resources are also likely to experience undemocratic politics and poor economies, because they are dependent on the price of a single commodity that is determined by the global market, and the state’s rulers are often able to rely on the money earned abroad and can ignore the well-being of their people. However, whether such circumstances lead to war, and if so in what form, are a function of the specific circumstances of the country.

Though it is hard to simplify the complexity of unique cases into an explanatory framework, Le Billon concludes his discussion of resource conflicts by suggesting how different types of resources and their geographic location are likely to produce particular types of conflicts. First, he categorizes resources as either being concentrated in a particular location, which he calls “point,” or whether the production of the resource takes place over a large area, which he calls “diffuse.” Examples of point resources include oil reserves, and examples of diffuse resources include timber and cropland. The reason why this distinction is

important lies in the ability to “harvest” and then move the resource to market, or what Le Billon calls the “lootability” of the resource. The nature and location of the resource relate to how it can be targeted by rebel or non-state forces. For example, onshore oil is hard for rebel groups to actually drill or exploit, but it may be stolen or facilities targeted for extortion. On the other hand, alluvial diamonds are liable to be exploited or stolen by rebels.

Taking this analysis a step further, Le Billon relates the type of resource (point or diffuse) to its location within a state, whether it is close (proximate) to the centres of power or nearer porous borders and in remote, poorly governed areas (distant). The result is a 2-by-2 categorization based on resource type and location that suggests the form of violence that rebel groups are most likely to use to control the resource (Table 8.1). Point resources, such as oil and gas, that are close to centres of power are most likely to provoke a coup d’?tat to take control of the state and thus the exploitation of the resource. However, if the same point resource is distant it is more likely to lead to secessionist politics, or attempts to create a new state that contains the resource. A diffuse resource that is proximate (such as cropland) is most likely to result in mass rebellions or peasant uprisings that seek to overthrow the existing government and replace it with a new one. However, if the diffuse resource is distant, as is often the case with timber, it is most likely to provoke warlordism – or the use of violence and intimidation to secure de facto control over a region within a state.

Table 8.1 The geography of resource conflicts

<i>Resource characteristic</i>	<i>Point</i>	<i>Diffuse</i>
Proximate	State control or coup	Peasant or mass rebellion
	Iraq/Kuwait (oil)	Mexico-Chiapas (cropland)
Distant	Secession	Warlordism
	Chechnya (oil)	Burma (timber)

Source: Le Billon (2005).

Activity

What do we know about the connection between environmental stress, climate change, and armed conflict? There is a general idea that climate change will heighten and intensify existing environmental difficulties and lead to wars. One rigorous test of these ideas has suggested we should be more cautious about making definite and complete claims (Raleigh and Urdal, 2007). Instead, population growth and population density seem to be related to conflict when some types of environmental stresses are involved

but not others. Also, these relationships seem to be different depending upon the context, specifically whether it is occurring within a high- or low-income country. See [Table 8.2](#), which summarizes whether there is a connection between conflict and different types of environmental stress, and whether the relationship changes between high- and low-income countries. This table shows, for example, that land degradation leads to greater risk of armed conflict in high-income countries but there is no relationship or connection between land degradation and armed conflict in low-income countries.

Table 8.2 Climate change and the risk of conflict

<i>Environmental stress</i>	<i>High-income countries</i>	<i>Low-income countries</i>
Population growth	Increased risk of conflict	Increased risk of conflict
Population density	Increased risk of conflict	Increased risk of conflict
Land degradation	Increased risk of conflict	No relationship with risk of conflict
Water scarcity	Increased risk of conflict	Increased risk of conflict (but less so than in high-income countries)
Population growth and land degradation	Some risk of conflict	No relationship with risk of conflict
Population growth and water scarcity	No relationship with risk of conflict	Increased risk of conflict

Source: Raleigh and Urdal (2007).

In what ways do the relationships support or challenge the ideas of Malthus, Marx, and Boserup we introduced at the start of the chapter? What geopolitical structures do you think are relevant? What forms of geopolitical agency do you think are relevant? How do you think these structures and agency interact? How and why would the interaction be different in high- or low-income countries?

Le Billon's 2005 framework forces our attention to the different geographies of civil war and their connection to resources. However, we should not forget that Le Billon situates these intra-state geographies within a context of global politics and the commodification of resources. Oil is the resource that, in today's world, is most commonly seen as a driver of global geopolitical activity, and it is to that topic we now turn.

Oil, empire, and resource wars

The geopolitics of oil is nothing new. Since the end of World War I the recognition of the importance of oil has produced calculations regarding colonialism, the need to maintain friendly governments in oil-rich countries, securing of seaways and (increasingly) pipelines through which oil is transported, and claims that military interventions are driven by the interests of oil companies. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the support for anti-Colonel Gaddafi rebels in Libya in 2011 have been portrayed as serving, primarily, the demands of oil companies. The immediacy of the geopolitics of oil has been heightened by the concept of “peak oil;” that we have reached the point where accessible oil reserves will diminish as demand grows.

Economic growth in Asia, especially China and India, will increase global demand for oil and gas (Klare, 2009). The increasing profile of Chinese investment in oil production facilities across the globe has provoked some accusations that China is trying to secure reserves and therefore promoting a risk of shortages for other states (Jiang and Sinton, 2011). On the contrary, a report by the International Energy Agency claims that rather than being driven by national geopolitical equations, investments by Chinese oil companies are largely independent of national geopolitical and state-based imperatives, and are sound financial investments based on business strategy (Jiang and Sinton, 2011). Furthermore, rather than creating shortages, these investments have usually increased the global supply of oil that is available through the international market. For example, despite investing heavily in Kazakhstan’s oil industry, and the existence of a pipeline into China, some of the oil produced as a result of Chinese investment is sent to China whilst some is sold on the global market (Jiang and Sinton, 2011).

The discussion of Chinese investment highlights two relevant themes. First, the recognition of the importance of a global market that sets the price of oil based upon supply and demand. Second, a concentration upon particular territorial geographies; the states investing, buying, and producing oil. The geopolitics of oil is a combination of territorial control and being able to have influence within economic flows of investment and supply. Though there are some critical commentators eager to throw the charge of “empire” at the US for its military actions that are seemingly provoked by the need to access oil reserves, a more careful analysis shows that there is more to the US geo?political code than territorial control.

Geographer John Morrissey has studied the history of US involvement in the Middle East, the world’s primary oil-producing region. Since 1945, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt committed the US to backing King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud’s regime in Saudi Arabia, successive US administrations have made protecting the flow of oil from the region a priority of their geopolitical code. It

has been a non-partisan issue (Morrissey, 2008). However, the situation changed in the 1970s when the US's loyal ally the Shah of Iran was overthrown by Islamists around the same time of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. The response by President Jimmy Carter was a reaffirmation of the US geopolitical code towards the region in what became known as the Carter Doctrine:

Let our position be absolutely clear: an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.

President Jimmy Carter, State of the Union Address, 20
January 1980.

An immediate act of geopolitical agency was the establishment of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). Morrissey (2008) argues that the Carter Doctrine and the RDJTF was not just a function of the 1970s rise in oil prices and the related crises in Iran and Afghanistan, but also the broader geopolitical context of the Cold War, including nuclear parity with the Soviet Union and wound-licking after defeat in Vietnam. The Carter administration had been considering the Middle East as a region in which superiority over the Soviets could be re-established. The geographical focus of this global calculation became clear when the “area of concern” of the ostensibly global and newly formed RDJTF was established as the Middle East and the Horn of Africa (Morrissey, 2008). The incoming administration of President Ronald Reagan reorganized the RDJTF into a separate regional command, central command or CENTCOM, and in the process promoted the region as the most important focus of the US geopolitical code, above Western Europe and Northeast Asia. The regional emphasis of the Carter Doctrine and the establishment of the RDJTF and CENTCOM suggest that the US geopolitical code and the geopolitics of oil are about the military control of territory (see [Figure 8.7](#)).

However, when the economic motives of CENTCOM are investigated, other geo?ographies become apparent. Its presence in the Middle East is not just to maintain and promote US strength but the economic vitality of the *world* (Morrissey, 2008, p. 108). Since 1983 every CENTCOM commander has gone before the US Congress to affirm the connection between US military presence in the region and the global economic benefit. As General Norman Schwarzkopf put it at the time of the US mission to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1990:

The greatest threat to U.S. interests in the area is the spillover of regional conflict which could endanger American lives, threaten U.S. interests in the area or interrupt the flow of oil, thereby requiring the commitment of U.S. combat forces.

(Schwarzkopf, 1990; quoted in Morrissey, 2008, p. 112)

Or as a subsequent CENTCOM commander-in-chief, General James Binford Peay III, said in 1994, the mission of maintaining “regional stability in the Persian Gulf [was] integral to the political and economic well-being of the international community” (Binford Peay, 1995; quoted in Morrissey, 2008, p. 113). These goals continue in the geopolitical practices and representations of the US, and were reiterated during the administration of President George W. Bush in the 2005 National Defense Strategy that noted the importance of a military presence in the region and the need to protect “the integrity of the international economic system” (Morrissey, 2008, p. 113).



Figure 8.7 CENTCOM.

The connection between the oil resources of the Middle East region, the global economy, and US geopolitics is reinforced by the analysis of geographer David Harvey (2003). He argues that the connection rests upon the following proposition: “whoever controls the Middle East controls the global oil spigot and whoever controls the global oil spigot can control the global economy, at least for the near future” (Harvey, 2003, p. 19). Military actions such as those in the establishment of CENTCOM and the invasion and occupation of Iraq are seen as means to stave off economic competition from China and the EU by controlling the cost of oil, and the manner in which it is distributed across the globe (Harvey, 2003, p. 25).

The contemporary geopolitics of oil is a complex mixture of global supply, increased demand related to economic growth (and especially the trajectory of India and China), a territorial focus upon military presence in the Middle East, and the flow through trade networks of oil exports. The actions of states in ensuring the flow of oil can change within the global context of the world oil market. Territorial geopolitics meets the geopolitics of flows and their control, and it is all occurring within a geopolitical context of competition between states. In 2015 and early 2016 the price of oil was very low, putting economic pressure on oil-producing states (such as Russia, Venezuela, and many Gulf states), while also raising questions about the changing meaning of energy security. Geopolitical codes increasingly emphasized domestic production of sustainable energy, in conjunction with the 2015 Paris Agreement, rather than access to foreign oil supplies.

The return of Malthus

Geopolitics is both practice and representation. For those who wish to securitize the environment and make it part of a state’s geopolitical code, a historic figure has become very useful. The Reverend Thomas Malthus is readily mobilized in geopolitical representations that are eager to do two things: 1) blame people other than ourselves for environmental degradation and 2) identify environmental concerns as a security issue that must be incorporated into geopolitical codes, usually with military involvement. Contemporary uses of Malthus, known as neo-Malthusian in the literature, are based upon geopolitical representations that concentrate on the global and unbounded nature of new environmental dangers (Dalby, 2006). In doing so, a dualism between society and environment is maintained; some connections across the globe are emphasized, but at the same time other linkages are denied.

The most influential neo-Malthusian text was Robert Kaplan's (1994) essay "The Coming Anarchy" in which a Global South was rife with environmental degradation, starvation and hunger, and disease (AIDS was highlighted) that was a function of unchecked population growth. It was vintage Malthus but with a global, or classic geopolitical, range. Kaplan specifically identified the impoverished masses being pushed to challenge the more prosperous North, building upon images of a wave of environmental refugees moving through Central America or crossing the Mediterranean Sea to seek survival and protection.

The geographic understanding of the world to provoke such a scenario, and it was a view of the world eagerly consumed in the wealthier parts of the world, required a carefully crafted geopolitical representation. First, the environment is seen as being separated from human activity; it becomes something external or a new type of "other" that has a dangerous impact upon innocent humans (Dalby, 1996). Disease, environmental degradation, and global climate change are not seen as social processes or the result of human activity. This is clearly an incomplete and biased perspective. It is like claiming that nuclear proliferation is independent of the decisions of state leaders. Deforestation and desertification are the result of human actions, such as clear-cutting of rainforests to harvest timber.

Second, certain geographic connections, some of them implausible, are represented as being likely (Dalby, 1996). This is a common component of geopolitical representations, constructing scenarios that bolster a weak argument and have implications that demand a security response. For Kaplan (1994), it was the movement of people from Global South to Global North. This exaggerated threat denies the necessary ties people have to place that sustain them even in times of hardship. Though massive disruptions, including war and natural disasters, do provoke large-scale movements of populations, these events are rare. The components of place we identified in [Chapter 1](#), including a source of livelihood, supporting institutions, and a sense of belonging, create bonds to places that make the cost of leaving high. In addition, the costs of moving in the conditions described by Kaplan would be enormous; being identified as a security threat would lead to the exclusion of environmental refugees from everyday society. They would be isolated in camps and likely be sent back across international boundaries.

Third, and in contrast to exaggerating weak or unlikely ties, Kaplan's analysis ignores actual and important connections between the Global South and North (Dalby, 1996). The environment and populations of the Global South are seen as an isolated "other." In reality, the environments being degraded are connected to the Global North through linkages of investment and trade. Simply, the timber harvested in the forests of Brazil or Burma is consumed as furniture or other

products in the stores of the US, Europe, Japan, China, etc. The pollution of the Niger delta and the poverty and violence experienced there are a direct result of oil exploitation by multinational companies and the demand for oil products in high-consumption societies. When discussing Massey's (1994) understanding of place in [Chapter 1](#) we noted the importance of identifying the connectivity between places, and investment and trade would be one such connection. Furthermore, while powerful actors may create or encourage some linkages (such as those involved in oil production), others may be discouraged. The countries of the Global South have consistently argued that the best way to combat the poverty that Kaplan laments is to end trade tariffs that protect US, EU, and Japanese farmers from competition.

As we have emphasized throughout the book, representation is an essential component of geopolitical codes. This does not change when it comes to environmental geopolitics, and the spectre of masses of the poor as somehow dangerous to the lives of the comparatively wealthy and powerful has been updated from the time of Thomas Malthus. The ubiquity of neo-Malthusianism is not surprising. It tells a comforting story: the poor are to blame for their situation, they are destroying the environment, and security actions against them are justified. This representation helps the comfortable and wealthy (including me and, I suspect, you) sleep at night. The power of a geographic perspective, such as Massey's (1994), that highlights real, rather than represented, connections between places is the establishment of a geopolitical awareness of how one group's poverty could be a function of our wealth; and it is "our" consumption that drives "their" environmental degradation. That is a much more unsettling story – though one more likely to incite collective geopolitical actions that may have positive impacts on global environmental change.

As we have emphasized throughout this book, geopolitics is a matter of practice and representation. The representations discussed in this section are motivated by a sense of limited resources and competition over their control.

Summary and segue

Human beings are components of nature, rather than separate entities that interact with the environment. Thinking of the environment as a geopolitical structure illustrates how the agency of states and international organizations creates the structure of the global environment and the ways in which that structure changes. Contemporary environmental geopolitics is a tension or contradiction between the recognized need for states and people across the globe to connect and cooperate, while at the same time promoting (in some cases) agency that is based on narrow

self-interest. Geopolitical codes are constructed accordingly as the environment has become securitized; the degree of cooperation or conflict as a means varies between countries and across issues. Also, the geopolitics of the environment forces an understanding that individuals are parts of broader groups or identities that interact within one world, whether we recognize those connections or not. However, cooperation is difficult to achieve precisely because geopolitical agents are complex and operate within multiple structures: global, interstate, and everyday agents and structures interact. The following concluding chapter focuses upon the complexity of geopolitical structures and agency.

Having read this chapter you will be able to:

- **Consider the ways humans interact with the environment**
- **Identify the way the environment has been securitized**
- **Understand the concept Anthropocene**
- **Investigate how geopolitical codes have emerged within the Anthropocene**
- **Evaluate the causes of resource conflicts**
- **Consider representations of the environmental aspects of geopolitical codes**

Further reading

Dalby, S. (2011) *Security and Environmental Change*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

This short and accessible book provides a summary of the current state of thinking about environmental security and the implications for humanity. It is written by one of the most prominent scholars of environmental geopolitics.

Alam, M., Bhatia, R. and Mawby, B. (2015) *Women and Climate Change: Impact and Agency in Human Rights, Security, and Economic Development*, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. Online. <<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/sites/giwps/files/Women%20and%20Climate%20Change.pdf>>

This report provides case studies and analysis to illustrate how local and regional power relations intersect with global environmental change to create everyday political realities for women. It illustrates how marginalized people are geopolitical agents, often bearing the brunt of climate change, but with the capacity for action.

Klare, M.T. (2009) *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet: The New Geopolitics of Energy*, New York: Holt Paperbacks.

Bringing together the geopolitics of global supply and demand for oil, as well as the politics of control of oil resources, this book extends the themes of our discussion in this chapter. The book also discusses the politics of alternative fuels.

Peet, R., Robbins, P. and Watts, M. (2011) *Global Political Ecology*, New York: Routledge.

A collection of essays that discusses a broad range of resources and environmental issues and makes connections between the actions of people and organizations in specific places across the globe with global trends and the power politics of the global economy.

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9

MESSY GEOPOLITICS: AGENCY AND MULTIPLE STRUCTURES



In this chapter we will:

- **Emphasize the complexity or “messiness” of geopolitics. In other words ...**
- **Highlight the interaction of multiple geopolitical structures in creating specific geopolitical contexts**
- **Focus on the topic of rape as a weapon of war to illustrate the argument**
- **Use a case study of the conflict over Jammu and Kashmir to exemplify the interaction of multiple geopolitical agents and structures**
- **Consider a geopolitical commitment to peace**
- **Use “messiness” to criticize the return to classical geopolitics in mainstream commentaries of global affairs**

We will conclude our discussion by emphasizing the complexity, or “messiness,” of geopolitics. Each of the previous chapters has focused upon a particular set of geopolitical agents and structures; the geopolitical codes of states, or the metageography of terrorist networks for example. However, in [Chapter 1](#) we introduced agents and structures by talking about how they could be seen as nested scales. In our introduction we noted that most geopolitical actors are simultaneously agents and structures. For example, NATO acts as a single agent, but also serves as a structure for the actions of individual member countries. The nested nature of agents and structures means that any geopolitical agent will have to simultaneously negotiate the opportunities and constraints of a number of structures. Furthermore, geopolitical agents have multiple goals – they are not homogenous, simple, or singular entities. The multiplicity of geopolitical goals is evident in individuals, nations, states, terrorist groups, and any other geopolitical agent. In other words, geopolitical agents juggle a number of identities, some competing and some complementary. Combining the multiplicity of agents’ identities and goals with the combination of geopolitical structures indicates that geopolitics is a messy affair.

Box 9.1 Who am I, who am I fighting, and why?

The cause of the Palestinians is commonly identified as a nationalist struggle – the desire of a people for their own independent state. Indeed, this was the focus of the case study in [Chapter 5](#). However, to talk of the Palestinians as a homogenous group is false. On the one hand, the politics of the national group is the product of competing groups with different goals. For one, factional politics is a key part of Palestinian politics. But instead of focusing on formal or party politics, let us begin with the example of an individual Palestinian man, ‘Adnan, living in the Rafah refugee camp in June 2001, and his experiences of an Israeli army raid that demolished 17 houses, the homes of 117 people:

While the shelling continued, I took my disabled mother, who requires a wheelchair, and told my wife and children to get out of the house. They were all frightened and hysterical. Throughout the neighborhood there were screams of little children, and adults asking, “Where is my son? Where is my brother? Did they get out?” [. . .] At approximately 5:30 A.M. it ended. The army left the area, and I looked for my wife and children. My sister Hanan told me that my wife, who is pregnant, was on the main road and couldn’t stand on her feet out of fear because of the horrible sight of the demolished houses. I went to her and asked what happened. She said that she was bleeding, a result of fear and the running from the house. [. . .] The army also demolished my irrigation pool, the shed with motors and pumps, and a one-hundred-square-meter sheep pen. The pen had six sheep and one of them was killed during the demolition. The bulldozer also uprooted six olive trees that were forty years old.

(B’Tselem, 2002, pp. 17–18; quoted in Falah and Flint, 2004, p. 124)

Who is ‘Adnan, or in what ways can we identify him as a geopolitical agent? Father, father-to-be, husband, son, brother, farmer, and current guardian of an olive grove that would be the hope of income for future generations. At the intense moment of the destruction of his home, what are ‘Adnan’s geopolitical goals? The quote stressed protection of his immediate family, both in the sense of their physical health and in as well as their economic well-being. Family and economics are the structural imperatives in the quote. Of course, they are linked to his plight as a refugee, and so to his membership of a stateless nation. The limited efficacy of his agency must be understood in relation to the coercive power of the Israeli Defense Forces, as well as the metageography of global geopolitics; legitimacy is accorded to states, and their citizens have rights that are not possessed by refugees. ‘Adnan’s limited options for geopolitical agency are situated within multiple and interconnected geopolitical structures.

Multiple geopolitical structures: rape as a weapon of war

Geopolitical agents operate within a number of geopolitical structures, even if they are not conscious of them. As we discussed in [Chapter 1](#), geopolitical structures can be both constraining and enabling for geopolitical agents. As we introduce the “messiness” of geopolitical structures we must consider that the interaction of different geopolitical structures may mean that some agents are particularly enabled or constrained by the way multiple structures interact. Rape as a weapon of war is a frighteningly common occurrence. The ability of some geopolitical agents to rape and use it as a weapon of war, and the vulnerability of the victims, is possible because of the interaction of different geopolitical structures. The interaction of structures means that different power relations come together, enabling rapists and constraining victims. Power relations expressed as patriarchy, generation, ethnicity, and the state make rape as a weapon of war possible. A key overarching structure is patriarchy, or the way the rules and norms of a society are made and enforced to assure that men dominate, oppress, and exploit women.

In 2008, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1820 that stated: “rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide.” However, no state has yet to be held accountable for using rape or sexual violence as a weapon of war. In the ongoing civil war in South Sudan, rape (including of young girls and old women) has become commonplace. A feminist geopolitical perspective helps us understand how this is possible, and why it is an effective weapon of war. By looking at the world of geopolitics through the harsh experiences of the victims we can see the way multiple power structures interact to create violence and marginalization.

For example, the role of women in collecting firewood is a product of long-standing patriarchal practices. In a time of war, such as in South Sudan, it can be a dangerous activity. Patriarchal construction of household duties and the vulnerabilities of particular places in a war zone combine to create a context in which women are vulnerable. In the words of Zainab Hawa Bangura, UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict:

The women when they go out to get firewood, etc. have to go through several checkpoints where you have the SPLA [Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Army] and in the course of that they are raped continuously. And, the men do not get out of the camp because the men have to make a choice. ‘If I go out, I get killed. So, I rather send my wife, my daughter or my mother out because the most they can do is rape her. She will come back alive.’ So men have to make that difficult decision of either being killed or female members of the family being raped.

(Schlein, 2014)

South Sudan is not an isolated case. Rape “routinely serves as a strategic function in war and acts as an integral tool for achieving particular military objectives” (Ramet, 1999, p. 206). Recent and ongoing conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Darfur/Sudan, Burma/Myanmar, Jammu and Kashmir have all involved systematic rape. Rape is an effective weapon because it has an impact upon a number of geopolitical structures and, hence, is disruptive in many ways. For example, Allen’s (1996) discussion of the former Yugoslavia points to the ability of systematic rape to change the perception of place: after public rapes of Bosnians and Croats had

demonstrated the danger of remaining, people would leave their established homes and leave the vacated town for occupation by Serbs. Rape had changed a place from a traditional site of community to a site of fear, and so facilitated the brutal redrawing of the ethnic geography of former Yugoslavia.

Key to understanding the ability to motivate soldiers to rape, as well as the disruption of communities, is the notion of patriarchy. The ability to violate and harm women, to see rape as an acceptable form of combat, requires soldiers to be socialized within structures that see the domination and control of women as a norm. The patriarchal view of women as “property” that cannot be married off or produce wanted children after rape reinforces the strategic understanding that communities and families will reject rape victims. In Nigeria women and girls liberated from capture from the militant Islamic group Boko Haram, and often raped while in captivity, are labelled “annoba,” meaning epidemics or “Boko Haram wives” (Searcey, 2016). Their subsequent rejection by their communities, and inability to find husbands, has lasting legacies. In the rest of this section we will explore the power of these legacies as the interaction of multiple structures.

Rape in warfare is also a means of impregnating women of particular social groups “and thus poisoning the womb of the enemy” (Crossette, 1998). From this perspective, the target of the rapists is at the individual scale of the mother and the offspring, invoking feminist geopolitical approaches to see the body as political. The woman becomes “damaged goods in a patriarchal system that defines woman as man’s possession and virgin woman as his most valuable asset” (Allen, 1996, p. 96). As one Rwandan rape victim said, “We are not protected against anything. . . . We become crazy. We aggravate people with our problems. We are the living dead” (Human Rights Watch, 1999, p. 73). Rape victims are unable to find husbands and bear other children, and hence become rejected by their families and communities. The target of the rapist in war is also the child, in a context in which membership of one ethnic community is vital and children born from rape can be seen, for example, as infusing Serbian blood into other ethnic groups and producing “little Chetniks” or “Serb soldier-heroes” (Allen, 1996, p. 96). Rape destroys the life of the individual and disrupts the identity and cohesion of the community and the ethnic group.

Understanding the power of patriarchy is crucial in making sense of the impact of systematic rape, and hence its adoption in war. In a nationalist or ethnic conflict, when it would appear that group identity is the dominant geopolitical factor, a daughter attacked by the enemy group does not receive the sympathy and help of her own community. Patriarchal values trump communal solidarity. In the former Yugoslavia, for example, women feared being shunned by family and friends (Allen, 1996, p. 70), and the victims' trauma was "exacerbated by cultural taboos associated with rape" (Human Rights Watch, 1999). In Jammu and Kashmir, Pandit and Muslim rape victims in the conflict were taunted by their neighbours (of their own cultural group), and sometimes rejected by their families. After rapes committed by the Indian security forces in 1991, "women had been deserted by their husbands . . . a seventy-year-old woman had been thrown out by her son . . . [and] girls . . . were teased even by the village men" (Chhachhi, 2002, p. 200). National and community solidarity in the face of conflict took second place to embedded views of the status of women. However, the very rejection of women rape victims by their own communities disrupts societies and cultures, and so is seen as an effective weapon of war.

The final geopolitical structure I will introduce in this discussion is the state. The case of Myanmar/Burma is especially indicative, though certainly not the only case, in which the government is active in promoting its soldiers as rapists. Systematic rape by the army is based upon a patriarchal society, with "many indicators of male predominance and female subordination throughout Burmese society" (Apple, 1998, p. 26). Also, the army is alleged to "recruit" teenagers by kidnap, and one argument is that systematic rape by Burmese soldiers is indicative of the abuse they have suffered themselves (Bernstein and Kean, 1998, p. 3). The Burmese government uses the army in its attempt to dominate minority ethnic groups. Similar to other conflicts, rape in Burma is used to illustrate the power of the state over ethnic minorities, to instill fear, and nullify any plans for rebellion (Women's Organizations of Burma, 2000, p. 27). Furthermore, Burmese soldiers are taught that by impregnating women from ethnic minorities they will be leaving Burmese blood in the villages, which will end the rebellion. Perhaps unique to the case of Burma, and indicative of the combined domination of state apparatus and patriarchy, is the belief that rape provides the opportunity for soldiers to give women "pleasure" and so persuade them into a marriage that would diffuse

Burmese “blood” and diminish the minority population (Apple, 1998, p. 44).

Rape as a weapon of war is effective because of the lasting legacies it creates. Children born through rape become political weapons as they create divisions within communities and further marginalize women and the young. For example, Darfur, a region of western Sudan and home to ethnic Africans, has been in conflict with the Arab-dominated Sudanese government. Calls have been made to classify the killings in the region as genocide, sponsored by the Sudanese government. The violence has been committed by Arab militias known by their victims as *janjaweed*, or “devils on horseback,” who are widely believed to be doing the bidding of the government, though this is denied by officials in Khartoum. The UN investigation of the attacks has highlighted the use of rape as a weapon by the *janjaweed*. The experience of Fatouma, a 16-year-old mother and rape victim, shows the geopolitical legacy of rape. She identifies her baby as a *janjaweed*: “When people see her light skin and her soft hair, they will know she is a *janjaweed*” (Polgreen, 2005, p. A1). For now, the baby is being raised and protected, but the future for both mother and baby is uncertain given the deep cultural taboos regarding rape and the fact that, in the Muslim tradition, identity is passed from father to son. The village sheik’s thoughts towards the baby are an example of the legacy of rape as a weapon of war: “She will stay with us for now. . . . We will treat her like our own. But we will watch carefully when she grows up, to see if she becomes like a *janjaweed*. If she behaves like a *janjaweed*, she cannot stay among us.” Ethnic identity that creates a sense of “them and us,” as well as the position of women in a patriarchal and traditional society, interplay to make the future for women such as Fatouma and her offspring bleak. Fatouma’s goals are clear: “One day I hope I will be married . . . I hope I find a husband who will love me and my daughter” (Polgreen, 2005, p. A2). The structures of religious and ethnic tradition and honour make the accomplishment of these goals problematic.

Rape as a weapon of war is an important topic to discuss because of its illustration of the manner of fighting in the civil and ethnic wars that are most common today. Theoretically, the issue of rape in warfare illustrates that geopolitical agency is often very aware of the multitude of geopolitical structures and their interrelationships. By targeting relatively weak individuals an army can disrupt communities and cultures. However, such

belief in the strategy, and its chances of success, are made possible by existing patriarchal structures that view women in particular and subordinate roles.

Box 9.2 Marginalizing women in the institutions of world leadership

What structures exist that amplify discussion of some weapons of war, nuclear weapons for example, but largely ignore rape? One argument is that women do not hold leadership roles in the positions of power related to foreign policy. The problem has particular ramifications when the gender inequity in leadership roles in the US, the geopolitical world leader, is considered. The world leader is essential in creating a Gramscian common sense about the world; including setting the “agenda” of what other countries and institutions should be concerned about. If the thinking within policy-making circles in the US is dominated by men, then the global geopolitical agenda is likely to be less concerned about forms of geopolitics that victimize women, such as rape. Asking these types of questions requires connecting the different forms of geopolitics we have discussed so far: the institutions that create Gramscian common sense are given authority within the structural geopolitics of world leadership, and feminist geopolitics highlights the role of patriarchy in marginalizing women’s voices and, consequently, shaping the geopolitical agenda so that some issues are deemed important and others are not.

Micah Zenko and Amelia Mae Wolf (2015), two journalists writing for *Foreign Policy* magazine, highlighted the patriarchal and sexist way women in positions of US foreign policy leadership were portrayed. Appearing on ABC’s show *The View*, National Security Advisor Susan Rice was greeted by one of the hosts commenting, “Great skin, I have to say. Just great skin.” In a *USA Today* interview she was also asked about her dress size. The interviewer claimed “I’ve got to ask you this. I’ve got to put this on record.” It is inconceivable that, for example, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter would be asked his shirt size or his after-shave preferences.

This sexist attitude to women in power is reflected in the numbers. In the US women account for just 30 per cent of State Department senior officials and 17 per cent of active duty officers in the military. Though 55 per cent of Congressional staff assistants are women, they comprise only 19 per cent of elected representatives and 20 per cent of senators. The same pattern can be found in prominent US think tanks: in 2015, the Stimson Center had the highest proportion of women in leadership positions (40 per cent), the American Enterprise Institute the lowest (16 per cent), and the average was just 24 per cent. Similar patterns were found in the way foreign policy was conveyed to the US public. In 2014, men accounted for 75 per cent of all guests and 87 per cent of solo interviews on the top five Sunday morning political talk shows.

Feminist geopolitics is crucial in identifying the marginalization of women in positions of leadership, and considering the implications. One reason why rape as a weapon of war is so low on the global agenda is silences that are created by a patriarchal system that privileges the thinking and agendas of men. However, the structural geopolitics of Modelski's model is also necessary to fully understand the politics of women's marginalization. The global leader sets the geopolitical agenda, what matters and why, for other countries and civil society actors. The exclusion of women from positions of leadership in the US means that young women rape victims in, for example, South Sudan are seen as unimportant. Masculine thinking continues to define war as a country-to-country affair using what are seen as established weapons of war (such as guns), rather than identifying rape as an everyday reality of modern conflict.

For a full discussion of marginalization of women in US foreign leadership positions see Micah Zenko and Amelia Mae Wolf's "Leaning From Behind: The Troubling Lack of Women in the World of Foreign-Policy Making and Media," *Foreign Policy* September 24, 2015. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/24/leaning-from-behind-women-foreign-policy-media/>.



Figure 9.1 Child soldiers.

The focus on the “messiness” of geopolitics shows that the reality and experience of conflict is very different from the simplicity and singular explanations provided by, say, Modelski’s model or definitions of nationalism, etc. However, that does not mean that models and theoretical concepts are unimportant. The role of models and concepts is to simplify in order to understand key structures and processes. The trick is to realize that any given situation is the coming together of a variety of geopolitical agents and structures operating at different scales. In other words, we can try and make sense of the “messiness” by first identifying the multiple structures and agents at work and, second, seeing how they interact in complementary and competing ways.

One conflict, but multiple agents and structures: the example of Jammu and Kashmir

The example of the nationalist conflict in the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir will attempt to show how any geopolitical conflict is the product

of the interaction between many different geopolitical agents and structures. By choosing to examine some geopolitical agents and structures, and perhaps ignore others, some forms of a geopolitical conflict will be emphasized and others ignored. By knowing that all conflicts involve multiple agents and structures you can ask yourself what is not being addressed in any media or scholarly discussion.

In June 1947 Britain announced that its withdrawal as colonial ruler of British India would involve partition of its colony and the creation of two separate independent states, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and India. At the time of partition the political positions concerning Jammu and Kashmir fell into three general categories: Hindus (geographically concentrated in Jammu) wished for the continued rule of the Maharaja. The Muslim Conference members wished to be a part of an Islamic state (either Pakistan or independent) and the National Conference wished to join the secular Indian state. Muslims were the majority group in the Kashmir Valley and a large amount of Muslims were also in Jammu (Malik, 2002, p. 64). The forces unleashed by partition created a wave of mass killings (based on ethnicity and religion) and displacements. Hindus and Sikhs moved eastward and Muslims migrated westward. During the British occupation there were areas that were formally controlled by the British and areas, such as Jammu and Kashmir, where the British gave power to another leader. At the time of partition, it was assumed that the latter would join either India or Pakistan, based on both geographic location and characteristics of the population. Kashmir and Jammu lay in between the two states, had a majority Muslim population, and were being ruled by a Hindu (Malik, 2002, p. 63).

In March 1948 an interim government of Jammu and Kashmir was formed with Sheik Abdullah as Prime Minister and Hari Singh holding the title of Maharaja but with little to no power. In May war broke out between India and Pakistan, when Pakistan sent its official troops into Kashmir. In January 1949 the UN brokered a ceasefire after a conflict that left approximately 1,500 casualties on each side. An official ceasefire line was declared and remained until 1965. The region was separated into three different administrative parts: the Northern Areas (controlled by Pakistan), Azad Kashmir (independent in theory), and the rest controlled by Indian troops. Further wars between India and Pakistan that occurred in 1965 and 1971 solidified the situation and India tried to strengthen ties with Sheik Abdullah. In 1981, Farooq Abdullah, the sheik's son, took over office and

his father died shortly afterwards. However, in 1984 India dismissed Farooq and installed a new ruler of their choosing. Farooq was quickly reinstated as “chief minister.” These changes led to the eruption of an insurgency in Kashmir in 1987. The situation worsened and in 1992 India initiated Operation Tiger (followed by Operation Shiva). These security operations have led to allegations by civil rights groups of widespread killings and other atrocities by the Indian security forces. The tensions occurred within the context of nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998 and further military clashes the following year.



Figure 9.2 Historical roots of conflict in Kashmir.

In 2001 India passed the Prevention of Terrorism Bill (POTB): “a repressive piece of legislation that could be used to justify considerable

human rights abuses by the government of India, especially in Kashmir, where India is fighting a counter-insurgency war” (Podur, 2002). Terrorist attacks on the Indian Parliament in December led to the build-up of Pakistani and Indian troops on the border. Tensions were defused, and troops withdrawn, after months of diplomacy. Between 2002–2008 there have been numerous attacks on Hindus in the area. In 2008 and 2009, large anti-Indian protests, regarding land transfers related to a Hindu religious site, caused a response by Indian forces that resulted in casualties and increased tensions.

Accurate, reliable information concerning the amount of casualties since the beginning of armed conflict in Kashmir is impossible to obtain. Official handouts give the following information from 1990–1999: 9,123 members of armed opposition groups, 6,673 victims of armed opposition groups, 2,477 civilians at the hands of Indian security forces and 1,593 security personnel have been killed. However, the Institute of Kashmir Studies, a research centre, has estimated the number of 40,000–50,000 deaths since 1989/1990 (all information taken from Amnesty International, 1999, pp. 8–9). Since 2001, tensions between India and Pakistan have waxed and waned. In early 2005, there were signs of cross-boundary cooperation that may be interpreted as peaceful overtures, and an earthquake in the region in October 2005 resulted in promises of cross-border cooperation. However, the situation is delicately poised. Indian politicians are keen to accuse Pakistan of sponsoring terrorist attacks in India (including the brazen attack on Mumbai in November 2008) and the public is quick to claim Pakistani sponsorship of the Kashmiri militants. In December 2015, the governments of India and Pakistan announced “comprehensive bilateral dialogue” in a move that was welcomed by the international community and seen to be the product of tentative positive diplomatic overtures, but there is ongoing violence involving the deaths of civilians and soldiers.

Geopolitical agency in Jammu and Kashmir

The brief history of the conflict emphasizes the actions of the Indian and Pakistani governments, and different national groups. If we explore the viewpoints of some other geopolitical agents we see how different geopolitical structures combine to provide a context for agency. Indeed, the purpose of this example is to emphasize how different geopolitical

structures and agents interact. The goal is to show the complexity of geopolitical conflicts. The conflict is not just about one state versus another, or even a singular nationalist claim. Religious identity, ethnicity, age and gender are all important structures that combine in different ways. People in the Muslim community have experienced severe treatment from the ever-present Indian security forces. “What unites disparate ideologies and programmes as well as ordinary people is a common enemy – the security forces” (Women’s Initiative, 2002, p. 90).

One set of geopolitical agents are the militant groups known as *tanzeems*, the major nationalist and religious factions that dominate understanding of the conflict. “The main political division among Kashmir Muslims now is between those wishing to accede to Pakistan and those wanting an independent state” (Malik, 2002, p. 357). What all of the Muslims agree upon, however, is the desire to be free from India. However, the everyday experiences emphasized by a feminist geopolitical approach show the violence and complexity of the conflict. *Tanzeems* are responsible for murders, rapes, and kidnappings of both Hindus and fellow Muslims. Because *tanzeems* are plentiful and uncoordinated, rivalries result that spur violence between groups. Fundamentalist groups also attack fellow Muslims that act in a way that violates their ideologies. For example, a teenager reports that his father was murdered because he consumed alcohol: “The Hizbul Mujahideen had warned him about drinking but when he didn’t care they killed him” (Chhachhi, 2002, p. 201).

In 1987, following elections that were thought to be fixed (given the very poor performance of the Muslim United Front in the elections), the youth of Kashmir began to protest and many were arrested. Disaffected youth believed they were persecuted for their religious beliefs and ethnicity. They were sought out by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI - the Pakistani Intelligence Service) who promised “arms and training to these ‘boys’ to launch armed struggles against India” (Santhanam et al., 2003). These recruits came mostly from the Islamic Students League (ISL). In the mid-nineties, due to the enormous amount of casualties within the *tanzeems*, there was a “drying up of young Kashmiri recruits. . . . School dropouts and rowdy elements began to dominate. . . . Rape became common in the Valley while innocent civilians were murdered on the suspicion that they were ‘informers’ ” (Santhanam et al., 2003, p. 28). According to a four-member all-woman team who set out to assess the situation in 1994:

Many people reported the recruitment of thousands of Kashmiri youth from poor families. . . . Someone remarked, “The sons of the rich in India and Pakistan go to America to study, for better opportunities. Our boys go out to learn how to use the gun. The power brokers are not interested in stopping the war, their children are not being sacrificed.”

(Women’s Initiative, 2002, pp. 89–90)

Lack of opportunity for young men, oppression by Indian security forces, a willing sponsor, and nationalist and religious ideology combined to fuel the *tanzeems*.

The *tanzeem* itself could become the most meaningful geopolitical structure, promoting disputes and violence between groups despite claims of a common cause. Brief descriptions of four *tanzeems* show the mixture of shared and divergent goals. *Hizbul Mujahideen* (HUM) emerged as an important *tanzeem*, headquartered in Srinagar. It is sponsored by the Pakistan government, ISI, and Jamaat-e-Islami, a political party in Pakistan. The objectives of HUM are to secede from India via armed combat and to merge with Pakistan. In 1990 Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI) and the ISI took control of Hizbul HUM. Now HUM is considered the militant wing of *Jammu and Kashmir Jamaat-e-Islami* (JKJEI), which is closely linked with the JEI in Pakistan. This group was more politically oriented and won seats in the 1987 State Assembly elections (Santhanam et al., 2003, p. 154). This *tanzeem* obviously shares the same objectives as the HUM, but seeks different means. The *Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front* (JKLF) differs from HUM and JKJEI in its goal of an independent, united Jammu and Kashmir (including Pakistani-occupied Kashmir and the Northern Territories). This group formed in 1988 (when the ISI was easily recruiting angered students and creating many new *tanzeems*) and is headquartered in Srinagar. Finally, the *Jammu and Kashmir People’s Conference* (JKPC) is less radical in nature with the objective of greater autonomy for the state of Jammu and Kashmir under the Indian Constitution. Two points should be taken from the diversity of the *tanzeems*. First, the protagonists in a conflict are rarely unified, and so it is wrong to view a particular cause or issue as singular. Second, the variety of geopolitical structures produced different goals and identities that were mutually reinforcing.

The creation of ethnic difference is also evident in this dispute. A conflict over the location of an international boundary fermented a conflict in which group identity became significant. It is estimated that about 400,000 Kashmiri Pandits (a sect of Hindus with ancestral ties to Kashmir) were forced from their homes between 1989 and 1991. The fears of a Pandit doctor facing a crowd of Hindus outside her house illustrate how cultural conflict was created over time: "Many of the young men in the crowd were boys I had delivered at the hospital! And here they were now shouting for my blood" (Raina, 2002, p. 179). The status of Pandits has changed too as they have been forced to become refugees: "While the 'refugees' were earlier welcomed and given assistance, local people have now begun blaming them for being the cause of all problems, ranging from typical urban infrastructure shortages of water and transport, to unemployment . . . increased state violence, militant attacks, sexual harassment, etc." (Dewan, 2002, p. 154).

Prior to the recent violence, Pandits and Muslims lived side by side without any problems. One woman recalls that "before the Kashmir issue [her] friends from that region were just Kashmiris; they were not seen as Muslims or Pandits" (Dewan, 2002, p. 149). Now the situation is quite different and Pandits' wishes for the fate of Kashmir differ greatly from those of the Kashmiri Muslims. "They want their own exclusive 'state' within the Valley – Panun Kashmir. This would be a region or state within India, autonomous both from central government and Kashmiri Muslim control" (Malik, 2002, p. 358). In other words, as conflict creates group identity and ethnic violence, the desire for a state for one's own group is seen to be imperative, and the geopolitical structure of a world of nation-states is reinforced.

To end our discussion of this conflict, a consideration of gender illuminates overarching or dominant geopolitical structures, as well as the cracks in their foundations. For the most part, the suffering endured by Muslim women on an individual level in the conflict is practically identical to the situation facing Pandit women who are normally seen to be on the other "side." The common threat of rape illustrates how the structure of patriarchy transcends nationalist and religious conflicts. The perspective of women is also able to stress comprehension of shared values and seek compromise and fusion over conflict and hierarchy. The sentiment of most

women is for peace based upon shared experiences. As one Pandit woman said:

It was after years that we had all gotten together at a marriage – all of us women – Pandit, Muslim, Sardarnis. It was almost like the old days. . . . We laughed and danced late into the night. Then, as we prepared to go to sleep, I heard some of the Muslim women whispering among themselves in the next room: “It’s been such a lovely evening. It is true, isn’t it, that a garden is only a garden of any worth when there are many kinds of flowers gracing it.”

(Chhachhi, 2002, p. 207)

However, not all women are united by feminist beliefs that negate the geopolitics of nationalism. A minority of women in the region saw their primary role to be within nationalist movements. For example, *Khawateen Markaz*, originally an organization that carried out social work for Muslims in Kashmir, joined the *Azaadi* movement in 1990. This group wishes for an independent Kashmir and believes “Kashmir is occupied by both India and Pakistan. We are Kashmiri women. We are committed to independent Kashmir. We respect all religions. We are not fundamentalists. People of all religions will live side by side. Kashmiri Pandits should come back here, this is their motherland” (Women’s Initiative, 2002, p. 86). On the other hand, *Dukhtaran-e-Millat*, begun in 1980, wishes that Kashmir become part of Pakistan. The movement uses the terms Hindustan and *jihad* and its leader says that “if the men make a pact with Hindustan, women of *Dukhtaran-e-Millat* will pick up the gun even against our own men if need be” (Women’s Initiative, 2002, p. 87). Clearly, the imperatives of nationalism are more important than submitting to traditional gender roles here. Ironically, the motivation is far from progressive though, as men are to be challenged only if they are seen to be nationalist appeasers.

Many women, the majority of whom are not involved in militant activity, accept the supporting role to men in their lives who join *tanzeems*. In other words, structures of patriarchy implicate women in the conflict through their subordinate relationship to husbands. Two women from Bandipora express their acceptance of family members taking part in militant activity, “I knew my husband was a militant. I knew that some day he would be killed. I grieve, but I do not complain” (Chhachhi, 2002, p. 194). Regarding

her son, another woman said, “The child of a freedom fighter will be a freedom fighter” (Chhachhi, 2002, p. 194).

The example of Kashmir has emphasized the diversity of geopolitical agents within a particular conflict and the intersection of a number of geopolitical structures. In our framework we note that geopolitical agents have opportunities and constraints set by geopolitical structures. If agents and structures are both multiple, then the choices made by geopolitical agents and the identities that come to the fore will be complex or “messy.” However, the “messiness” is a function of the many geopolitical structures that interact to form particular geopolitical contexts. Moreover, geopolitical agents have, well, agency, or the ability to make choices – such as the Kashmiri women who either rejected the language of nationalism or adopted it. By emphasizing “messiness” in this final chapter two things should stand out. First, no geopolitical conflict is simple – there are divisions within the antagonists, or many different struggles (gender, race, religion, etc.) are in play within what is often reported as a “one issue” situation. Second, you can understand the complexity by identifying the different structures that are operating, and noting the way they intersect. As a result, an attempt can be made to identify and understand the options (or lack of them) available to the different agents.

Activity

Find a news magazine such as *The Economist*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker*, *Time*, or the colour supplements of the Sunday newspapers. These magazines usually carry longer stories on current conflicts than the daily newspapers and include interviews with the participants and victims. Explore an article of your choice and use the interviews and descriptions of the participants’ circumstances to identify different structures and how they interact. Do the interviews show divisions within particular groups or agents, such as political parties, ethnic groups, etc.? In other words, does the article exemplify how geopolitical agents are not singular?

If you are in a class or other group setting you could do this project with someone else and explore the same conflict using different media sources. This will not only help you in identifying more structures and

types of agency, but you may also consider how different media outlets emphasize different structures and types of agency over others. For example, were political parties and state ministries or departments emphasized in one source while protest groups, women's groups, and other social groups emphasized in another?

Messiness, structure and peace

The horrors of the everyday experiences suffered by people in Jammu and Kashmir, or other conflicts in which rape is used as a weapon of war, are strong reminders of the chasm between a geopolitics of militarized state policies and the common and simple desire by individuals for peace. The search for peace, or the geopolitical agency to achieve and maintain peace, is one that involves multiple geographic scales and the interaction of different geopolitical structures.

So what is peace? The usual way to define peace is to distinguish between negative and positive versions of the condition. Negative peace is, simply, the absence of violence of all kinds (Galtung, 1964; Galtung, 1996, p. 31). Positive peace is better thought of as a process; a means to resolve conflicts peacefully and transform institutions and behaviours to promote justice and well-being (Galtung, 1996, p. 32). Positive peace endeavours to end violence in a sense that goes beyond simply stopping bouts of physical violence. Positive peace requires 1) identifying inequitable economic and social structures, transgressions of the natural environment, and attitudes of racism, homophobia, sexism, and religious fundamentalism, and 2) creating means to transform these structures and create dialogues of mutual understanding between individuals, states, and social groups.

Galtung (1996) realizes that the pursuit of positive peace requires consideration of different geographic scales and geopolitical structures. Adolf (2009, p. 2) distinguishes three basic categories of peace that can be related to scale:

1. Individual Peace: how individuals become and stay at peace with themselves.
2. Social Peace: how groups become and stay at peace within themselves.

Collective Peace: how groups become and stay at peace between each other.

3.

If we relate this trifold category to the dominant actors of geopolitics and negative peace, the latter two categories can be thought of as peace within a state (lack of social disorder or civil war) and peace between states (lack of war between states). In terms of positive peace, Adolf's use of the word "become" is important: it forces us to consider institutions and behaviour that constantly work to better the individual's sense of purpose and worth, the ability of states to better the life chances of all social groups within their borders and the interaction between them, and interstate cooperation that improves the well-being of all states. In other words, positive peace requires a progressive approach that creates a world based on a sense of collective identity and the mutual benefits of cooperation rather than merely the absence of fighting between states. The perspective, suggested by feminist geopoliticians, of focusing upon the individual in particular circumstances, the multiple forms of security they are seeking, and the need to focus upon interactions across the globe seems best suited to exploring ways to achieve these forms of peace. Furthermore, such a search for individual peace is only possible if geopolitical structures, such as the home, the local community, and the state are transformed too. A consideration of environmental geopolitics would also suggest a transformation of the way humans live within their global ecosystem.

If peace is to be obtained it will require constant activity to create and maintain peace at all scales, from the individual to the global. Recognizing the multi-scale nature of the process, Adolf (2009) proposes a pyramid of peace ([Figure 9.3](#)). The structure of the pyramid reflects the three scales of transnational social movement activity we introduced in [Chapter 6](#): the individual, states, and intergovernmental institutions (Smith, 1997). As we shall see, the attainment of peace at all levels of the pyramid requires geopolitical agency, by individuals and groups, which create territorial entities *and* transnational networks. Each of the levels of the pyramid has a number of structures that must be enacted, lived, and constantly constructed to build and maintain peace.

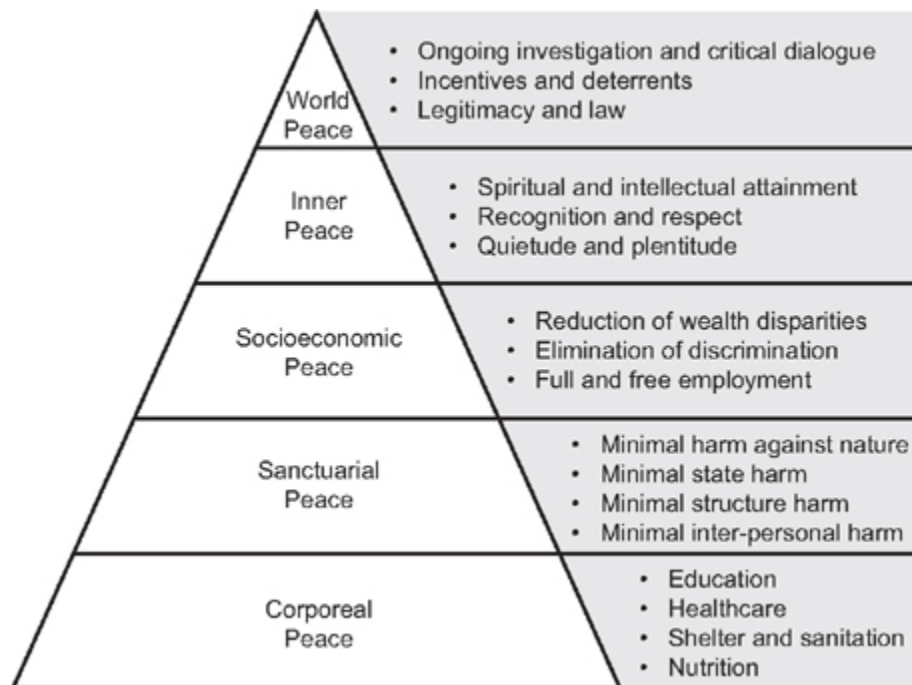


Figure 9.3 Peace pyramid.

Corporeal peace, or the well-being of the mind and body, requires nutrition, shelter and sanitation, healthcare, and education (Adolf, 2009, pp. 236–238). Sanctuarial peace may be interpreted as the construction of small-scale areas or territories that enable freedom from interpersonal harm, oppression and attack from the state or other social groups. Socioeconomic peace stems from the assumption that “how we live and work with each other (or not) as individuals and groups is a determining factor of whether peace is actualizable” (Adolf, 2009, p. 241). The components of socioeconomic peace are full and free employment, elimination of discrimination, and reduction of wealth disparities. The next level of the pyramid is inner peace, composed of quietude and plenitude, recognition and respect for other social groups and political entities, and spiritual and intellectual attainment. Though this level may appear to be exclusively focused upon the individual scale, Adolf claims that it is relevant on individual, social, and collective levels (2009, p. 243). Individuals and groups require reflection, the ability to respect and recognize others, and achieve a sense of good purpose. To put this another way, societies should not practice the “othering” we described as Orientalism in [Chapter 4](#). The top level of the pyramid is world peace, which would involve not just peace between states but the actions of intergovernmental institutions and

transnational social movements to ensure the component parts: legitimacy and law, incentives and deterrents to maintain peace, and ongoing dialogue to understand and resolve differences.

The pyramid requires, amongst other things, creation of areas of sanctuary (such as a peaceful home and community), a state with social and inner peace, and transnational movements to constantly maintain respect and dialogue. Constructing and maintaining peace requires geopolitical agency at many scales and with the intention of creating territories, networks and other geopolitical structures. Peace is a geographical and social-political process. The different components of the peace pyramid reflect the goals of different types of geopolitical agency, including the movements of the World Social Forum we identified in [Chapter 6](#). Environmental movements engage issues of corporeal, sanctuarial, and social peace. Anti-racist/human rights movements engage the inner peace of the individual and the social, and the respect and dialogue necessary for social and world peace. Contemporary peace movements are not simply anti-war, but engage the other elements of movements identified by Chase-Dunn and Kaneshiro (2009). However, this has not always been the case. The following history of peace movements shows how the form of geopolitics undertaken by anti-war movements has changed to address peace more generally through a growing politics of transnational engagement.

Geopolitics of peace movements

Writing within the context of the Cold War, George Konrad (1984) proposed the idea of antipolitics to challenge the nuclear militarism of the United States and Soviet Union that had the potential to devastate the globe. Konrad believed that the pursuit of peace could not be left to states; they had a tendency towards militarizing issues and provoking conflict. For Konrad, the solution was to reject state-based politics (voting for representatives, lobbying, etc.) completely and create alternative movements that crossed international boundaries to create communities of people seeking common goals and values. The antipolitics that Konrad called for countered the perspective of nationalism and its emphasis upon difference. The antagonisms of the Cold War required the creation of an “Other;” or the sense that the people of the Soviet bloc were fundamentally

different from the people of the West, and vice versa. It is easy to identify Konrad's vision as having come to some fruition with the development of contemporary transnational social movements and the central role of peace movements within the WSF that we have already discussed.

As we noted at the very beginning of the book, geographers have been more active in creating geopolitical codes for states, and usually aggressive codes, than they have been in constructing peace. This is also true of the key classical thinkers of geography, with the notable exceptions of Kropotkin and Reclus. As with other social scientists, war has been a more intriguing topic for geographers than peace. The tide is turning to some degree (Mamadouh, 2005; Kirsch and Flint, 2011; Megoran, 2010), and one topic of analysis is a geographic approach to peace movements and activism (Herb, 2005; Megoran, 2011; Koopman, 2011).

Herb (2005) identifies three periods of anti-war and peace activism, based upon the different geopolitical context within which the movements formed and the geographic scale at which they targeted their activity. Though Herb notes that there have been organized tendencies to promote peace throughout human history, he identifies the period after the Napoleonic wars as the origin of modern peace activity. The rise of nation-state politics (after the American and French Revolutions) gave rise to a politically active citizenry. In conjunction with industrialized warfare, the citizenry was the basis for mass conscript armies that resulted in new levels of battlefield carnage. However, active citizens also organized to counter such state-based violence. In the mid-1800s the first organized peace groups appeared in the United States and Britain, including all-women groups, and in 1843 the first General Peace Convention was held in London (Herb, 2005, p. 351).

By 1900 over 400 peace societies existed in Europe and the United States, urged on by growing tensions on the European continent that, in hindsight, were the precursor to World War I. These efforts by citizens to promote peace had significant effects upon states. Herb notes the influence of peace movements in enabling Sweden's peaceful split from Norway in 1905; and the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907 that outlawed inhumane weapons, such as poison gas, and the deliberate killing of civilians. Despite these successes, World War I started and unleashed levels of battlefield carnage that shocked the world. The politics of nationalism promoted the continuation of the war and made for a difficult political

landscape for peace movements. States openly oppressed peace organizations, but still conscientious objectors (16,500 in Britain alone), and feminist movements pressed for a peaceful and internationalist agenda (Herb, 2005).

In between World War I and World War II the rise of fascist movements raised questions about the morality and effectiveness of peace movements, with some prominent voices saying that military means were necessary to counter such a political and social evil as Nazism (Herb, 2005). Though the world experienced nationalism again during the second global conflict, significant movements towards peace emerged. Notably, Ghandi's anti-imperialism movement that inspired people across the globe, and helped foster an understanding of peace beyond the negative sense of "not war." The rapid emergence of the Cold War after the end of World War II created a new environment hostile to peaceful internationalism, especially during the aggressive and paranoid anti-communism of the 1950s in the United States. In that context, any claims to be seeking peace and international engagement were easily labelled as being pro-communist in the West and led to persecution.

Despite the constraints of political oppression, Herb identifies a second peak of peace activism in the late 1950s and 1960s. The geopolitical context was defined by the nuclear arms race and concern for the future of the planet. Nuclear bomb tests in the Pacific, the growing criticism of nuclear weapons by the scientific community, and the concern of countries outside of the bi-polar alliances of the Cold War came together to launch anti-nuclear and peace campaigns. At this time political activities that can be seen as the roots for the contemporary organization of the WSF emerged. Notably, Women Strike for Peace was founded in Seattle in 1961, a grassroots movement that combined the goals of feminism and peace. There were some notable successes in the anti-nuclear movement. In 1967, twenty-four Latin American states signed the Treaty of Tlatelolco to declare a nuclear-weapons-free zone (Herb, 2005). The British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was founded in 1958, with similar organizations appearing throughout Europe, Canada, New Zealand, and Japan. Anti-nuclear activism waned after 1964 with the passing of the Limited Test Ban Treaty; a partial success but enough to provide a sense of mission accomplished.

The third peak of peace activity occurred in the 1980s in a geopolitical context of heightened tensions in the Cold War (Herb, 2005). The 1979 NATO deployment of medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe changed the geography of the Cold War: countries in Eastern and Western Europe, either side of the Iron Curtain, could foresee a limited nuclear war initiated by the superpowers that incinerated their cities while leaving the United States and the Soviet Union untouched. This new geopolitical context was the background for Konrad's (1984) antipolitics approach we introduced earlier. Concrete and practical manifestations of antipolitics included the intersection of environmentalist and anti-nuclear power movements, the women's movement and the increasing visibility of feminism, and questioning of Western consumer culture (Herb, 2005, p. 356). Though opponents of the movement, especially Western governments and mainstream media, painted the anti-nuclear movement as a puppet of a Communist conspiracy, public support was broad. In NATO countries, surveys found support for the movement from between 55 to 81 per cent of the population (Herb 2005, p. 357). As with the previous peak of activism, success for the movement came in the form of a treaty, the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty that stipulated the removal of short- and medium-range nuclear weapons from Europe.

Box 9.3 A place for peace

Hiroshima is the site of the first nuclear bomb attack. It is sobering to reflect that nuclear weapons have been used by states in warfare. Furthermore, the two nuclear bombs that have been used in war were dropped by the United States at the end of World War II, and not an international outcast or "rogue state;" and they were dropped with the intent to cause mass casualties amongst civilians rather than as limited or tactical weapons on the battlefield aimed at soldiers. Though two cities were the victims of US nuclear attack (Nagasaki being the other one), it is Hiroshima that plays an important role as a geographic site of remembrance for the horrors of nuclear war.

Hiroshima is an example of the construction of a place with a particular meaning and, hence, a role that expands beyond its simple location to encompass the globe. It is the site of the Peace Memorial

Park and Peace Memorial Museum. The park and museum attract tourists from around the world and offer educational facilities aimed at furthering peace agendas. One of the activities of the museum is the construction of a network of universities teaching about the atomic bomb under the simple plea that “No one else should suffer what we did.” The Peace and International Solidarity Promotion Division of the museum encourages universities across the world to teach courses on peace and the nuclear bomb. Hiroshima is a place acting as a key hub in an educational network that spans the globe and encourages peace.

Activity

Visit the site http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/index_e2.html. In what ways do the language of the peace declarations, children’s stories, and other exhibits use the special experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to create a global network and message? Do you think readers in different countries will see the website and museum as a national or international project?

Some general conclusions can be drawn from Herb’s (2005) geographic interpretation of the history of peace movements. First, peaks of peace activism emerge within specific and different geopolitical contexts. Second, the social construction of scale is an integral part of peace activism, as individual and local actions are the building blocks for broader politics. Third, the scope of peace activism has changed over time, becoming increasingly global rather than national. Fourth, this movement towards a globalized peace movement goes hand in hand with an increasing breadth of political activity that has become the “movement of movements” we discussed earlier. Fifth, peace activity is grassroots-based, but requires a form of institutionalization allowing for a national and global impact. Sixth, and finally, peace activity by social movements has produced responses by states; the geopolitics of states has had to take account of coordinated demands for peace.

Geopolitics of peace

The pursuit of peace is often represented as the goal of geopolitical agents. States consistently represent their actions, even when they take the form of war, as attempts to create peace. But, as we have seen, peace can be defined in different ways, and the form of definition is related to the identification of actors and structures. The idea of negative peace, or absence of violence, can lead to a focus upon states as the only meaningful geopolitical actors (Galtung, 1964). States can agree to end wars, or a strong and victorious state can impose peace on weaker states. Negotiations between states lead to treaties that impose conditions and behaviours that result in a lack of war, or a condition we call “peace.” However, the lack of overt violence does not necessarily mean a just and sustainable political situation; meaning that we should be aware of the false dichotomy between peace and war (Kirsch and Flint, 2011). Indeed, a negative peace often requires the construction of spaces and places in which the power relations that led to war are either continued, or new ones put in place. Negative peace is then another form of geopolitics, the intersection of power and geography.

An awareness of the problems of negative peace has resulted in a call by geographers to consider what peace is and what it means to study and practice geographies of peace (Megoran, 2011; Williams and McConnell, 2011). Megoran (2011) argues for an engagement with the idea of positive peace that requires the integration of society (Galtung, 1964) and engages a range of scales, from the individual body and mind to the global. Positive peace identifies peace as a process rather than a situation or an outcome, a commitment that requires constant engagement and evaluation of power relations and their implications. The process is one in which multiple power relations are involved, and hence multiple forms of agency and structures. Peace is, then, something that cannot be left to states’ elites and formal treaties, but requires social groups to constantly engage with matters of race, economy, gender, and the environment.

Megoran (2011) challenges geographers to not simply study peace (rather than being focused upon war) but to be *committed* to peace. Particular research agendas, such as critiquing the “peaceful” actions of states and investigating ways in which border disputes may be resolved, are one form of engagement. Another fruitful approach, and one that ensures consideration of a variety of structures and forms of agency, is the

increasing attention being paid to everyday peace – or the way in which people create institutions to maintain social harmony; for example Williams’s (2007) analysis of Hindu–Muslim relations in the Indian city of Varanasi. Another important topic of study is peace movements and activism, discussed as a form of network geopolitics in [Chapter 6](#).

However, Megoran (2011, p. 8) argues that geographers need to be committed to the construction of a “pacific geopolitics,” defined as “the study of how ways of thinking geographically about world politics can promote peaceful and mutually enriching human coexistence.” This requires not just studying those who practice forms of feminist geopolitics and antipolitics, but a commitment by geographers to participating in peace activities and practicing forms of non-violence. The main way academic geographers can do this is through their teaching, including student-based public engagement projects. In addition, geographers can also use the internet and participate in social movements to express a public and collective engagement with peace (Megoran, 2011).

Whether it is through traditional forms of research and teaching, or forms of public engagement and activism (Koopman, 2011), the pursuit of peace is a noble commitment for a globalized world facing nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and environmental degradation. The content of this book shows that a commitment to peace as a process is one that goes hand in hand with an understanding of (pacific) geopolitics as a messy interaction of multiple agents and structures.

The politics of geopolitics

In the Prologue we described classical geopolitics and discussed its “return” ([Box P.4](#)), or more accurately its persistence. The approach of this book is to challenge the simplicity and national agenda of classical geopolitics by introducing the insights provided by critical and feminist geopolitics. Despite a name that seems to suggest something historical, classical geopolitics is alive and well. Most of the references to geopolitics you will see in media outlets are based on the features of classical geopolitics we identified in [Table P.1](#). Op-eds, commentaries, and longer reports from governments or think tanks are likely to be written by an author from a privileged position, most commonly male (see [Box 9.2](#)), that paint a

simplified picture of a world of “us” versus “them” that emphasizes state-against-state conflicts and threats. After reading this book you should be able to critique arguments from this dominant view and ask yourself whose agenda is being promoted in a particular media intervention, and reflect on what is not being discussed. In other words, one of the take-home lessons of this book is that there is *a politics of geopolitics* (Herb, 2008). When an author makes a claim about “knowing” by describing a conflict in a particular way and offering prescriptions, they are making a decision regarding who and what is important.

Geopolitics is a way of seeing (Agnew, 2003). By reading this book and thinking about its content you now have a toolkit of ways in which to see the world. The state-centric view of classical geopolitics is just one approach to understanding current affairs. A fuller picture of the world is gained by being critical of the Gramscian common-sense that is being presented to you, and by identifying the multiple power relations and structures in operation by looking at an issue through a feminist geopolitics perspective that focuses on everyday people and their experiences. Adopting critical and feminist geopolitics perspectives means that you are no longer a passive recipient of classic geopolitical frameworks: you have the ability to read them critically and create your own hybrid way of seeing the world.

Geopolitics is not just a way of seeing. It is also the actions and outcomes that simultaneously transform spaces, places, and politics. Classic geopolitics will frame such transformation in a very limited way: usually it just asks for your acquiescence in militarized state foreign policies against a perceived threat. For those serving in the military or government services, the required actions fall firmly within the realm of “national security.” The concepts and examples in this book have allowed you to identify a much broader range of geopolitical transformations. Geopolitical agency can target a variety of structures through a host of geopolitical venues. While classic geopolitics will limit the arena of action to interstate politics, contemporary geopolitics enables you to act as an agent in many different ways for different reasons.

Conclusion and epilogue

A book such as this has no definitive conclusion. The book's task is to let the reader initiate inquiry into geopolitics and not to provide things that are "known." The case studies are included to provide background to what have proved to be persistent conflicts that could intensify and expand. Knowledge of these actual conflicts is necessary to understand contemporary geopolitics in two senses: the basic "what is happening/where is Korea?" sense, and as a way to exemplify the manner in which geopolitical structures and agents interact. In the first sense, the case studies provide a stepping stone towards a knowledge that will steadily expand as you continue to explore and engage with current affairs. In the second sense, the case studies are my attempt to talk you through some actual conflicts with reference to the framework of structures and agents – they are an exercise that I hope will facilitate your ability to analyse future geopolitical situations.

If I have one goal with this book it is to make you an informed and active participant in geopolitics. In the most everyday sense, I hope that working through this book allows you to critique what you see and hear in the media. When an "expert" is put in front of the cameras or framed on the opinion pages do not be in awe of them, but use the perspective and knowledge you have gained from this book to question their assumptions, the way they approach the conflict (and so limit the questions that are asked), and wonder what someone from another national, gender, class, racial, religious, or political perspective would say instead. To do this, the first thing is to tease out *all* the geopolitical structures and agents that are involved in the conflict and, hence, be aware of what the expert is *not* discussing. The next step is to construct a fuller picture than the expert will deliver by integrating the role of the excluded agents and structures.

My other intention for writing this book is to act as a guide to participating in geopolitics; but I am aware that this is a pretentious claim, so please let me qualify the statement. I hope that one of the lessons from this book is clear: we are all geopoliticians. We participate in geopolitics on a daily basis: we recreate our own national and state structures by simple acts of reading a "national" newspaper that is organized to talk about "them" in the international section as opposed to "us" in the politics, sports, and weather sections (Billig, 1995). We carry around images of other

countries and conflicts that are based upon popular representations of geopolitics, which in turn influence our approval of or opposition to foreign policy. Being aware of the structures of global interstate interaction, and nationalism, may, at the very least, allow for more reflection when one is asked to act in the name of the “common sense” that such structures inspire – a common sense that feminists will be eager to point out revolves around hierarchy, difference, and violent competition. What are the structures and notions of “normal” behaviour underlying *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*.

For many, participation in geopolitics is much more than the passive reconstruction of structures that are remote and somewhat intangible. Career paths may well lead to direct involvement: teaching in the United States, I am responsible for the education of many young adults who have already begun serving in the armed forces or wish to pursue careers with intelligence agencies or as part of the Department of Homeland Security. For many of the current generation of university students, political awareness was initiated on 11 September 2001. Their sense of geopolitics is very much moulded by the language of the War on Terror.

Participation in geopolitics is also a matter of questioning and challenging the “common sense” assumptions generated by the geopolitical structures in general (difference, conflict, etc.), as well as by the representations and actions of key geopolitical agents, the US and British governments for example. Protest, dissent and questioning are also evident amongst the students I teach – disaffection with both the persistent structures as well as specific government actions are also common viewpoints that produce their own actions. The commitment to peace that Megoran (2011) asks for is certainly an option I hope we all consider.

I am in no position to be judgmental about the geopolitical actions that others take. The message that I want to end with is that agency is constrained and enabled by structures. You have choices within structures – knowing the structure makes for a more informed strategy – whether that is within a family, neighbourhood, business, social movement, or state. The same awareness may be applied when interpreting current events. The decisions made by the governments of Iran and North Korea, for example, may be portrayed as irrational and unnecessarily aggressive by Western governments. But it is your task to see them as agency within structural settings of global, regional and interstate politics. As Robert McNamara

advised in the excellent documentary “The Fog of War” (2003), Lesson Number One is to empathize with your enemy. Knowing the structural context of other geopolitical agents is a means to knowing their fears, concerns, and goals. Such knowledge of geopolitics is an avenue to empathy and understanding that will, I hope, be a pathway to a more peaceful world.

To finish, one may be more poetic in considering structures and agents:

The world is big. Some people are unable to comprehend that simple fact. They want the world on their own terms, its peoples just like them and their friends, its places like the manicured little patch on which they live. But this is a foolish and blind wish. Diversity is not an abnormality but the very reality of our planet. The human world manifests the same reality and will not seek our permission to celebrate itself in the magnificence of its endless varieties. Civility is a sensible attribute in this kind of world we have; narrowness of heart and mind is not.

Chinua Achebe, Bates College commencement
address, 27 May 1996.

Further reading

The reading listed at the end of [Chapter 1](#) as more detailed and sophisticated investigations of geopolitics should be reviewed. It will provide different interpretations and topical concentrations that will be accessible after reading this book.

Adolf, A. (2009) *Peace: A World History*, Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press.

A thought-provoking definition of peace, linking a variety of scales and processes and a compelling analysis of how peace activism has proven effective across the course of human history.

Allen, B. (1996) *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

A discussion of the role and meaning of rape in warfare, with a detailed case study.

Bose, S. (2003) *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Provides an understanding of a long-running conflict that has broader regional implications.

Herb, G.H. (2005) “The Geography of Peace Movements,” in C. Flint (ed.) *The Geography of War and Peace*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 347–368.

An accessible analysis of the geopolitical contexts that have led to the formation of peace movements across history, and the changing geographic strategies they have adopted.

Stump, R.W. (2005) "Religion and the Geographies of War," in C. Flint (ed.) *The Geography of War and Peace*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 144–173.

Provides a framework for identifying and interpreting the role of religion in conflict.

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