At the End of Geopolitics?
Reflections on a Plural Problematic at the Century’s End

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It is now something of a cliché to assert that we live in an era of transition between a dying old world order and the birth of a new world order. A multiplicity of different theoretical schemas have tried to outline and chart this transition. For some, we are undergoing a wrenching but also exciting transition from a Second Wave civilization, where the norms of industrial society were paradigmatic, to a Third Wave civilization of informational capitalism that will establish a completely new order of norms, values, behaviors, and even subjects.¹ For others, we have reached the end of history and the dramas that face us are a triumphant liberalism grandly unfolding across the planet. Yet others stress the limits, contradictions, and dark future of world order, underscoring how the triumph of a fully neoliberal world order is impossible in a decentered, polyglot world of emergent anarchy and pervasive indiscipline.² Certainly, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 can be read as nothing other than a epochal event. The historian Eric Hobsbawm uses this date to mark the end of what he calls “the short twentieth century.” It began in Sarajevo in 1914 and ends ironically not only with the collapse of the Soviet Empire but also where it began, in a Sarajevo under siege by the forces of fascistic nationalism.³

For students of geopolitics, these varied attempts to chart the end of the old and the beginning of the new have involved numerous pronouncements on the passing of geopolitics. Long before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, figures like Paul Virilio (and more recently James Der Derian) were arguing that “chronopolitics” is now more important than geopolitics in contemporary international affairs. “The loss of material space,” Virilio

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argued, "leads to the government of nothing but time." "Territory has lost its significance in favor of the projectile. In fact, the strategic value of the non-place of speed has definitely supplanted that of place." Never shy of hyperbole, Virilio proclaimed fourteen years ago that: "Space is no longer in geography—it's in electronics... There is a movement from the geo-chronopolitics: the distribution of territory becomes the distribution of time." 4

Others, like Edward Luttwak, asserted—again, before the collapse of the Soviet Union—that the waning of the Cold War has reduced the significance of military power in international affairs. Summarizing a supposed consensus within the Western foreign policy community in 1990, he posited a transition from geopolitics to geoeconomics: "Everyone, it appears, now agrees that the methods of commerce are displacing military methods—with disposable capital in lieu of firepower, civilian innovation in lieu of military-technical advancement, and market penetration in lieu of garrisons and bases." 5 Luttwak's enthusiasms, however, fall far short of globalization boosters like Keniche Ohmae, who envisions a near-future world of borderless capitalism and "the end of the nation state." 6 States, for Luttwak, are here to stay; they are "spatial entities structured to jealously delimit their own territories"; they are "inherently inclined to strive for relative advantage against like entities on the international scene." As bureaucracies, they are "impelled by the bureaucratic urges of role-preservation and role-enhancement to acquire a 'geo-economic' substitute for their decaying geopolitical role." 7 Thus, the coming geoeconomic age will not be one of harmonious global interdependence, but rather an age of continued state rivalry where "the logic of conflict" will be expressed in "the grammar of commerce."

Yet others have touted burgeoning environmental and ecological crises that threaten to alter radically the nature of international politics. For many environmentally conscious intellectuals and policy wonks, the real transition to be made is from geopolitics to geopolitics. 8 According to US Vice-President Al Gore, the explosion of the world's population, the loss of forest land, topsoil, stratospheric ozone, and species across our fragile planet pose unprecedented challenges to our civilization. To deal with this deterioration of the global environment, humanity needs not a Strategic Defense Initiative but a Strategic Environmental Initiative, a mission to planet earth. 9 Ecology has become "the new sacred agenda" that requires a new faith in the future of life on earth and "a new reverence for absolute principles that can serve as guiding stars by which to map the future course of our species." 10

Combining elements of all, Richard Falk argues that the world is moving rapidly away from geopolitics "towards a more integrated, economic, cultural and political reality," a set of circumstances identified by him as "geogovernance." 11 The capacity of the sovereign territorial state as an actor to manage the history of humanity has diminished significantly; indeed, in many instances, the state is fragmenting, which reflects in the decline in governmental capacity at the level of the nation-state. The dilemma of global politics is no longer geopolitics but geogovernance, the ongoing and often unhappy struggle to establish workable governance structures at the global scale. Indeed, by the standards of justice and order held by Falk and those others associated with the World Order Models Project, this struggle is a dismal failure. The world order of the twenty-first century is likely to be one of "inhumane governance."

Different though all these arguments are, they do nevertheless have in common the thesis that we have reached the end of geopolitics. Geopolitics, it seems, belongs to the past, to an earlier technological and territorial era, an epoch of different institutions, degrees of globalization, and discourses of danger. What these arguments also have in common is a rather simplistic and limited notion of geopolitics that associates it with the Cold War and the logos of state sovereignty. Geopolitics is no more than realpolitik across space, a solid-state world of competing territorial monads, Kissingerian Cold War balance-of-power politics played out across the map.

In response to the generalized thesis of "the end of geopolitics," this article develops two arguments. The first is that the whole question of geopolitics is much richer than these and other intellectuals have acknowledged. Geopolitics works as an illusive complexity, not a manifest given, a plural problematic not a singular concept, a constellation in a Frankfurt School sense; namely, a "juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle." 12 To engage geopolitics critically is to study how this dispersed cluster of changing elements has congealed historically into different orders of geographical knowledge and power.

In my second argument, problematic though sequences of then/now or old/new are, this article seeks schematically to outline a transformation in its conditions of possibility by contrasting geopolitical knowledge-production at the beginning of the century with geopolitical knowledge-production at the end of the century. It must be stated at the outset that this contrast is a heuristic device, a metaphorical myth-structure, comparing what we can describe, following
Leonard, as modern and postmodern geopolitics. Yet, the exercise is worthwhile, and against which we can conceptualize specific clusters of the geopolitical problematic. It elaborates a critical understanding of the geopolitical power, knowledge, and production of global space that students of global affairs should not neglect or overlook.

A Spinning Globe in Perspective

Geopolitics is a twentieth-century concept. The term, geopolitics was first coined by Rudolf Keyserling in 1939. It did not come into widespread use, however, until the 1940s when it was championed by the Group of German political geographers around the retired Major General Dr. Karl Haushofer. The concept was then further developed by the Chief of the Geographical Bureau of Hitler's Ministry of Defense. During World War II, a small group of advocates—academic business, and military elites—in the United States and the United Kingdom pushed geopolitics as a form of strategic thinking that could help them win the war against the Axis powers. The United States, on the other hand, considered geopolitics an essential tool for winning the war. The writings of figures like Halldor Madsen—often referred to as the "father of international politics"—were suddenly rediscovered as the United States sought to maintain its global power.

The geopolitical gaze that Madsen helped codify produced international politics as a detached, perspectival scene. The viewing of international politics as a detached, perspectival scene...
Cold War geopolitics is characterized by the emphasis on the permanent expansion of the Soviet Union—now the USSR—after World War II. The world was divided between a free-market, capitalist West and a totalitarian, communist East. The geopolitical landscape became significant as geopolitical discourse spread beyond its traditional boundaries to include a focus on European and African territories. Mackinder's notion of a Central World dominated by the Soviet Union and the United States created a framework for understanding the geopolitical landscape.

Mackinder's concept of the Central World was a strategic framework that emphasized the importance of Russia as a geopolitical hub. By emphasizing the role of Russia in the world order, Mackinder's ideas have continued to shape geopolitical discourse and analysis. Understanding Mackinder's ideas is crucial for comprehending the geopolitical landscape today.

In this post-World War II context, Mackinder's concept of the Central World was particularly relevant as the Soviet Union emerged as a dominant power. The geopolitical landscape became defined by the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, leading to a Cold War that shaped the world order for decades.

Mackinder's ideas continue to influence geopolitical discourse and analysis today. Understanding his concepts is crucial for comprehending the geopolitical landscape and for making informed decisions about international relations and policy.

The geopolitical landscape is a complex and ever-changing field. Understanding Mackinder's ideas is crucial for comprehending the world order and for making informed decisions about international relations and policy. The geopolitical landscape is a crucial aspect of understanding the world today.
hubris of Western scientific myths about uncovering timeless essences and determining universal causation. Its naturalization of an idealized version of the European state system, projecting this upon the world, and representing global politics as balance-of-power politics, reveal the operation of an ethnocentric grand narrative wherein history has realized itself as European conceptions alone. In sum, modern geopolitics is a condensation of Western epistemological and ontological hubris—an imagining of the world from an imperial point of view.

Obviously, these three features of modern geopolitics are no more than a quick snapshot of a much more complex and messy history involving the decline of the British Empire, the challenging rise of the German Empire, and the emergence of the United States as hegemon after World War II. Nevertheless, they serve as a useful contrast to the contemporary situation, where as we approach the end of the twentieth century, all three features of modern geopolitics are in crisis and under erasure.

Postmodern Geopolitics: The Vertigo of a Globe in a Spin

In The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard treats postmodernity as a condition of knowledge and as a historical period. As a condition of knowledge, the postmodern represents incredulity toward metanarratives. It is a crisis in the language of the universal and the absolute, a loss of confidence in the grand narratives of progress and truth. Speaking in particular about art, Lyotard observes that the "postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable." 26 Joyce, for example, is a postmodernist for Lyotard, as are Nietzsche and Montaigne, because they wage war on totality.

Although not particularly contemporary, Lyotard generally associates the postmodern condition with the reconstruction of knowledge in computerized societies since the 1950s, the transition to informational capitalism, and the rising power of multinational corporations. As a result of technological changes, informationalization, and globalization, scientific knowledge has lost its traditional credibility and is now legitimated by performativity, not truth. Knowledge is not produced for itself but instrumentalized to generate the best input/output equation.

Both of these senses of the postmodern are useful in specifying a postmodern geopolitics. It must be remembered that it was a growing incredulity toward the traditional British imperial metanarratives that motivated Mackinder's geopolitics at the beginning of the twentieth century. He decreed the disintegration and decay associated with international capitalism and modern urban life. 27 His global qua total geopolitical vision was asserted amid the tumult and confusion of the early twentieth century, a response to the weaknesses exposed within the British Empire by the Boer War. 28 More generally, Mackinder's geography qua geopolitics was conceptualized, as he once wrote, "a standing protest against the disintegration of culture with which we are threatened."29 For geographically minded strategists like Mackinder, Haushofer, and, in the postwar period, Kennan, Kissinger, Brzezinski, and others, geopolitics was a method of establishing order and securing vision in the midst of the decay and chaos that always threatened. 30

The postmodern as the shadow of vertiginous anxieties has always haunted geopolitical visions, but these anxieties have become significantly amplified over the last three decades with the dissolution of the Pax Americana constructed after World War II. Beginning with the US defeat in Vietnam and the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system of pegged exchange rates in the early 1970s, the disintegration of the world order that US hegemony built has intensified with the globalization of communications, production, and finance in the 1980s, and the collapse of the Cold War as a defining metanarrative for the West in the early 1990s. Our contemporary condition appears to be, as New Perspectives Quarterly put it, one of "geopolitical vertigo."31 Impacted by informationalization, globalization, and deterritorialization, global space appears less perspectivalist, more hybridized, and moving in multiple, decentered formations beyond the power of sovereign states.

First, electronic communication and accelerated modes of transport have provoked an intensified round of time-space compression, dramatically shrinking our experience of geographical space and planetary expanse. 32 Technologies for envisioning global space have proliferated greatly in the last few decades, transforming the conditions of possibility of producing global space. 33 Within the state apparatus, a planetary watching machine comprising orbital "keyhole" intelligence satellites, global positioning systems, geostationary weather monitors, and high-altitude flight by aircraft and robotic drones offer perpetually updated technoscientific visions of global
space to national security technicians, intelligence officers, state bureaucrats, and political leaders. Whether it be electromagnetic scans of battlefields, remote sensing of the earth’s vegetation, weather photo-reconnaissance images of hurricanes, or bomb’s-eye video from a cruise missile, the imagining of the globe is no longer the sole purview of the cartographer. Once a cartographic lantern-slide show, geographical knowledge has become cyberneticized and informationized as the bit-stream of geographical information systems, database visualization software programs in the hands of the technological classes. More profoundly, the very activity of visualization is transferred to the video screens and electronic optics of machinic systems. The imperial eye is now a cybercosmic electronic eye.

Beyond the state, global telecommunication and mass media networks offer real-time coverage of global space twenty-four hours a day. The spinning globe, the logo of CNN International, has produced a globe that is perpetually subject to CNN’s spin. The everyday experience of geography is now also a collective experience of the virtual geography of global media events, as the world-making and world-disclosing vectors of the television, telephone, and telesatellite uplinks make telethesia—perception at a distance—an integral part of late-twentieth-century “human” faculties and capabilities. Indeed, it can be argued, such teletechnologies are producing terminal subjects, cyborg entities defined not by where they live but by the telematic flows they receive and emit.

Thus, increasingly, the space of international politics has become a postperspectival (s)pace. Zbigniew Brzezinski, in a revealing book titled Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century, articulates a general feeling of geopolitical vertigo in writing of “the notable acceleration in the velocity of our history and the uncertainty of its trajectory.”

History has not ended, [he observes] but has become compressed. Whereas in the past, historical epochs stood out in relatively sharp relief, and one could thus have a defined sense of historical progression, history today entails sharp discontinuities that collide with each other, condense our sense of perspective, and confuse our historical perceptions.

Second, the end of the Cold War and the (con)structions of hybridized globalization have provoked a generalized crisis of strategic discourse in the West. The geopolitical discourse of essential geographical entities in perpetual conflict is difficult to sustain in a world where geographical entities appear less solid, fixed, and pure than they once did. Once a monolithic red space in the US mind, the territory of the former Soviet Union is now perceived as the wild east, an anarchic zone of warring ethnic groups, upstart capitalist entrepreneurs, parasitic criminal syndicates, and disintegrating military infrastructures. Nevertheless, attempts to re-map the surface of international politics in comfortably essentialist terms persist in the Western foreign policy community. Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” thesis, for example, was a Mackinder-like attempt to assert—in the guise of uncovering—the existence of fundamental civilizational blocs beneath the “boomin’ buzzin’ confusion” of the present. Other ambitious attempts to redraft global space to some unveiled underlying essence will, no doubt, continue, but so also has what David Campbell describes as “the globalization of contingency, the erasure of markers of certainty, and the rarefaction of political discourse.”

Finally, the emergence of a condition of postmodernity over the last three decades has coincided with a dramatic materialist and ideological deterritorialization of the geopolitical world order established under US hegemony after World War II. A new spatiality of flows is provoking the development of un-stated space, networks, and webs that are not simply beyond but that overwhelm the jurisdictional power and territorial control of sovereign states. Previously-national capital, equity, and bond markets are becoming untethered from national territorial space. The bound market of the Bretton Woods era has given way to an “unbound” global capital market that is, according to McKinsey and Company consultants Bryan and Farrell, “only now beginning to flex its muscles,” “just now discovering its own strength and potential.” “Individual national financial markets are loosing their separate identities as they merge into a single, overpowering marketplace.” As a consequence, as financial power has gravitated toward global capital markets and networks, states can no longer control their own economic destiny. For neoliberal ideologists, this change is overwhelmingly positive and is discursively constituted as a contest between accelerating progress (globalization and transnational corporate capitalism promise a cosmopolitan world of abundance) and reactionary national resistance (governments offer only bureaucracy and deadening regulation). In Bryan and Farrell’s terms:

As the market becomes unbound from the constraints of national governments, it is creating the potential for a tidal wave of global capitalism that could drive rapid growth and highly beneficial integration of the world’s real economy well into the next century.
The political and cultural wash from this tsunami of transformation is already finding expression in renewed efforts to *reterritorialize* identity around remythologized fixities of kin and country. Postmodernity, according to Zygmunt Bauman, is about living with the experience of absent totality—dealing with the erosion of tradition, with detraditionalization. Postmodernity is an age of contingency that inspires dreams of missing totalities:

> Totality in space: a framed composition that would allow every brush stroke to bask in the glory of meaningful design. And totality in time: an unbroken thread of time that would keep every bead in place, and in its right place, as it is strung on the thread of time just after the one before and before the one that will come after.\(^{12}\)

The vertigo of the postmodern renders the absence of perspectivalist visions of space and time, place and tradition, all the more acute, engendering a politics of impossible returns and contradictory positionality, and unleashing desires for the very ordered unities and totalities of space/time the capitalist global market is shredding.

In sum, the certainties and fixities of modern geopolitics are disintegrating in complex and plural ways as global space becomes conditioned by telecommunicational dromologies, strategic discourse struggles to keep pace and up to speed, and state sovereignty reels from its disintermediation and dis-instatement by what Timothy Luke terms "un-stated sovereign potencies."\(^{43}\) Is this condition, then, adequately described as the end of geopolitics?

### Researching Postmodern Geopolitics

For many theorists of international affairs, the conditions just noted are sufficient evidence for the claim that geopolitics is over. Yet, most of these very same theorists would readily concede that questions of geographical politics are in the storm's eye of the maelstrom of postmodernity. Conceptualizing geopolitics not as an essence of vision, strategy, and state power but as an imperfect name for particular historical condensations of strategic geography and governmentality, a discursive constellation concerned with, among other things, the envisioning, strategizing, and disciplining of global space, enables us to appreciate it as a problematic that is pluralizing and splintering in strange new ways. Consolidated as a deconstructive approach to geopolitics at the end of the Cold War, critical geopolitics needs to acknowledge not only the erosion and fragmentation of modern geopolitics but also the heterogenesis of the polycodal technofimations and megamachinic flowmations of postmodern geopolitics. Following the general trajectory of the structural features already noted, three emergent clusters of postmodern geopolitics suggest themselves for future research by critical geopoliticians.\(^{44}\)

The first is the postmodern production of "global views" namely, the capture and enframing of global space within certain technological and informational orders of power. Established and mobilizing global media empires and strategic alliances such as Warner-Turner, CNBC-Microsoft, AT&T DirecTV, and MCI-News Corporation (which owns BskyB and has a major stake in the Hong Kong based Star TV) promise to envelop the globe within their corporate telecommunicational and televisual logos of power, producing global affairs as live action or a collage of sound bites, spectacular footage, and entertainment minutes. The electronic eyes of the media function as videocameratic orders of power. To be *in camera* is to be enclosed, to be within the chambers of a judge or person of title; it is to be before an objective public authority with the power to issue (video) indictments if there is a noncorrespondence between the imagined world and the imagined moral world.\(^{45}\) With their powerful systems of image-capture, global media machines have tremendous police power over how we see and understand "real (i.e., virtual) geography" in international politics. Together with other megamachinic assemblages, they help center and format post–Cold War global space into sectors like "rogue states" (a war-machine zone), "failed states" (a paragovernmental zone), and "emerging markets" (a global financial-machine zone).\(^{46}\)

Beyond the mass media but still part of the technological enframing of global space, commercial and quasi-state enterprises—like Sovinformsputnik and Prioda from Russia, Israeli Aircraft Industries, and the private California-based Core Software Technology, Space Imaging (led by Lockheed Martin), E-Systems (a Raytheon and Mitsubishi Corp. joint venture), EarthWatch (backed by Ball Aerospace, WorldView Imaging, and Hitachi), and Orbital Sciences—are all in competition to sell high-quality satellite images of any spot on the exposed face of the earth. The postmodern geopolitics of these satellite-image companies is particularly interesting because they mark the privatization of previously state-monopolized intelligence operations. A subdivision of Orbital Sciences, Orbital Imaging’s satellite Orb-View is scheduled for launch in mid-1997 and offers exclusive territorial agreements for clients. Buy the images of a certain terrain or region and no one else will get access. In the future, states may be forced to buy up images of their own territory to prevent spying.\(^{47}\)
The Israeli government has already objected to a Saudi Arabian investment in Orbital Science, resulting in an agreement to alter the satellite’s software to block imaging of the Israeli state. The French state, whose Helios-IA high-resolution optical spy satellite joined those of Russia and the United States in orbit in early 1996, understands the global view afforded by their system as a geopower that helps, literally and figuratively, to define the nation. More than simply seeing actual high-definition images of France from space, it reconfirms France’s mythical identity as a great power. As a Chirac aide put it: “Over-the-horizon information is a new source of geopolitical power, like nuclear weapons.” Other machinic systems producing technogeopolitical views include the US-run global positioning system (GPS) and military intelligence platforms and systems whose ongoing efforts to police the planetary spectrum are driven by technoscientific and militaristic fantasies of pure global (war-machine) vision.

A complex postmodern geopolitics entwining territory, media, and machines was evident in the US cruise missile attacks against Iraq in September 1996. The latest version of the U.S. Tomahawk cruise missile used in these attacks (made by the GM-owned Hughes Aircraft Company at an estimated cost of $1 million apiece) employed not only a supposedly improved terrain “scene-matching” computer but also a complementary guidance system that used satellites continually to update the missile’s location and target. (Many of the missiles still missed.) The unusual geopolitics of these attacks—the use of drone weapons launched by warships in international waters and by B-52s based in Guam, a twenty-hour flight away—was necessitated both by territorial limits in the region, diplomatic restrictions on the use of airbases in Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and televisual limits at home, and the Clinton administration’s fear of the spectacle of US military casualties in the run-up to a presidential election. The geopolitics of vision, in this case, was triangulated by technology, territory, and television.

A second cluster of postmodern geopolitics is that emerging from the efforts of intellectuals and institutions of statecraft to remap the global strategic landscape after the Cold War. While the crude Manichean world of the Cold War may be gone for now, the preoccupation of the national security establishment with “rogue states and nuclear outlaws” is indicative of a persistent territorial conceptualization of danger in international security studies. Underwriting these territorializing specifications of danger are, of course, old-fashioned essentialist identities—totalitarian states, Islamic fundamentalists, die-hard Communists, terrorists, criminals, and devils (like Saddam Hussein)—and a longstanding strategic commitment on the part of the Western security apparatus to pro-Western states like Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. The effort of NATO to extend this zone of strategic commitment and protection in Central Europe is evidence that a state-centric territorial geopolitics does persist, but increasingly it is also nonterritorial, “postmodern terrorist” threats in a speeding hybrid world that preoccupy the defense planners in the Pentagon, at NATO headquarters in Brussels, and elsewhere. Threats from contraband flows and proliferations—the spread of nuclear weapons, plutonium, terrorists, drugs, illegal migrants, infectious diseases, money laundering, sensitive high-tech assets, biological and chemical agents, and so on—and threats to vital official flows and ports—oil pipelines, subways, world trading centers, airports, teleports, secret data archives, fiber-optic lines, international financial networks, and global sporting spectacles—have brought into being a postmodern geopolitics of security in which the geographies are in fluid flowmations, not fixed formations. Ostensibly preoccupied by a geography of territorial fixities during the Cold War, security discourse has expanded to encompass the protection of fundamental spaces of flows from material attack or the immaterial terrorism of computer hackers and software viruses. The creation of a Belfast-style “ring of steel” and CCTV system around the City of London—a strategic space of financial flows—and the militarization of US airports in response to recent spectacular bombings disclose a geopolitics that mixes traditional forms of containment and detainment with new panoptic surveillance and scanning technologies. Again, media vectors are also implicated in the creation of these landscapes, one of their “strategic” functions being the simulation of security and the containment of media-borne viruses of panic and hysteria.

Even within the much remarked-upon emergence of “environmental security” and the sacred visions of green governmentalists like Al Gore, geography is postterritorial in-flowmations of ozone gases, acid rain, industrial pollution, topsoil erosion, smog emissions, rainforest depletions, and toxic spills. Yet, there also persists the discourse of unveiled and primordial geographical regions. In the place of Mackinder’s natural seats of power, Gore presents the “great genetic treasure map” of the globe—twelve areas around the globe that “hold the greatest concentration of germplasm important to modern agriculture and world food production.” Robert Kaplan’s unsentimental journey to the “ends of the earth” where cartographic geographies are unraveling and fading has him disclosing a “real world” of themeless violence and chaos, a world where “[w]e are not in
control.55 The specter of a second Cold War—"a protracted struggle between ourselves and the demons of crime, population pressure, environmental degradation, disease, and cultural conflict"—haunts his thoughts.56 This equivocal environmentalization of strategic discourse (and vice versa)—and the environmental strategic think tanks like the World Watch Institute that promote it—deserve problematization as clusters of postmodern geopolitics, in this case congealments of geographical knowledge and green governamentalities designed to recharge the US polity with a circumscribed global environmental mission to save Planet Earth from destruction.57

Thirdly, the deterritorialization of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inherited identity by the transnational flowmations of economic, financial, and cultural globalization has already provoked a postmodern geopolitical rhetoric of acceleration and pace, on the one hand, and resistance and place, on the other hand, within US political culture. On the one side, one has dromo-celebrants like Jack Kemp and Newt Gingrich for whom "accelerating the transition" from Second Wave industrial capitalism to Third Wave informational capitalism has become a mantra.58 The United States needs to dismantle its obsolete and old-fashioned regulatory "barriers" and speed itself out onto Microsoft's "road ahead" and into a futuristic "opportunity society" of friction-free (h)orderless capitalism. On the other hand, one has self-styled rebels, fundamentalists, and cultural warriors like Patrick Buchanan, Ross Perot, and Pat Choate, who campaign against the swamping of US identity by illegal immigration and multiculturalism, the erosion of US sovereignty by international agencies and corporations, and the dissipation of US patriotism induced by permissive individualism and radical social minorities. Buchanan's call for the construction of a vast wall along the Rio Grande seemed to symbolize his whole campaign for president, his metaphors of barriers, walls, and resistance being symptomatic of a profound desire to resolidify and reterritorialize the United States around imaginary notions of place, country, and kin. In a postmodern time where, Zygmunt Bauman notes, "formlessness is the fittest of forms," Buchananism represented a desire to return to a time when forms were enduring fixities—the durable structures of family, faith, and America First that made the United States the fittest of all the nations.59 Yet Buchanan, an electronic populist—a product of the very screens of power he condemns—can offer only teletraditionalist solutions to deterritorialization, the simulation of sovereignty in a world where the real thing is gone forever.60

Briefly summarized here are only some of the many decentered clusters in the postmodern geopolitics constellation now free-forming around us. As should be evident, the condition of postmodernity is saturated with geographical politics of many different kinds. To assert glibly that geopolitics is coming to an end is to ignore the ongoing struggle over global space at the end of the twentieth century. The imperial visions of Halford Mackinder and Cold War geopoliticians may be obsolete, but new technoscientific visions of space have taken their place and strive to enframe our world. Geopolitics is not over; the struggle to envision and enframe global space in imperial constellations of geography/power/knowledge continues. So also do struggles of resistance.

Notes

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52. A 1996 report on the American intelligence bureaucracies (including the CIA, National Reconnaissance Office, National Security Agency, and Defense Intelligence Agency) by the Twentieth Century Fund criticized the militarization of intelligence and overreliance on machines at the expense of people within the intelligence community. It was reported that, to analyze the information that machines collect, more than $26 billion a year is spent on machines and less than $3 billion on people. The CIA’s “paramilitary” culture of spying and secrecy have dominated the agency at the expense of analysts. Put differently, the epistemology of the US intelligence community is primitve, technocratic, and realist. The emphasis is on gathering, sifting, and isolating supposedly “raw objective data” rather than on higher-order interpretative skills and creative thinking. No doubt this helps explain why the CIA did not have the capability to see one of the most significant events of the late twentieth century, namely, the collapse of the Soviet Union. See Tim Weener, “Spies Faulted for War Focus,” New York Times, June 28, 1996, p. 20, and David Wise, “I Spy a Makeover,” Washington Post, March 24, 1996, p. C2.


