(Dis)placing geopolitics: writing on the maps of global politics

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Abstract. The meaning of geopolitics is a curiously underexamined issue in ‘critical geopolitics’. In this paper I seek to outline and pursue a poststructuralist displacement of the concept, a displacement marked by hyphenization: geo-politics. Using Derrida’s critique of Saussure, in the first part of the paper I interweave the problem of meaning with the discourse of geography so as to write on the concepts of ‘the map’ and ‘geography’. In the second part of the paper I explore the implications of this writing on or displacing for the analysis of geographical discourse and in global politics. I concentrate on three issues: (1) problematizing the traditional conceptual maps of ‘geopolitics’, (2) speculating on the historical problematic of geography and governmentality, and (3) suggesting a typology for the study of geo-politics which pays particular attention to how places are sighted/sited/cited by governmental institutions (geo-political sites).

Radicalizing geopolitics
‘Critical geopolitics’ is a paradoxical promissory declaration. As the name of a heterogeneous movement of theoretical perspectives and agendas loosely associated with ‘poststructuralism’ or ‘postmodernism’ (both highly problematic labels), the term has a seductive but problematic existence within and across disciplinary boundaries. On the one hand, it promises the possibility of a new and radically different reconceptualization of the traditional concepts, concerns, and modes of thought that have defined the study of geopolitics for almost a century. ‘Critical geopolitics’ promises both a new degree of politicization to understandings of geography and a new degree of geographicalization to the study of global politics. It seeks to transgress boundaries and challenge what are held to be essential identities, whether they be imagined communities or inherited philosophical boundaries. On the other hand, the term is an awkward oxymoron, an attempt to force together a word usually associated with the questioning of power with another whose very mode of being has been power and the calculated use of it for reactionary ends. The ‘critical’ asserts a connection to the new critical social movements that challenge state-centric thinking, yet ‘geopolitics’ is most often associated with precisely such thinking, with policy prescription for the state.

Surprisingly, ‘critical geopolitics’ has little to say about the meaning of ‘geopolitics’. As a concept, geopolitics is regularly evoked and knowingly used yet rarely problematized. In general discourse, we can find references to the geopolitics of architecture, art, the body, capitalism (Harvey, 1985), environmentalism (Brown, 1990), genealogy (Foucault, 1980), inner-city policing (Davis, 1990), people power (Pearson, 1992), race (Delaney, 1993), random access memory (Gilder, 1990), anti-imperialist ideologies (Lacoste, 1982), urban zoning politics (Savitch, 1988), and settlement patterns (Meining, 1986), amongst others. The qualifier ‘geopolitical’ has an even greater range of usage. Given this exorbitant range of meaning, reflection on the question ‘what is geopolitics?’ is long overdue. In reflecting on this question, we are also inevitably reflecting on the question ‘what is critical geopolitics?’
The question ‘what is ...’ Derrida (1976, page 19) remarks, is the instituting question of (Western) philosophy, the question he associates with this tradition’s need to find the essence or nucleus of meaning, with its metaphysics of presence. Rather than submit to the rule of this question that begs an essential answer, Derrida seeks to displace the question, to problematize its limits and conditions of possibility. One strategy he uses is to radicalize the concepts he investigates by playing on their signifying excesses, their exorbitant meaning. Rather than conceptualizing meaning as a stable atom, a dense core or essence, deconstructionism illustrates how meaning is an unstable and shifting nucleus, a free radical that defies capture.

As a reaction to the question ‘what is (critical) geopolitics?’, in this paper I seek to radicalize and displace the concept of geopolitics by situating it within the concerns of ‘poststructuralist’ social theory, an awkward but necessary umbrella term encompassing the varied intellectual projects emerging out of the critique of structuralism in France in the 1960s. Two of these ‘poststructuralist’ intellectual projects in particular, those of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, are drawn upon in an experimental exercise to provoke a *geo-politics* (with a hyphen) that names (to the extent that this is ever possible) the problematic of the functioning of geographical discourse and/in global politics. The identification and naming of this problematic is far from a simple matter. The conceptual supports that accompany geopolitics— notions of ‘geography’, ‘maps’, ‘the earth’, and activities such as ‘surveying’ and ‘seeing’—have long remained unexamined threads in geopolitical discourse, threads which are used to stitch and sew the same old text(ile)s which (ad)dress global politics (Doel, 1993). In this paper I seek to (un)ravel some of these main threads in a subversive way by pulling them beyond the limits of their declared meaning. To deconstruct the ‘map’, ‘geography’, or ‘geopolitics’ is not to destroy or dissolve the meaning of these concepts (Doel, 1992). Rather, it is to radicalize them so that the general problematic of how we signify our world(s) can be recognized and studied. As an index of this radicalization and displacement, I have chosen to label my (un)ravelling with visible hyphen marks so the unseen conceptual marks that have so delimited our existing understandings of maps, geography, and geopolitics can be rendered visible. Though many will trivialize such textual markings and play, it has the serious purpose of problematizing how our inherited language and concepts are sewn together and presented as seamless text(ile)s to the world. This is significant in a (trans) political sense, for what we are doing is problematizing how geographical discourse and systems of power work through each other to project maps of global politics with familiar centers and foreign peripheries, core identities and marginal spaces, tame regions and wild zones (Ó Tuathail and Luke, 1994). In certain places, such as Bosnia, a ‘wild zone’ in the Western map of the new world (dis)order, the projection of certain pure, essential maps has led to a deadly game of geographical purification.

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(1) Two qualifications are in order. First, the use of both Derrida and Foucault raises the question of the differences between the projects of both theorists. For my purposes here, however, I wish to ignore these differences beyond noting that their projects are not the same. ‘Poststructuralism’, as I have already noted, is not the best term but we will use it for now. Second, the concept of ‘global politics’ is used here for its strategic convenience and ambiguity. It is preferred over ‘international politics’ which already assumes a division between the international and the national, the outside and the inside (Walker, 1993). An analysis of the conceptual history of ‘global politics’, and it is important to remember that it has a conceptual history, is not attempted in this paper.
of ethnic cleansing in the name of imaginary clean maps. In problematizing and displacing clean maps, in writing on their apparent transparency and legibility, we are practising a radical (trans)political politics (Clarke and Doel, forthcoming).

To explore the question 'what is geopolitics?' in a rigorous way, we must first review the poststructuralist problematization of meaning and its implications for how we understand, locate, and delimit such well-used and deceptively straightforward concepts as 'geography' and 'maps'. That these concepts are not as simple as they are made out to be in our official conceptualizations is already evident within geography. A concept such as 'maps of meaning', for example, problematizes the location and meaning of 'geography' and 'maps' themselves. Peter Jackson (1989) uses the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies to describe cultures as "maps of meaning through which the world is made intelligible" (page 2). Maps of meaning are understood by him as the codes by which meaning is constructed, conveyed, and understood. This possibility of reading meaning in cartographic terms is not particular to Jackson or the Centre. One can find it in Saussurian structuralism. It was, in part, because of Derrida's critique of Saussure's structuralism that commentators first coined the label 'poststructuralism' (Dews, 1987). In the first part of this paper I briefly review Saussure and Derrida's reading of his work as a means of elucidating the question of meaning and problematizing what is meant by 'geography' and 'maps'. In the second part I explore the implications of these arguments. I seek (1) to displace existent conceptual maps of 'geopolitics' within geography, (2) to outline a Foucaultian influenced problematic geo-politics, and (3) to suggest a possible research agenda which problematizes how maps of meaning about global politics are produced at various institutional sites in the contemporary world order. My purpose is suggestively and speculatively to sketch the possibilities of using poststructuralism to analyze critically questions of geography/global politics in all their ambiguity, uncertainty, and incompleteness. 'Critical geopolitics', as I understand it, is a question not an answer, an approach not a theory, which opens up the messy problematic of geography/global politics to rigorous problematization and investigation.

Maps and meaning: problematizing geography

The profound influence of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure on social science in the late 20th century is by now well known (Culler, 1986). What is interesting, from a geographical perspective, is how geographical discourse is implicated within the exposition of Saussure's arguments, particularly within his less celebrated metaphors (though implicitly also in his famous chess metaphors). A geometric

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(2) "The Bosnian war is above all the War of Maps ... nowhere were the new maps so ubiquitous as in former Yugoslavia, and nowhere were their frontiers so charged with historical emotion. They were on the walls of barracks, in the soldiers' handbooks, pinned up in cafes and framed above the hearth" (Vulliami, 1994, pages 5, 8).

(3) Jackson's exploration and exploitation of the term map is to be commended, but its radical implications are somewhat underdeveloped. Maps of meaning can also lead to the problematization of the rules which govern perspective, the art of describing, and the construction of the visual (Foster, 1988). Also, the projection of maps of meaning can be interpreted psychoanalytically [as can displacement (Žižek, 1991)]. As aspirant 'mirrors of nature', maps raise some interesting Lacanian questions about how we see, recognize, and reflect ourselves to ourselves (O'Tuathail, 1994a; Slater, 1993; Weber, 1994). Jackson (1989) demonstrates a certain reluctance to play upon the potentiality of displacing the map and our notions of geography. He still gestures to the proper, describing 'maps of meaning' as a 'geographical metaphor'. Deconstruction problematizes the possibility of ever fully distinguishing between proper and metaphorical meaning.
notion of space and spacing is fundamental to Saussure’s arguments. Language is an arrangement, a system, a pattern. Units within it are defined by their relational location, their positionality or coordinates within a system space. There is more than a passing commonality between the abstract mathematical space evoked by Saussure (which ties in with his use of metaphors from neoclassical economies) and that which makes cartography possible. In outlining his understanding of synchronic linguistics, which has as its object a ‘language-state’, Saussure writes:

“It would be absurd to attempt to sketch a panorama of the Alps by viewing them simultaneously from several peaks of the Jura; a panorama must be made from a single vantage point. The same applies to language; the linguist can neither describe it nor draw up standards of usage except by concentrating on one state. When he follows the evolution of the language, he resembles the moving observer who goes from one peak of the Jura to another in order to record the shifts in perspective” (1959, page 82).

The word ‘panorama’ derives from an instrument which enabled observers to see, on a flat surface, an unbroken view of a whole landscape or horizon (Oxford English Dictionary; Derrida, 1978, page 5). A panorama is a projection of a three-dimensional object onto a two-dimensional surface, much like a map. What Saussure is suggesting here is that the synchronic linguist is like a cartographer (or a landscape painter, geographer, or photographer), an observer who attempts to record a full vision from a stable vantage point. Saussure’s language-state is equivalent to a map. The diachronic linguist is one who records a series of historical perspectives qua maps of language-states. Saussure suggests elsewhere that a language-state is a type of projection: “A language-state is like a projection of the facts [of a linguistic system] at a particular moment” (1959, page 87). He also writes that, without language, “thought is a vague, uncharted nebula” (page 112). Language is a phenomenon that charts and affixes objects in space, just like a map.

But just what kind of a map emerges from the structuralist project enunciated by Saussure? Derrida (1978), in a reading of a literary structuralist work (the text is Jean Rousset’s Forme et Signification), provides a provocative reading of the dimensions of such a map. First, the structuralist map is a geometric construction. Its spatiality is that of the mathematical graph, of forms and figures in Euclidian, isotropic, abstract space (Lefebvre, 1991, pages 236, 285). Derrida relates this to the tendency in 17th century rhetoric (following Aristotle) to classify language according to its spatial arrangement in figures of discourse (Derrida, 1978, page 16; Johnson, 1993, page 14). The double meaning of figure is important here, for it is both rhetorical and geometric.

Second, the structuralist map has a performist teleology. All structuralisms, according to Derrida, assume some sort of telos, insofar as an organized totality cannot be conceived without some presumption of an end (Johnson, 1993, page 31). Teleology is a condition of possibility of totality. All performances of a structure are held to hold within them the totality of a structure. Parts mirror wholes, thus allowing the totality to be permanently present in any of its partial manifestations (page 15). In geopolitics, for example, the Truman Doctrine might be held to contain within it the very structure of the Cold War world order (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992). The metaphysical commitment here, according to Derrida, is to the idea of simultaneity, to the simultaneous apprehension of all the elements of a given configuration (the myth of a total reading). Space here plays an important role in sustaining such a metaphysic, for space has been held by the Western philosophical tradition to be “the order of coexistences” (Leibnitz) (Derrida, 1978, pages 24–25; Johnson, 1993, page 16).
The map emerging from structuralism is, thus, a flat two-dimensional one. Derrida terms the panoragram "the very image of the structuralist instrument ... Thanks to a more or less openly acknowledged schematization or spatialization, one can glance over the field divested of its forces more freely or diagrammatically. Or one can glance over the totality divested of its forces" (1978, page 5). Two points are significant here. First, the map as panoragram promises the possibility of uninterrupted perception, of an elevated, privileged surveying gaze. A certain form of total visualization is secured by the map/panoragram. The projection of the map flattens out not only the complications of volume and depth but also the movement of time, of duration, all of which are implied by what Derrida here calls 'force'. In the structuralist map, form takes precedence over content; horizontality triumphs over volume, surface over depth. Classical geopolitics appealed to such an understanding of the map, and, arguably, 'critical geopolitics' is still caught within this understanding of geography.

Second, the map as panoragram freezes the dynamic and homogenizes a heterogeneous landscape. The equivocal (force, process, movement) is reduced to the univocal (Johnson, 1993, page 33). Elements are given an integral intelligibility, a positionality within a system of binary oppositions and a location within a teleological structure. Constructing a map of meaning is an act of power because it is an imposition of order, identity, and understanding. As a map, structuralism can be tied to that etymological connotation of map which derives from late Latin word *carta* indicating any kind of formal document [the etymology of French *carte*, Italian *carta*, Russian *karta* (Harley and Woodward, 1987, page xvi)]. Structuralism configures the map as a formal(ist) document or as a formal(ized) picture of the real. Harley and Woodward (1987) note that it was common in medieval and Renaissance Europe to use words such as 'picture' or 'description' for what today would be called a map.

The structuralist map can also be understood as a mathematical *geograph*. In mathematical discourse a 'graph' is a diagram, a two-dimensional drawing of lines in Euclidian space. In its anthropological form (most notably in the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss), structuralism attempts to uncover a diagram of a world, a grid of intelligibility by which a world is constituted and connections within it take on meaning. A geograph in a structuralist sense, therefore, is a two-dimensional geometric grid of a world. It is a graph that is fixed and finished, a stable picture, a linear composition of a world.

In attempting to disrupt Rouset’s structuralist map in *Force and Signification* Derrida does not simply abandon the structuralist map but displaces and subverts it. First, Derrida seeks to revalue force in the structuralist map. Force, for Derrida, is pure heterogeneity, that which is needed by form to make it possible. Second, Derrida seeks to revalue duration and becoming in the face of structuralism’s configuration of temporality as simultaneity. Derrida does not champion a map of force and duration over a map of form and simultaneity. Rather, he questions the possibility of apprehending form outside force and simultaneity separate from duration, and structuralism’s promotion of one at the expense of the other. If Derrida’s argument is a map, then it is a strategic deconstructing map which questions the limits of all maps and mappings.

Johnson (1993, page 17) reads Derrida’s argument as an argument for viewing the text as ‘three-dimensional’ (itself a problematic description). The extra dimension is the inclusion of force and duration, both represented by the polysemous term ‘volume’ (depth but also a book and a measure of flow), that which cannot be reduced to the simultaneity of a form (Derrida, 1978, page 25). To the two-dimensional map’s homogeneity, identity, and surface are added the complications of heterogeneity,
difference, and volume. These block the possibility of a panoptic gaze across the surface of a clear, calm map for the map is no longer flattened, decidable, and stable. (Seeing, Derrida suggests throughout his writings, is blind to its own logocentric conditions of possibility.) All disrupt the integral intelligibility of the structuralist map. Rather than being a map of identities and stasis, the deconstructing map is a disputation of the logocentric map, a strategic tracing of the moving geography of the play of difference (Johnson, 1993, page 35). Rather than being a map of single-point perspective, lines, and limits, it is a fragment of traces and flows that questions all perspectivism. Rather than being finished, complete, and visible, it is deranged, disseminating, and inscrutable, a map that questions maps, that gnaws away at borders (Doel, 1994).

In contrast to the structuralist reading of a map as a formal[ist] document (the late Latin *carta*), Derridean poststructuralism reads the map as a cloth, from the late Latin word *mappe* which is the etymological origin of the English, Polish, Spanish, and Portuguese words for a map (Harley and Woodward, 1987, page xvi). The cloth map is inevitably a text(ile), a woven material that is full of small holes. To map is to weave a text(ile). Conversely to write a text(ile) is to weave a map. Unlike the structuralist map, the poststructuralist map may be read as a *geo-graph*, the hyphen (un)zapping the seamless and surgically opening up the concept, suspending it from closure. The hyphen is the mark of the indeterminate. In contrast to the geograph, a *geo-graph* refuses the authoritative closure of the grid, the mathematical stitching of the graph and the geo. More than a fixed mathematical structure, *graph* is also an active verb, as a process of becoming, a movement that defies reduction to two-dimensionality. A supplemental etymological reading of graphing is as a tracing, a fluid, open-ended, playful writing that resists reduction to formal lines and presences. To graph, therefore, can be to write in a generalized Derridean sense; it is to space and temporize, to defer and differ (Derrida, 1982). Radicalizing our understanding of the *graph* in this way encourages a resurrection of the deadened sense of geography as *geo-graphing*, an open-ended inscribing, delimiting, and engraving of the earth/globe/world. To study *geo-graph*-y, then, is to study the projection of geographs striving for signification; it is to study the graphing/weaving/writing of a geo/world/system. Geo-graphing can be viewed as an interminable tracing without ends or limits, a writing that never reaches closure, that never totally maps.

However, evoking a *poststructuralist map* or a contrast between a *geograph* and a *geo-graph* as if they were opposites, as if the insertion of the hyphen marked the end of one map and the beginning of another, misrepresents the nature of Derrida's challenge to the map. In pointing out how meaning is never totally mapped, Derrida is issuing a challenge to the concept of the map. While not rejecting this concept, he is problematizing its conditions of possibility and subverting it so it questions itself. His project is to problematize how maps of meaning are made, not to make maps of meaning. Deconstructionism rests on a series of paradoxes; it makes meaning by challenging meaning, it writes to question writing, and maps to

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(4) The hyphen, the mark of the problematizations raised by Derrida, can be easily reassimilated into the very metaphysics of presence Derrida would have us question. In a sense, the problem of contrasting the geograph to the *geo-graph* or geopolitics to geo-politics is the same as the problem associated with the names structuralism and poststructuralism. The latter, however, are displacements of the former, not their opposite. Deconstructionism (Derrida, 1991, page 272), is both a structuralist and an antistructuralist gesture. It assumes the need for a certain structuralist problematic. Both *geo-graph*-y and geo-politics should be read in a similar way, as dislocations of the problematics of geography and geopolitics.
render maps problematic. The task of the critical theorist is to write on maps of meaning, to write over that which is reputedly already written and disrupt the legibility of maps, the techniques of observation which make them possible. To write on the map, to deface its projected image of itself, is to reveal the map itself as merely writing.

Displacing geopolitics
The implications of the deconstructionist problematization of the infrastructures of geographical discourse are considerable for geography as a whole and are slowly being explored within the discipline (Doel, 1992; 1993; 1994). I wish to consider three implications of poststructuralism for the specific study of geographical discourse and/in global politics. The first of these implications addresses the specification of the concept ‘geopolitics’ by geopolitical theorists and historically influential intellectuals within the discipline of geography. The second addresses the historical problematic marked by concepts such as ‘political geography’ and ‘geopolitics’. The third addresses how ‘critical geopolitics’ might go about writing on maps of global politics based on a poststructuralist problematization of the institutional sites from which the surface of global political affairs is observed, surveyed, and mapped.

Dislocating traditional maps of geopolitics
Derrida’s use and yet problematization of the map to explore the problem of meaning suggest ways to challenge the authority of the cartographic regimes of meaning that have worked for so long to delimit geopolitics as a concept both within the geopolitical tradition and within the discipline of geography. In the case of the geopolitical tradition, a recurrent cartographic border is that between geography and history whereas, within geography, it is the boundary between science and ideology. Let us briefly examine each.

The geopolitician’s map of geopolitics
“The essence of geopolitical analysis is the relation of international political power to the geographical setting” (Cohen, 1973, page 29; repeated in Gray, 1988, page 4).

We can take this short definition as indicative of a common conceptual map of geopolitics. Its first feature is its assumption that geopolitics has an essence. Geopolitics is a fixed point, a known identity, a presence. This point is located at the intersection of two separate domains or territories of knowledge: ‘international political power’ and ‘geographical setting’. Where these lands overlap is the location of geopolitics. Furthermore, the relationship between these two domains is structured by qualification of geography as a ‘setting’. The associative relations of this term map a relationship between geography and its binary opposite (history/politics/ideology). Within the geopolitical tradition, geography is projected as natural not historical, passive not dynamic, permanent not transitory, solid not fluid, a stage rather than a drama.

Such a map of geopolitics, however, is neither fixed nor faithfully directional. We soon get lost between the lines of these distinctions. What are rhetorically asserted to be identifiable points, discrete domains, and clean divisions turn out to be illusive identities, blurred boundaries, and slippery semantics. How, for example,

(5) The concept of ‘infrastructure’ is developed by Gasche (1986, pages 142–176) as a means of reading the enterprise of deconstructionism. Crudely put, an infrastructure is a displaced or decentered structure (totality), an ‘open matrix’; “that within which metaphysics can be produced but which metaphysics cannot think” (Derrida, 1976, page 167; Gasche, 1986, page 147).
are we to delimit a ‘geographical setting’? Is it the physical environment, and if so, where exactly does this begin and end? Perhaps it is the human landscape, but how are we to pin down the meaning of the ‘human’ and ‘landscape’? If it is the situation of a place within the world economy, how is this separate from ‘international political power’? To recognize a geographical setting, we must both have and use geographical discourse. But, as an historical, human creation, geographical discourse has a history inseparable from international political power. Geographical discourse helps us to write how we know the settings or regions of the earth. Indeed, recognition of geographical settings would not be possible without international political power. Furthermore, international political power needs geographical settings in order to be meaningful. The very concept of an international presupposes a geographical distinction between an inside domestic sphere and an outside international sphere. To sustain the distinction between geography and international political power, therefore, requires that we first ignore this distinction. Geopolitics is made possible by the gap between its declared meaning and its factual practice, between what it claims about its concepts and how its concepts function in order to mean. The same holds true of the conceptual claims that geography can ever only be natural, passive, permanent, and solid. Geopolitics, like other genres of writing, involuntarily betrays a tension between its rhetoric and logic.

*Geography’s map of geopolitics*

In 1927 Carl Sauer described ‘political geography’ as “the wayward child of the geographic family”, a field without a distinct disciplinary and methodological orientation (1927, page 207). Though Sauer briefly writes of geopolitics, the distinction between it and political geography is not yet fully formed. Political geography/geopolitics is named as the troublesome offspring of an upstanding and directed science. It is an undisciplined progeny in a noble family, an offspring that did not submit to the family values of discipline and direction, the methods of sound science (Enriksen, 1984).

Sauer’s representation of political geography/geopolitics’s place within the geographical home remained durable until World War 2 when Isaiah Bowman and Richard Hartshorne made political geography and geopolitics separate offspring, with political geography as the reformed child and geopolitics as its corrupted relation. Bowman’s 1942 defensive broadside “Geography vs. geopolitics” contrasts the distortion and perversion of German geopolitics with his own disinterested, scientific political geography. In 1935 Hartshorne wrote about reforming the wayward child (page 965). By 1950, he contrasts “the dangerous doctrines of geopolitics” with the possibility of a solidly scientific political geography that may “arrive at applications of sound value in the solution of actual problems” (page 102). In both authors, geopolitics becomes the outside of geographical science, the mirror image by which good scientific geography knows itself as objective and beyond politics. Geopolitics qua *Geopolitik* alone became the discipline’s wayward child.

The image of geography as a moral family with a troublesome wayward child was a self-serving one for Sauer, Bowman, Hartshorne, and many others. Rather than being a home of family values, geography’s history reveals a record of its complicity with political power. David Livingstone (1993) speculates that perhaps geography’s history should be X-rated. Bowman and Hartshorne made strategic use of the category

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(6) For a discussion of this contrast and deconstructive ‘methodology’ see Gasche (1986, page 133).
'geopolitics' to legitimate their own political involvements (Kirby, forthcoming; Ó Tuathail, 1994b; Smith, 1984; 1989). Together with Sauer they acted as disciplinary father figures who sought to enforce a stable domestic regime within geography. Political geography/geopolitics was potentially unruly because it implicitly challenged the separation of geography and politics, science and ideology, scholarship and advocacy. It was the point where the discipline's carefully constructed self-identity came apart. Thus it is marked as wayward, a dangerous wandering from the true home of science. But the patriarchs of this home, 'founding fathers' like Ratzel, Mackinder, Sauer, Bowman, and Hartshorne were all political geographers if for no other reason than their marking out of a divide between geography and geopolitics. To exclude geopolitics from geography, they practised their own geopolitics. (Geo)politics was built into the very home of geography. Geography's domestic moral order was built and governed by (geo)political men.

Reversing and displacing the traditional conceptual maps of geopolitics in the above manner is only the opening move in any displacement of the concept of geopolitics. A second gesture, a gesture beyond the discursive circulation of the name 'geopolitics', is needed for there is much more to the problematic marked by 'geopolitics' than the 20th-century history of the term itself (first coined, remember, in 1899). This larger problematic, an historical, institutional, and materialist problematic, concerns the production and functioning of a knowledge of the conceptualization, inventorization, and theorization of security, population, and territory that was both geographical and governmental.

**Geography and governmentality: geo-power, geo-politics**

Though often conceptualized as 'advice to the prince', the reading of the varied usages of 'geopolitics' in the 20th century in terms of an idealized Renaissance model of statecraft and government is both historically inappropriate and conceptually misleading. Geopolitics is much more appropriately considered one of many 20th-century forms of governmentality (Ó Tuathail, 1994c). Governmentality, for Foucault, is the name he gives to the ensemble of institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections which has as its target population, as its principle forms of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security (1991, page 102). Emerging first in 18th-century Europe, it describes a triangle of "security, territory and population" (the title Foucault gave to his annual course at the College de France in 1978). The historical movement is that "which brings about the emergence of population as a datum, as a field of intervention and as an objective of governmental techniques" (1991, page 102). The concept of government, for Foucault, is to be understood in the broadest sense. He defined it as "the conduct of conduct" and it ranges, as Colin Gordon (1991, pages 2-3) notes, from the management of the self, interpersonal relations, relations within social institutions and communities, to the exercise of political sovereignty (including the administration of colonies and far-flung territories). Discourses of governmentality are not exclusively created by the apparatuses of the state but by institutions and interest groups throughout political and civil society.

Of particular interest to Foucault is the birth of social and political forms of governmentality which result in the formation of a series of specific governmental apparatus and savoirs dedicated to scrutinizing population, political economy, and state security in the 18th century. Amongst these emergent savoirs was political geography which, to my knowledge, was first specified as a region of knowledge in 1751 by the Louis XVI's controller-general Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (1727-81)
in his short work "Plan d'un ouvrage sur la geographic politique". The history of the specification, elaboration, and functioning of such a region of knowledge, developing out of earlier practices such 'political arithmetic' (a type of early modern statistics of the state), remains to be written, but we can nevertheless note how political geographical knowledge was intimately bound up with the problematic of population and political economy Foucault identifies as bio-power (Foucault, 1978, pages 139–140). Coexisting with the practical, political and economic concern with birth rate, longevity, public health, and migration were what we would now recognize as geopolitical concerns with administering the land, safeguarding frontiers, utilizing natural resources, and measuring one's own geographical assets and those of one's rivals. Associated with these tasks of government were modes of objectification by which geographical knowledge was produced: statistical tables, gazetteers, atlases, country reports, cartographic surveys, geographical textbooks, and contemplative works on how geography influences the direction of human history. All can be considered forms of geo-power, techniques of power that survey, measure, chart, and speculate on the surface of global political life.

That we can and should begin to think in terms of a history of geo-power is a gesture which displaces but does not erase the problematic marked by the history of the word 'geopolitics'. The Foucaultian theme of governmentality allows us to investigate geopolitics while problematizing it, to move beyond a nominal obsession with the term 'geopolitics' so we can investigate the historical emergence of forms and types of geographical knowledge with the development of savoirs of governmentality. Geo-politics is an appropriate name for this Foucaultian problematization of the historical conditions of possibility of geography and governmentality, the term retaining yet displacing ‘geopolitics’ while simultaneously reminding us of bio-politics, bio-power, and geo-power. Yet, we should also remember the Derridean problematization and displacement of geography, the hyphen as the mark of the undecidable. In so marking the problematic of geography/governmentality as geo-politics, we are also marking that which exceeds geopolitics and makes it possible: the 'infrastructure of geopolitics'. What we are doing is physically inscribing an old concept to designate something entirely different from its previous signified. The logic here is what Derrida calls the 'logic of paleonyms' wherein an old name is transformed so as to designate precisely what it represses (Gasche, 1986, pages 166–167).

(7) The historical emergence of the concept of political geography needs historical research. Two books from the 1940s point to the significance of Turgot among other figures (usually Aristotle, Bodin, and Montesquieu). Andreas Dorphalen (1942, page 48) suggests that Turgot was probably the first to use the term 'political geography'. Andrew Gyorgy (1944, page 148) offers a brief summary of Turgot's book as does Jean Gottmann (1951, page 172). Turgot, who is probably best known today as a Physicrat, wrote his essay on political geography around the time he decided to abandon the ecclesiastical career upon which he had embarked for a career of service to the Crown. The essay is a companion piece to his "On universal history" in which he seeks to account for his belief that there is a general long-run tendency towards progress and 'greater perfection' in human society. Turgot outlines five 'political maps of the world' in his notes and three stages of human development (Meek, 1973, page 9). The failure of Turgot's reforms during his brief tenure (August 1774 to May 1776) as controller-general for Louis XVI marked a crucial stage in the demise of the ancient regime in France.

(8) The close connection between geo-power and bio-power needs further investigation. It is sometimes forgotten that the 'geopolitics' of Friedrich Ratzel, Karl Haushofer, and others was explicitly concerned with questions of space and population. In fact, one could argue that what was later viewed as 'geopolitics' in Ratzel (a term retrospectively applied to his work) was more appropriately termed 'bio-politics'. Ratzel himself used the term 'bio-geography' to describe his work (Dorphalen, 1942, page 50). Haushofer, following Ratzel, used this term extensively in his own work (Strausz-Hupe, 1942, pages 158, 218, 230).
Geo-politics communicates with the conventional concept of geopolitics yet marks it as a concept that could not have emerged historically without the infrastructural cluster of possibilities that are the historical geography/governmentality problematic.

Our previous discussion of Derrida's questioning of the map is relevant to the historical study of this problematic. The various practices that are instances of geo-power can be read as institutionalized striving to produce official, two-dimensional charts, calculations, and inventories of the surface of global politics. The multiple technologies of geo-power labor to produce the earth's surface as a fully transparent and comprehensively mapped external object, an entity held to be separate and distinct from the techniques used to represent it. The endeavor is to make the features, realities, and enduring laws that supposedly account for global politics visible to statesmen and the general public. They do so by means of an unseen infrastructure of uninterrupted perception, an elevated, privileged surveying gaze that reduces the complex and inscrutable volume of global politics to a form that is unequivocal and homogeneous, a panoramagram that has flattened out the undecidable in global political life.

The task of any 'critical geopolitics' is to document historically and displace the discursive infrastructure of forms of geo-power. This does not involve 'revealing' or 'uncovering' the deep, hidden meanings of maps of global politics. This would make it complicit with the very strategies it wishes to question. Rather its tasks are (1) to problematize the delimitation of the relationship between geography and politics to essential identities and domains; (2) to document the strategies by which maps of global politics are produced by governmental sites; and (3) to disrupt the infrastructural functioning of such maps by "displacing their boundaries, blotting out their cardinal reference points, thus making it more difficult to read off the coordinates" (Kamuf, 1991, page xix). 'Critical geopolitics' is a writing on the maps of global politics.

**Scrutinizing geo-political sights/sites/cites: disciplinary, practical, and popular geo-politics**

Crucial to the displacement of the infrastructure of geo-politics is the problematization of the techniques of seeing that make maps of global politics possible. Traditionally, as already noted, maps have been represented as 'mirrors of nature', as objective correspondence reflections or portraits of a preformed external reality. In traditional geopolitical discourse, the techniques by which certain visions of global political life are projected are not problematized. 'Visualization', for example, was considered the key by Halford Mackinder (1904) to the practice of political geography, yet visualization or the act of seeing was never considered to be a socially constructed or technologically dependent act. Sight was considered a natural faculty prior to writing (Ó Tuathail, forthcoming). That which made sight possible was an unseen problematic. A deconstructive attitude towards sight focuses on the very aporias that made sight possible. Sight is demonstrated to depend upon that which it renounces. Rather than objectively recording an already fully formed reality, *sight* is made possible by social and technological scopic regimes that *site* and *cite* places in the drama of global affairs (Luke, 1993). Places are sited within socially available taxonomies, hierarchies, and systems of signification. They are cited by the authority of hegemonic discursive/scopic formations that produce regimes of truth about places and geographical regions (for example, Sovietology during the Cold War or Orientalism from the 18th century).

One means of scrutinizing this dynamic of the sight/site/cite-ing of global politics is to focus on the differing institutions that are involved in the scanning, charting, and projection of global political maps. Of concern here are institutional sites which
function as geo-political observatories. There are, in practice, a great multiplicity of these institutional sites in the contemporary world order, some, obviously, much more significant and expansive in their scope than others. As a means of rendering the scrutiny of these seeing sites more manageable, I wish to suggest speculatively a threefold typology of geo-political sites and a corresponding typology of the imperatives which shape how places are written in these different governmental panopticons.

**Disciplinary geo-politics: place righting**

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979) writes of discipline as an art of correct training. Discipline is meant in a double sense: not only is it the name of a regimentation of the body but it is also the name we give to bodies of knowledge, to medicine, geography, and the like (page 190). Foucault's remarks on the emergence of a disciplinary society during the classical age are a suggestive means of problematizing the geo-politics produced by the institutions and bureaucracies of the state, and by the universities, institutes, and think tanks of civil society. Discipline, as Foucault notes, trains individuals in particular habits of thought and ways of seeing; it separates, analyzes, differentiates, and codifies procedures of observation and study. “Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (page 170). To this we can add that discipline also makes spaces; it makes territories, states, and empires possible. Not only does discipline train the footsoldiers of the state or the administrators of empire; it also invents the procedures by which territories, both domestic and colonial, can be surveyed and controlled, mapped and subdued, taxed and governed.

Foucault identifies three instruments of discipline. The first is hierarchical observation: “The exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coheres by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible” (pages 170-171). The modern history of global politics could be written as a history of coercive observatories, of ever more intrusive techniques of seeing. The whole project of cartography is one premised on observation; maps so a country can be known and an army can subjugate it, so territorial acquisitions can be made transparent. Cartography focused the eye of the state on coveted blank spaces, (feminized) territories to be penetrated and occupied. Travel writing, which descended from and was, in part, itself a form of espionage, brought the epistemological observatories of Europe to the rest of the world and rendered the interiors of continents visible to Western governments and commercial interests (Pratt, 1992). From this developed the modern panoptics of our university disciplines: anthropology, geography, political science, area studies, with their dependence on detached seeing Man (Haraway, 1991; Keller and Grontkowski, 1983). All codified, within their disciplining procedures, certain ways of seeing and coercing their unique object[ification]. From Mackinder to contemporary proponents of geographic information systems, visualization has occupied a central place in geography’s epistemological situating of itself to its object[ification] (MacEachren et al, 1992).

The second instrument of discipline Foucault discusses is normalizing judgment. Within the observational systems of the human sciences function mechanisms of judgment by which places become emplaced within systems of knowledge. In writing about *The New World* in 1921, Isaiah Bowman did not include any chapter on the United States because it was the observation tower from which the rest of the world was written (Bowman, 1928; Ó Tuathail, 1994b). Bowman’s text was a type
of spatial accountancy, a tallying up of the world's regions, an individualizing of them according to classificatory systems of climate, degrees of freedom, inventories of resources, and hierarchies of race. Informing such surveying projects and infusing their application is the norm, that which is held to be adequate, developed, progressive, and right. One example is the norm of the nation-state, a norm built around an idealized reading of the histories of certain European states. Another is the interpretative analytics of modernization theory, a theoretical system that still observes places according to Western standards and models of development (Popke, 1994; Luke, 1991; Slater, 1994). A third is the global panoptic of freedom, a free-floating significatory system that allows states to be ranked and graded according to 'objective' standards: free and fair elections, a free press, human rights abuses, a free enterprise economy, restrictions on foreign investment, etc. To see and to record these things is the task of embassies and spies, country desk officers and regional officials, mass media journalists, and other international observers.

The third technique of discipline Foucault identifies is the examination: "The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish (1979, page 184). Contemporary global politics is replete with formal examinations: countries are inspected for arms control violations, nuclear power procedures, human rights abuses, market reform procedures, and structural adjustment programs. Add to these the persistent examinations of foreign policy diplomats, market analysts, spies, international relief agencies, freelance journalists, and the international news media. From the wire dispatch, to the secret cable, the satellite feed, the World Bank report, the IMF prognosis, and the photo reconnaissance image, territories are under perpetual examination. The examination, as Foucault notes, links knowledge formation to the exercise of a certain type of power. Visibility assures the hold of a certain type of power and when visibility is thwarted, international tensions often result. Examples include the contemporary politics of nuclear inspections in Iraq and North Korea, or the United States' annual examination of China's 'human rights record' (a regime of examination which is, of course, eminently pliable) when renewing that country's preferred trading status with the United States. The examination enables the individualization of territories and regions; it encourages the development of procedures of writing and codes of accounting by which spaces are to be described, judged, compared, and measured. The turning of real lives into writing (righting), Foucault notes, functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection (1979, page 192). So it is with the populations of states. State-delineated economies are isolated as cases; measures are taken, diagnoses are made, and procedures for rehabilitation and cure are prescribed.

It is within the historical emergence of a disciplining modernity that we can locate the human sciences, the bureaucracies of the state, and the agencies of international organizations. It is within this that we can also locate today's corporate-sponsored strategic institutes, centers of international studies, foreign policy associations, and university area studies programs. All are sites of seeing and also seeings of cites, geo-political observatories which recognize and insight/site/site, write and right, normalize, discipline and punish.

Practical geo-politics: place (w)riting
The visions of international sites and scenes produced by the various institutional geo-political observatories undoubtedly have a profound influence on the practice of foreign policy, as does the omnipresent geo-politics of daily life. There is, however, good reason for treating the practical conduct of foreign policy by small
groups of decisionmakers (usually white males) as a separate domain worthy of study in and of itself. Though foreign policy is often acknowledged to be ‘geopolitical’, few have actually sought to document critically what this might mean in practice. The maps produced at disciplinary or popular sites within a state are no guide to the details of actual foreign policy decisionmaking. Disciplinary and popular maps are often—though not always—easily rewritten so they can sustain quite different foreign policy practices (for example, from tilt towards to war against in the case of the Bush administration’s foreign policy towards Iraq). To understand this, we must understand foreign policy making as a distinct subculture, a subculture with its own realpolitik methods of marking up and scratching out identities for places. In cases of war, the discursive writing of a place is followed by its violent writing (slitting and slashing) by military war machines.

In their detailed investigations of US decisionmaking during the Vietnam war, David Sylvan and Stephen Majeski (forthcoming) have explored the question of practical geopolitics in a rigorous way. They argue that high-level US foreign policy decisionmaking (which involves what they characterize as a small, largely autonomous, normatively cohesive, and secretive group of persons, usually no more than five) is a problem-solving culture which involves (1) the formulation of recommendations, (2) choosing among recommendations, and (3) reopening debate. At the heart of any recommendation, decision, or move to reopen debate are situation descriptions, linguistically constituted descriptions of problems and solutions that apply to places. “Situations”, they argue, “pertain to places: certain places will be deemed to involve a commitment of some sort or to be important enough to fight for; others will be characterized as not enjoying a U.S. commitment or being hopeless to fight in. Places, however, are unlikely to be redescribed anywhere near as often as situations” (Sylvan and Majeski, forthcoming, page 7).

It is the construction of Indochina as a strategically vital location that interests Sylvan and Majeski. They trace the progression of ‘Indochina’ as a relatively unqualified place in 1947 to its emergence as a strategically important location by 1949, complete with appropriate attributes, noting its location in Asia (“a source of numerous raw materials”) and relation to China and the spread of communism. Details as to what kind of a place it is on the inside are added later: it contains communists, Europeans, and “native anti-communists” (Sylvan and Majeski, forthcoming, page 12). Yet, Indochina was still less of a place than a location. It was only with the departure of the French, the establishment of the Diem government, and the setting up of a South Vietnamese state that a place became constituted to which US decisionmakers could understand themselves as having a commitment.

Sylvan and Majeski’s explorations of place characteristics in high-level US foreign policy decisionmaking on Vietnam suggest a number of points worthy of consideration by geographers. First, their arguments demonstrate that the geopolitics of foreign policy practice extends well beyond that which is conventionally tagged by policymakers as ‘geopolitical’ or ‘geoeconomic’ (that is, arguments about raw materials, distance, and the like). Foreign policy decisionmaking is saturated with a geo-graph-ical politics; foreign policy is made by small groups engaged in discursive persuasion at the center of which are arguments about place characteristics and situation descriptions. Second, it is, as they note, actually quite difficult to cut out a definition of a place. “It appears, at a minimum, that places are far more nested (regions, states, sections), far more complex (peoples, history, borders), and far more subtle (locations, places, internal features) than the situation descriptions that we have been accustomed to dealing with. Precisely because places seem both so common-sensical and so much background, policy makers barely set down all the
interconnections of their constructions" (page 14). Third, Sylvan and Majeski point out the significant gap that exists between the policy-solving discourse of foreign policy decisionmakers and the discourse of the most ‘policy-relevant’ of theorists (in strategic institutes and universities). The implication of this is interesting for, as Sylvan and Majeski go on to suggest, the assumptions of supposedly influential philosophies of statecraft like political realism actually mean very little when policymakers are faced with actual problems and crises. Political realism is no more a guide to how the policymaking culture works than is the geopolitical tradition a guide to how geopolitics is actually practised. There is also a warning in this for ‘critical geopolitics’: foreign policy analysis should not rest on general remarks about how a state produces its enemy as Other. The complexity of foreign policy should be respected and can only be appreciated by engagement with the inscriptive functioning of practical problem-solving geo-politics in concrete instances.

Popular geo-politics: place rite-ing/wright-ing

To the caution against reliance on monochromatic workups of othering, we can add further cautions against a tendency to gravitate towards abstractions such as ‘culture’, ‘the Western mind’, ‘the Occidental gaze’, or ‘the popular imagination’ within ‘critical geopolitics’. It is not that these concepts are inherently corrupting—they gesture towards an important and understudied (in geography at least) collective inheritance or unconscious—but that their deployment in critical discourse tends needlessly to arrest questioning and suggest essentialist explanations (for example, reducing all politics to identity politics). Notions of the ‘public mind’ or the ‘popular’ should be problematized, for popular culture is a flow of unstable, heterogeneous discourses in colliding motion. Questioning how these categories function, however, does not mean we should abandon them. Societies and states do, undoubtedly, craft the world and their position within it in consistent, regularized ways. All states aspire to create official stage productions of their identity, geo-writings of their origin, identity, and role in the great drama of history. Such geo-writings are crafted and stated shows of force, theatrical spectacles, memorials, historical anniversaries (the 12th of July in Ulster, the D-Day commemorations, the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising) around which develop rites and rituals of place. Let us briefly consider some examples.

Urban architecture and memorials The capital city of a great power is a place where popular geopolitical myths are often given concrete monumental form. In the Third Reich, for example, architectural theorists conceptualized public buildings as bearing witness to national will, as shows of force where the word becomes stone (Taylor, 1974, pages 81–83). Monumental neoclassical buildings were meant to dwarf the citizen, to humble yet mirror the citizen as part of a larger transcendental project (‘the thousand-year Reich’). Indeed, architecture in the Third Reich blurred the distinction between fixed forms and moving images. Alfred Speer, one of Hitler’s chief architects after the death of Paul Ludwig Troost, was the designer not only of neoclassical showpieces but also of outdoor political theatres, such as Nuremberg’s Zeppelin Field, where the party faithful gathered in their thousands. Speer created a ‘cathedral of light’ in this theatre by directing 150 searchlights 15 km into the night sky (Taylor, 1974, page 170). Speer’s ‘architecture of light’ problematizes the very terms by which we understand architecture. Paul Virilio, following Walter Benjamin, explores this problematic further and suggests that architecture, like cinema, is about the projection of light as form/image. Indeed, he pushes the argument so the specificity of the architectural begins to dissolve into the general
problematic of vision, of the emission and reception of architectonic form-images (1991, page 70).

Understanding buildings as projectors raises the question of the intentionality motivating a particular projectionist project and its reception. Robert Taylor (1974) concludes his study of architecture in national socialist ideology by suggesting that the word fell on deaf ears. "[E]ven the most emphatically 'Nazi' buildings seem to have failed in the long run to carry the message expected of them" (page 280). Henri Lefebvre, though he sought to draw an unsustainable distinction between texts and texture, notes of monuments:

"A monumental work, like a musical one, does not have a 'signified' (or 'signifieds'); rather, it has a horizon of meaning: a specific or indefinite multiplicity of meaning, a shifting hierarchy in which one, now another meaning comes momentarily to the fore, by means of—and for the sake of—a particular action. The social and political operation of a monumental work traverses the various 'systems' and 'subsystems', or codes and subcodes, and implies a 'supercoding', in that it tends towards an all-embracing presence of the totality" (1991, page 222, his emphasis).

The usage of certain monuments in Eastern Europe—Heroes Square or the Liberation Monument in Budapest, for example—is instructive. Heroes Square, a signifier of the ancient lineage of Magyar rule in Hungary, is alternatively a sight/site/cite of legitimacy for a Soviet-sponsored dictatorship and a sight/site/cite of resistance to that dictatorship (Nagy's funeral service here in 1989 was the beginning of the end for the regime). More interestingly, the Liberation Monument on Gellert Hill, designed under the authoritarian regime of Admiral Horthy and erected during the period of Soviet hegemony (with a Soviet soldier at its base; now removed) acted as a suitable mirror, a reflecting horizon of signification that supported quasi-fascist and communist maps of meaning in the past, and now supports new ones, prominent among which is its signifying of Budapest as a tourist location.

Film As a technology of seeing and a form of projectionism, film can be regarded as eminently geo-graph-ical and geo-political. First, films are tremendously powerful at projecting a world; they site and situate, script and scene a world before us, subject-positioning us into certain places in this very act. Cinema as theatrical spectacle is unique in its ability to hold a mass audience for hours under the spell of its vision. Some of the classic films of the early silent cinema were explicit visual maps of foundational moments in the life of the state. Sergey Eisenstein's The Battleship Potemkin (1925) and October (1927) are remarkable works of geo-political propaganda on behalf of the Soviet state, which were highly popular with audiences both within the USSR and abroad. Both works were commissioned and funded by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. D W Griffith's The Birth of a Nation (1915) is an epic racist tract which seeks to blame the US civil war and its aftermath on African-Americans and scheming politicians. The unity of the Aryan race in the United States was, according to Griffith's film, undermined by the "bringing of the African to this country" (Christensen, 1987, page 17). Griffith consciously seeks to begin his famous historical scenes (the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, the death of Lincoln, etc) with facsimile reproductions of historical photographs, which he then brings to life and uses to illustrate his heavy-handed narrative. Subject-positioning his audience as witnesses to a tragedy of disunion, of whites fighting whites, The Birth of a Nation portrays the Ku Klux Klan as the saviours of the white race, as defenders of the virtue of white women, and as representatives of Christian civilization, a civilization under threat from the innate primitivism and uncontrollable sexual appetite of emancipated African-Americans.
The ability of films to screen such myths and to in-sight/site/cite audiences (peoples as nations, communities, racial groups) give them enormous power in the making of the political places necessary for (geo)politics at all scales.

Second, as Virilio suggests, cinema is also a technology of perception that insights, in-sites, and in-cites war. In War and Cinema Virilio (1989) presents a provocative history of the use of cinematographic techniques in the conflicts of the 20th century. Virilio notes the interesting equivalence of the map, the aerial reconnaissance photo, and the cinematic photogrammetry as creations of a logistics of military perception (page 79). The shooting camera was from the beginning a weapon of war, a rapid-firing logistical weapon which provided the necessary perceptual data for the conduct of long-range war. Seeing (siting) the enemy in space-time frames facilitated destroying this enemy. Since the beginning of this century, war machines have been dependent upon observation machines (page 71).

But cinema also incited war. In its popular entertainment guise, it was an instrument in the state’s battle to sustain the morale and spectacle necessary for war. The collaboration between state and screen was most consciously orchestrated in Nazi Germany (though we should not forget that Hollywood was making some consciously pro-military films in the 1930s). Leni Reifenstahl’s films, particularly her film record of the 1934 Nuremberg Party Congress Triumph of the Will, is considered a classic of political propaganda. Fritz Hippler’s war documentaries Campaign in Poland and Victory in the West celebrated the crusading Nazi war machine. Frank Capra, one of Hollywood’s most successful directors in the 1930s, considered Triumph of the Will “the greatest propaganda film anyone has ever made” (1971, pages 328–329; McBride, 1992, page 466). During World War 2, Capra commanded the 834th Signal Service Photographic Detachment, Special Services Division, Film Production Division of the US Army. There he was executive producer of a series of film projects, the most prominent of which were the seven Why We Fight documentaries, films made by reusing Reifenstahl and Hippler’s footage to re-site Germany in an antifascist narrative. The Why We Fight films were initially designed to strengthen the motivation and morale of US troops, but some were released to the public and translated into various languages for screening around the world (McBride, 1992, page 470). The first of these films, Prelude to War, portrays the world in stark didactic terms. Using a line from then Vice-President Henry Wallace, it divided a spinning globe into two hemispheres: a free half composed of the United States, the British Empire, China, and the Soviet Union, and a slave half comprising Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Hirohito’s Japan. The former world is bathed in soft light and accompanied by a lilting soundtrack; the latter world is dark and has the sound of marching armies as its aural signature. In a series of dramatic images, the maps of Germany, Italy, and Japan turn into threatening symbols: Germany becomes a swastika, Italy the fasces, while Japan transmogrifies into a scorpion. The world map shows the Americas being surrounded and then taken over; a superimposition has the Japanese army marching up Pennsylvania Avenue. Though the black-and-white moralism of Prelude was designed to leave no room for ambiguity, there is no evidence it increased the motivation of the fighting forces [there is, in fact, evidence to the contrary (McBride, 1992, page 482)]. The 834th Detachment may have sought to produce a morally stark geo-graphy but there was no guarantee they would be read that way. Reception is key in the making of geo-political sense.

Capra’s state-sponsored propaganda films may be the most obvious examples of his cinematic geo-politics, but they are probably less significant than the geo-graphs he sketched in his civilian films. Capra’s classic films for Columbia during the
1930s (for example, *Mr Deeds Goes to Town*, *Lost Horizon*, *You Can’t Take it With You*, and *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*) are equally geo-political documents that contrast places of freedom with places of slavery, or idyllic organic spaces (Mandrake Falls, Shang-Ri-La, the Vanderhof house, Boy Ranger America) with the corrupt spaces of modernity (principally the city). Though he is often read as a champion of populist themes in American cinema, Joseph McBride (1992) documents how Capra was personally a Republican who adhered to a reactionary Catholicism (he was, for example, a strong supporter of Franco). His films, particularly his 1946 *It’s a Wonderful Life* where the contrast between an organic place—Bedford Falls—and ‘fallen’ place is integral to the plot, charted a moral world that was recycled by B-movie actor Ronald Reagan in the late 1970s and the 1980s. Cinematic representations of ‘family values’ became potent political representations of the need for American renewal, while also serving as vehicles for consumerist ideologies (Luke, 1989/90). The use of films as systems of signification for political purposes in 1980s America (the decade of the ‘evil empire’, ‘Star Wars’, ‘make my day’, and ‘read my lips’) and today, of course, well documented.

There are many other sights/sites/sites where we can document the operation of a popular geo-politics. Edward Said (1993) discusses how classic literary works are vehicles for the geo-graphs that sustain imperialism. Other work documents the popular geo-politics at work in newspapers, cartoons, news magazines, and popular household journals such as *National Geographic* and *The Reader’s Digest* (Dorimain, 1983; Hallin, 1986a; 1986b; Rothenberg, forthcoming; Sharp, 1993). All these and more are potential areas of research for ‘critical geopolitics’.

(A) (dis)placing (critical) geopolitics?

Emplacing ‘critical geopolitics’ within the confines of a regime of quotation marks, as I have done throughout this paper, is a displacing gesture designed to suspend the unthinking presumption that ‘critical geopolitics’ is the name of a recognizable and identifiable presence, a distinct theoretical project ranged against a known object. This presumption is worth contesting, for, as I have suggested in this paper, the meaning and identity of ‘geopolitics’ are far from stable and settled. Emplacing a hyphen into geopolitics is the way I sought to mark the necessary displacement of where the concept officially locates itself. ‘Critical geopolitics’ should, I believe, be an occasion for (dis)placement in political geography, an interrogation of official emplacements of global politics by institutions and networks of power. It is not a discourse outside of and separate from geopolitics but equally a geopolitics, a geopolitics that displaces and emplaces. Three points about the (im)possibility of (a) (dis)placing geopolitics are worth noting.

First, the practice of displacement is not an act that takes place outside of the texts, institutions, and figures under investigation. ‘Critical geopolitics’ can never be written from a beyond of geopolitics, from a place outside or beyond the infrastructure of mapping, geo-graphing, seeing. In displacing, we are consorting with a philosophical tradition, an historical code, a geographical map, an order of places. Yet, we are refusing this tradition/code/map’s teleological drive towards homogeneity, decidability, certainty. The identity of place and the place of identity are problematized.

Second, the act of displacing conceptual systems such as ‘the map’, ‘geography’, and ‘geopolitics’ is not an act that requires the weight of the new to dislocate concepts. Concepts such as ‘the map’, ‘geography’, and ‘geopolitics’ are already in a condition of displacement, are already in a place other than where they claim to be.
In fact, we can, following Derrida's argument that there are no metaphysical concepts in themselves, suggest that there are no concepts such as 'the map', 'geography', and 'geopolitics' in and of themselves (Gasche, 1986, page 165). The putative self-sufficient unity and positional identity of all these concepts need to be challenged.

Third, the operation of displacement is not an operation that premises it can annul, neutralize, or destroy the practices of mapping, writing, surveying, or seeing that sustain geography/geopolitics. This paper is a map, a work of geography, and a form of geopolitics. It appeals to and relies upon the metaphors of mapping (charting, positioning, etc) and seeing (scrutinizing, recognizing, etc) to make its arguments. Deconstructionism does not presume it can ever absolutely break from such metaphysical systems. The most it can do is reverse and displace such structures. Writing on these maps, nevertheless, is a powerful (trans)political act of (dis)placement.

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