

THE EFFACEMENT OF PLACE? US FOREIGN POLICY AND THE SPATIALITY OF THE GULF CRISIS

Gearóid Ó Tuathail (Gerard Toal)[†]

On January 15, 1991 a world-wide audience watched a geopolitical crisis become a war live on their television screens. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 was the ostensible cause of the crisis. With the approval of the United Nations Security Council, Iraq was subject to a comprehensive economic blockade in the weeks that followed, while the United States coordinated an international military coalition of thirty six nations against Iraq. The US state itself moved half a million soldiers into the region and coordinated 250,000 soldiers from other nations together with millions of tons of food, fuel and equipment to support this offensive force. On January 15, 1991, after the failure of diplomatic initiatives, the US-led coalition launched an intense aerial bombardment of Iraq and Kuwait which lasted six weeks. After a short 100 hour ground war to recapture Kuwait, a cease-fire was declared by President Bush at midnight on the 27th of February 1991. An estimated 100,000 to 150,000 combat and civilian Iraqis and Kuwaitis were killed in the war. United States combat losses were remarkably low at 148 dead (38 from so-called "friendly fire"), making the Iraq-to-United States loss ratio roughly a thousand to one (Draper, 1992b). Iraq, Kuwait and the Persian Gulf all suffered acute environmental devastation. Thousands of Kurdish and Shi'ite Iraqis died after the cease-fire in short-lived uprisings. Hundreds of Iraqis, mostly children, are still dying as a consequence of the allied assault, continued UN sanctions, and the rule of Saddam Hussein.¹

With such a grim balance sheet for a war that is still killing people (and may not yet be completely over), geographers have a moral and political obligation to confront and challenge the strategies by which the war was given to be seen by politicians, "experts" and the mass media within the "Western" world. As intellectuals sensitive to the social production of space and place, geographers have a special role

[†] Department of Geography, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA

in the documentation and deconstruction of the spatiality of the Gulf crisis, a spatiality which created the conditions of possibility for a techno-frenzied slaughter (which does not deserve the name "war") and the consummation of militarist fantasies that had long been harbored under the Reagan-Bush administrations. This paper is an attempt to open up the spatiality of what was projected as "the Gulf crisis" to empirical investigation and theoretical reflection. Its object of focus is the US role in the crisis and not the regional origins of the crisis, nor the motivations of the international coalition that participated in the war (see Brenner, 1991; Bullock and Morris, 1991; Cooper, et al. 1991; Draper, 1992a, 1992b; Halliday, 1991; Simpson, 1991 on these issues). Proceeding in an approximate chronological way from the origins of the "crisis" to the war itself, the paper addresses four general issues. First, it seeks to construct an (not the) explanation of why the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait came to be narrated as "the Gulf crisis," an event of supposed global significance and danger that necessitated a military response. Second, it seeks to document how the crisis was inscribed with meaning and a particular stage set of historical and geographical backgrounding by the Bush administration. The third section of the paper moves away from consideration of the official US inscription of the crisis to explore, using Paul Virilio's notion of "chronopolitics" as its point of departure, the related but less traditional problematic of speed and the management of time during the crisis and war. Finally, the fourth section reflects briefly on the nature and moral consequences of the electronic imaging of place by the military war machine and the mass media. Although there is sometimes an uneasy relationship between official, chronopolitical and electronic constructions of place, all these forms of inscription can be described as abstracting place and eviscerating its social dimensions and human character.

Deconstructing the discursive strategies by which the Gulf crisis was geo-graphed necessarily requires one to develop a narrative of intelligibility about the spatiality of the Gulf crisis. Such a narrative should be premised on the impossibility of separating our inherited language and discourse from the "reality" of the Gulf slaughter; our very categories of reading and writing are already infested with those that made the Gulf war possible. This very fact should make us particularly self-conscious of the narratives of intelligibility we use to write the Gulf as critical geopoliticians (Dalby, 1991). The one that implicitly informs this paper (and other works of critical geopolitics) is the effacement of place, the erasure of the sociality of place by official geopolitical inscriptive strategies, speed and technology. The paper concludes by explicitly turning on this narrative and demonstrating how it itself has its limits. Narratives which summarize the spatiality of the Gulf crisis as characterized by an effacement of place should not reify place and treat it as

a natural, innocent object outside of any relationship to signification and inscription.

US Foreign Policy, the End of the Cold War, and the Origins of the Gulf Crisis

While the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 had complex regional origins, the subsequent narration of this event as the globally significant and dramatically threatening "Gulf crisis" must be traced back to the dilemmas created for the United States and Atlanticist security structure by the end of the Cold War. As a geopolitical system, the Cold War gave a distinct organizational structure to global politics and helped bring into existence not only two distinct socioeconomic and geopolitical orders but two permanent military-industrial complexes in the West and East. The reality of US-Soviet antagonism helped legitimate US military hegemony amongst the advanced capitalist states while the ideological use of Cold War discourses of danger shaped the very nature of political life within these states. Articulations of Cold War geopolitics helped constitute and secure a field of geographical identities ("the West," "the Soviet Union," the "United States") while serving to discipline domestic social and cultural difference within these spaces (Campbell, 1992a; Kaldor, 1990; Ross, 1989).

The Reagan rerun of classic Cold War geopolitics in the early eighties helped secure a conservative domestic order within the United States but the contradictions of Reaganomics left the US state seriously crippled with huge trade and budget deficits (Corbridge and Agnew, 1991). The relative economic standing of United States vis-à-vis Japan and Germany declined and became an issue of national concern. Gorbachev's "new thinking" in Soviet foreign policy explicitly sought to deconstruct the Cold War image of the Soviet Union in Western society. In the late 1980s arms agreements, revolutions in Eastern Europe, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the manifest economic failures of communism rendered the US national security community's standard script of world politics obsolete and anachronistic (Ó Tuathail, 1992b). The collapse of the Cold War (due to the economic failures of Soviet communism) provided the new Bush administration, an administration elected because of its successful manipulation of Cold War signifiers, with the challenging task of moving beyond Cold War reflexes, attitudes and institutions. The possibility of this being realized was not good considering the fact that the overwhelmingly white, male conservatives that made up the Bush administration owed their careers, political position and very subjectivities to the Cold War. Many were veterans of the Nixon and Ford administrations and followed Kissinger in view-

ing post-Cold War "euphoria" as dangerous.² The discursive functioning of "euphoria" (which had a narcotic sub-text) revealed the persistence of a gendered Cold War subjectivity amongst this community, particularly those in key foreign policy positions (especially National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney). "Euphoria" was the position of the idealist, the softheaded, loose, feminine reader of international politics whereas "prudence and realism" was the position of the seasoned Cold Warrior, the hard-headed, masculine analyst of international affairs (who had seen it all before).

From the perspective of the Bush administration, the expectations released by the end of the Cold War, therefore, were dangerous aspirations in need of containment. Domestically, there was a clamor for a "peace dividend" and renewed sentiment for a more "isolationist" role for the United States in world affairs. The possibility of an American hegemony after the Cold War also threatened to loosen the cultural hegemony of Cold War understandings of "America" and "the West" (already under contestation in debates over the canon of Western civilization) not to mention the lock of the Republican Party on the White House. Internationally, the end of the Cold War also raised the awkward issue of whether the subordination of Western Europe (principally Germany) and Japan to US military authority would continue. The traditional identity, authority and role of the "United States of America" was becoming less distinct and more uncertain. In Deleusian and Guattarian terms, the implosion of Cold War discourse "deterritorialized" the "United States" as an identity (Doel, forthcoming; Bogue, 1989; the globalization of the 1980s had already de-territorialized its economic identity).

"Re-territorializing" the role of the "United States" and the "Western" security system was an implicit, reflex priority for the Bush administration in 1990. Traditional anti-communist threat narratives had to be rewritten as general threat narratives in order to re-secure and re-discipline a domestic as well as an international order. The United States still lived in a dangerous world and instability itself, as Bush noted in early 1990, was now the enemy. Deeply imbedded discourses of danger concerning Third World otherness (Islam, despotism, anarchy, narcoterrorism) were re-asserted independent from Cold War narratives and activated to justify the US invasion of Panama in December 1989. This Theodore Roosevelt-style hemispheric police action, however, was a regional affair and incapable of serving as the means of re-asserting the "United States" as a purposeful state in world affairs. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait less than a year later, however, offered an opportunity to do this in a very dramatic and forceful way. The invasion became a global platform for a comprehensive re-articulation of the US

role in world politics. The "United States" became meaningful again and the role of the "Western" security system in a changing world was invested with a new purpose. This purpose was to safeguard the "Western" way of life against disruptive anarchies which threatened geopolitical order and the stability of the global economy.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was a disruptive anarchy in the flows of the global economy. As a place "Kuwait" always had a somewhat problematic identity. Like all states, its existence was a product of global historical forces and dependent upon discourses of imagined community and sovereignty. Unlike the paradigmatic Western nation-states, however, the precariousness of these discourses in the case of Kuwait was transparent. A few days after the Iraqi invasion the *New York Times* (August 5, 1990) described Kuwait as "less a country than a family-owned oil company with a flag and a seat at the United Nations." Ostensibly a sovereign nation, its population of over 2 million comprised 1.5 million expatriate workers and only 570,000 legal Kuwaiti citizens. Only 60,000 males from this group had a legal right to vote if allowed to by the Al-Sabah family who controlled the state's enormous wealth. Much of this wealth was non-territorial in form. Kuwait's overseas assets were estimated at \$100 billion or more, and were invested largely in the United States (where it owned Santa Fe International), Britain (where it had a 9.8% stake in British Petroleum, a 10.5% stake in Midland Bank and complete ownership of St Martin's Property), Japan (10.3% stake in Arabian Oil), Spain (72% ownership of Torras Hostench) and Germany (25% ownership in Hoechst) (*Business Week* 1990a). "Iraq" also was a problematic territorial entity and a lesser presence than Kuwait in the stream of international capital flows (Luke, 1991). It had an international debt of \$80 billion, half of which was owed to Arab Gulf states, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in particular. The rest was guaranteed trade debts to assorted Western countries (including France, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland and Ireland) and military debt mostly to the USSR (Karsh and Kautsi, 1991: 29). It had holdings in banks in London and the Netherlands among other places (Economist Intelligence Unit, 1990: 13).

In invading the territory of Kuwait the Iraqi army did not, however, gain access to Kuwait's non-territorial transnational cybernetic wealth (Luke, 1991). The ability of the Al-Sabah family to escape the invading army and relocate their corporate headquarters to the luxury of Sheraton Al-Hada Hotel in Tiaf, Saudi Arabia, allowed them to mount an international war against Iraq across the international airwaves. Their counter-offensive began immediately with the founding and financing of "Citizens for a Free Kuwait" to lobby the US Congress for military intervention. The "Citizens" dimension to the organization was purely fictional since funding came overwhelmingly from the Kuwaiti govern-

ment in exile (MacArthur, 1992: 49). This group hired Hill and Knowlton, a Washington, D.C. public relations firm, to act as the coordinators of their informational air-war against Iraq. Deploying both the powerful discourse of sovereignty and equally powerful gendered discourses about territory and the body (the "rape" of Kuwait and the killing of babies; the "eye-witness" account of the removal of babies from incubators was subsequently shown to be unfounded; MacArthur, 1992), the lobbying battle achieved a series of strategic victories on Capitol Hill and on the screens of the mass media. The contested reality of "Kuwait" came to be articulated in terms of sovereignty not in terms of sociology, history or even justice. Discursive fictions of the sovereignty narrative, like "the Kuwaiti people," usually achieved aerial supremacy over competing political ("feudal monarchy"), sociological ("migrant labor" colony) and economic ("blood for oil") narrations of the territory (and crisis).

The effacement of the material realities of Kuwait in the public relations efforts of "Citizens for a Free Kuwait" was decisively aided by the inscription of Kuwait as a global symbol of a "victimized nation" by the Thatcher and Bush administrations. The decision to mobilize an international coalition against the invasion reversed the previous US policy tilt towards Iraq that began in 1979 after the Iranian revolution. The United States had removed Iraq from its list of countries sponsoring terrorism in 1982 and restored full diplomatic relations in 1984 (Gigot, 1990).³ From 1985 to 1990 the United States authorized over \$4 billion in guaranteed agricultural exports to Iraq (Ridgeway 1991: 13). During the Iran-Iraq war the United States shared intelligence information with Iraq on the movements of the Iranian army and intervened to re-flag Kuwaiti tankers carrying Iraqi oil, thus enabling Iraq to continue fighting. In the fall of 1988 when evidence of Iraqi use of chemical weapons against the Kurds came to light, the US Senate passed tough unilateral sanctions against Iraq by a vote of 87-0. Through persistent lobbying by the Reagan administration and US business interests the sanctions never became law (Gigot 1990: 6). In the geopolitical calculus of the Reagan and Bush administrations a "strong Iraq" provided a buffer against a "fundamentalist Iran."⁴

On August 2, 1991 George Bush and his advisors had a two-hour meeting with Margaret Thatcher in Aspen, Colorado.⁵ Thatcher, evoking Churchill and World War II, urged Bush to make a stand against Saddam Hussein.⁶ Revealing both her own exaggerated masculinized subjectivity and gendered understanding of diplomacy she reportedly stated: "Remember, George, this is no time to go wobbly" (J.E. Smith, 1992: 63). At a National Security Council meeting the next day Bush evidently steered his self to embody the recommended stiffness. CIA Director William Webster, interpreting the texts generated by spy sat-

ellites, suggested that Iraq was about to invade (penetrate) Saudi Arabia. Though certain military and political advisors were unconvinced, Bush (with the strong support of Brent Scowcroft) concluded that this was the case and that the United States needed to send forces to Saudi Arabia as a (steel) shield against potential "naked aggression." Through telephone diplomacy and the dispatch of a high-level US delegation (led by Secretary of Defense Cheney) to meet with King Fahd, the United States secured permission from the Saudi monarchy to send troops there under the contingency plan 1002-90 (Woodward, 1991). This recently updated contingency plan was the result of a war game simulation with Iraq as enemy that had been designed and run by General Schwarzkopf in the summer of 1990. On August 8, 1991 125,000 United States troops from the 82nd Airborne Division and units of the US Air Force began arriving in Saudi Arabia.

Inscribing the Gulf Crisis: The Practical Geopolitical Reasoning of the Bush Administration

The critical study of geopolitical ideology can be usefully divided into the study of formal and practical geopolitical reasoning (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992). The former involves the study of the intellectuals and texts of the geopolitical tradition. The latter involves the study of the pragmatic practice of statecraft by national security elites and is concerned with the strategies of inscription and re-inscription of identity and difference upon international politics. This takes the form of the relentless construction of imaginary geographical boundaries between the self and the other, the domain of freedom and the domain of danger, the inside realm of community and the outside realm of anarchy with the former always privileged over the latter. In times of crisis this process of geopolitical scripting rigidly designates (in a Kripkean sense) the map of international politics. Places become rigidly inscribed with sets of identities, descriptions, histories and intentions. The boundary between community and anarchy becomes a Manichean divide. In the process the complex and ambiguous human geography of places and peoples becomes eviscerated. States lose their quality as socially constructed geographical places (locations for the sustenance of life), and become abstractions in a geopolitical power game (Dalby, 1990; Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992).

The speeches and policy statements of the Bush administration on the Gulf crisis are performances of practical geopolitical reasoning. Using the public record of speeches and policy statements by top officials in the Bush administration, as chronicled in the US State Department's weekly publication *Dispatch*, one can identify certain recurring inscrip-

tion strategies by which the crisis was rendered meaningful to the United States and world public. Only a few strategies can be examined here, so I have concentrated on the scripting strategies used in explanations of the ostensible reasons for US force deployments (oil and the "new world order"), and explications of the historical and geographical meaning of the crisis (World War II and Vietnam as systems of signification). Other differentiation strategies involving technology (Oriental primitivism versus Western high-tech "smart" weapons), gender (the Iraqi "rape" of Kuwait versus the protective and socially "liberated" armies of the West), and religious morality (Islamic barbarism versus Western "just war" morality) are also important but are not considered here.

Oil: Geopolitical Hyperrealism

Unlike many Americans, President Bush, as a former oil executive, knew where Kuwait was located on the world map. Oil gave the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait a general geopolitical significance but the assumption that the US state rationally intervened in the region to safeguard the West's supply of oil is highly contentious. From a realist geopolitical perspective, one which purports to read potential threats in the context of empirical strategic realities, US military intervention was not particularly necessary. The defense of Kuwait was not in the vital interests of the United States and administration policy before the invasion reflected this fact (see the Glaspie-Hussein transcript in Sifry and Cerf, 1991, pp. 122-133; Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs John H. Kelly's exchange with Representative Lee Hamilton on July 31, 1990 in Draper, 1992a, pp. 52-53). Even after US forces were committed, resort to the use of force was not necessary and many leading geopoliticians and other intellectuals within the United States argued against going to war (see the opinions of Admiral Crowe, Arthur Schlesinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski and others collected in Ridge-way 1991, and Sifry and Cerf 1991). In practice, the Bush administration's reasoning on oil was a form of geopolitical hyperrealism, a condition where geopolitical reasoning loses all but the most fantastic relationship to empirical strategic realities.⁷ One can document this by considering three different dimensions to the US state's practical geopolitical reasoning concerning oil.

The Defense of Saudi Arabia. Four days after the Iraqi invasion, Bush first stated that "this will not stand." Implicitly this suggested the rollback of the invasion. Inside accounts have suggested that from the beginning Bush's goal was to go beyond defending Saudi Arabia but this objective was initially shared neither with the public nor many

officials outside his closest advisors (Woodward, 1991). Bush's first address to the nation on the invasion ("The Arabian Peninsula: US Principles," August 8, 1990) described the mission of the US troops dispatched to Saudi Arabia as "wholly defensive." "The sovereign independence of Saudi Arabia," Bush declared, "is of vital interest to the United States" (*Dispatch* September 3, 1990: 53). Bush's immediate goal was to protect the remaining elements of the pro-Western geopolitical order in the Middle East, the centerpiece of which was Saudi Arabia. This order comprised rich dictatorial regimes who ruled over sparse populations and vast oil reserves, states historically created by the West as client regimes (Brenner 1991: 128). Iraq's military did appear to threaten this order yet the empirical evidence that they intended to invade Saudi Arabia was ambiguous at best (its deployment in Kuwait was entirely defensive; Bullock and Morris 1991: 168–69). Furthermore, it was doubtful if Iraq had the capability to do so successfully since Saudi Arabia, the largest importer of arms in the world, was far from being defenseless. Finally, it was not obvious that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait necessarily threatened "Western interests" in the region since Iraq had historically been understood as serving these interests rather well. It was Iraq, not Kuwait, that acted as the main check on the expansion of Iranian power in the region.

Oil Reserves and Supplies. Once the Bush administration decided on the necessity to deploy US forces to defend Saudi Arabia it also began to claim that Iraq posed a serious threat to the West's oil reserves and supplies. In his August 8, 1990 address Bush contrasted Iraq and the United States. Iraq is "a rich and powerful country that possesses the world's second largest reserves of oil and over a million men under arms. It's the fourth largest military in the world." The United States, by contrast, "now imports nearly half the oil it consumes and could face a major threat to its economic independence. Much of the world is even more dependent upon imported oil and is even more vulnerable to Iraqi threats" (Bush, *Dispatch* September 3, 1990: 52).

Bush's description of the Iraqi threat and the supposed vulnerability of the world to Iraqi control over oil bore little relation to strategic realities. First, Iraq's military force was largely composed of poorly trained conscripts adept at little beyond defensive strategy (Freedman and Karsh, 1991).⁸ Second, stressing control over reserves of oil was misleading since figures on oil reserves vastly overstated the importance of Middle Eastern oil to the Western economy (Bandow, 1991). Third, even with control over Kuwaiti oil Iraq could not pose a serious threat to world oil supplies. Before the invasion Kuwait and Iraq together produced between four and five million barrels a day (b/d) for the world oil market. Their combined production was 4.7m b/d in July 1990, 20

percent of OPEC crude oil production that month and almost 9 percent of the global supply in the third quarter of the year (Shelley, 1992: 166). This oil was stopped from reaching the world market by a UN embargo after the invasion, not by Iraqi action. The price of oil on the international spot market did soar and fall in response to the vicissitudes of the crisis. In supply terms, however, by the end of September 1990 the 11 other OPEC members had boosted their joint production by 3.5m b/d. A brief shortfall in global supply was soon overcome. There was to be no oil shock for the structures of the global oil market were quite different from those of the 1970s (Johnson, 1989; Shelley, 1992).

The Chokehold Image. The reasoning of the Bush administration on oil was ultimately based on deep-rooted strategic fantasies (Ó Tuathail 1992a) rather than on existent strategic realities. Before the Gulf crisis Robert Johnson (1989), a former member of the National Security Council staff, argued that US strategy in the Persian Gulf was based on the erroneous assumption (rooted in a "misunderstanding of events in the seventies") that the greatest threat was one of a severe oil supply crisis. Despite the outdated and mistaken nature of this assumption Bush and other officials made frequent recourse to images of the choking hands of Saddam Hussein on the lifeline of the West (again corporal and geopolitical territoriality are made mutually indistinguishable). In announcing US troop increases November 8, 1991 Bush declared that the world community must prevent Saddam Hussein from "establishing a chokehold on the world's economic lifeline" (*Dispatch* November 12, 1990: 258). Geopolitical reasoning blended with demonology as Saddam Hussein was represented as a sadistic madman who threatened the strangulation of the vulnerable West. The Bush administration could thus represent itself in this unconscious fantasy drama as a guardian of law and order, a doctor/police power with responsibilities for the health and welfare of the "Western way of life." Speaking at the Pentagon on 15 August 1990 Bush described how the US role was about:

maintaining access to energy resources that are key – not just to the functioning of this country but to the entire world. Our jobs, our way of life, our own freedom, and the freedom of friendly countries around the world would all suffer if control of the world's great oil reserves fell into the hands of Saddam Hussein (Bush, "Against Aggression in the Persian Gulf" *Dispatch* September 3, 1990: 54).

The irony of this hyperbolic geopolitical reasoning is that it was *not* shared by countries who had more reason than the United States to be concerned about oil supplies. At the time of the invasion Japan imported

99% of its oil and received two-thirds of that from the Middle East. It was the largest customer for Kuwaiti and Iraqi petroleum (*Business Week*, 1990b). However, Japan was reluctant to back the use of military force in the Gulf. In a heated parliamentary debate over the invasion most leaders did not show notable concern about a potential oil crisis (Tamoto, 1991). The Japanese consul general in New York was reported as stating in January 1991 that "[e]xperience tells us that whoever controls oil will be prepared to sell it. We are prepared to pay" (*Business Week*, 1991). Van Wolferen (1991: 28) claims this geo-economic perspective was quietly encouraged by the Japanese bureaucracy. Yet by the war's end the Japanese state had pledged nearly \$13 billion towards the costs of the war while Germany, another reluctant warrior, promised \$10.7 billion to the US-led coalition (Hamilton and Clad, 1991).

The Bush Administration's "New World Order"

The second, and more significant, motivation for US interventionism in the Gulf was what President Bush described as the "new world order." The phrase itself had twentieth century associations with Woodrow Wilson and the Nazis among others. In recent times, however, it was Mikhail Gorbachev who revived the ideal as an expression of his vision of a post-Cold War world (Der Derian, 1992: 162–63). Within the Bush administration the concept gradually gathered favor as it became obvious that the Cold War world order had indeed ended. Both Bush and Robert Gates used the phrase in speeches in April and May of 1991. However, it was in an address before a joint session of Congress on September 11, 1990 that Bush first began to actively promote the concept as the new "big idea" in US foreign policy thinking. From the evidence of this speech the "new world order" was that which could be achieved once Iraq's threat to the peace was resolved: "The crisis in the Persian Gulf . . . offers a rare opportunity to move towards a historic period of cooperation. Out of the troubled times . . . a new world order can emerge" (Bush, "Towards a New World Order," *Dispatch* September 17, 1990: 91). Implicitly Bush's speech suggested it would have five elements: American global leadership, East-West co-operation against threats to the peace, proper functioning of the United Nations, allied support for US leadership and economic renewal within the United States itself. Three points are worth noting about the Bush administration's articulation of its vision of a "new world order."

First, the "new world order" was envisaged as a *post-Cold War* world order more than a fundamentally *new* world order. Bush's first means of defining it was to point to the US-Soviet joint statement at Helsinki a few days earlier condemning Iraqi aggression. This is significant.

Though the Cold War as a geopolitical system had ended the super-powers were assumed to still hold central authority in world politics. The Bush administration's "new world order" did not countenance a delegation of authority to geo-economic powers like Japan and Germany. Both states were to remain "prisoners" of geopolitical alliances established during the Cold War which subordinated them militarily and diplomatically to the United States (they appeared willing "prisoners" in the short-term). World order was to be established with the Soviets and the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, a group that did not include Japan and Germany, in a way originally envisaged by Franklin D. Roosevelt and modified by Churchill and Stalin. Co-operation between the former geopolitical rivals offered the new possibility of converting the US into a global instrument for the promotion of order as the permanent members of the Security Council saw it. The Bush administration's vision of the "new world order" was thus a traditional backward-looking geopolitical rather than a new futuristic geo-economic one. Threats were defined, first, in terms of the sovereignty of existing states (invasions, terrorism, ethnic violence), second, in terms of geopolitical order (nuclear proliferation, territorial settlements, terrorism) and only third in economic and environmental terms (global debt, environmental degradation, economic decline).

Second, the traditional geopolitical cast given to the "new world order" was reinforced by the claim that its realization was threatened by disruptive regional conflicts in the Third World. Though the "new world order" vision claimed to address the global geopolitical system its articulation did not, in practice, transcend the symbolic case of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. This event enabled the Bush administration, firstly, to define the global system as a system in transition (without new rules) and, secondly, to define this transition as dangerous. US Secretary of State James Baker stated before the House Foreign Affairs Committee (September 4, 1990):

Iraq's unprovoked aggression is a test of how the post-Cold War world will work. Amidst the revolutions sweeping the globe and the transformation of East-West relations, we stand at a critical juncture in history. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is one of the defining moments of a new era – an era full of promise but also one replete with new challenges. . . . we must respond to the defining moments of this new era, recognizing the emergent dangers lurking before us. We are entering an era in which ethnic and sectarian identities could easily breed new violence and conflict. It is an era in which hostilities and threats could erupt as misguided leaders are tempted to assert regional dominance before the ground rules

of a new order can be accepted (Baker, "America's Stake in the Persian Gulf," *Dispatch* September 10, 1990: 69).

Such a discourse of danger echoed colonialist discourses from the past. "Ethnic and sectarian identities" breeding new violence and conflict was code for non-Western and non-rational spaces where dictators ruled and anarchy lurked. Throughout the US justifications for interventionism in the Gulf the issue was inscribed as a conflict between "the rule of law" and "the law of the jungle" (e.g. Bush, *Dispatch* September 3, 1990: 54; October 22, 1990: 205; January 21, 1991: 38). The latter expression recalls colonial images of wild, untamed spaces where "Western" traditions of law and order were obscured or no longer applied. Iraq's invasion was "a ruthless assault on the very essence of international order and civilized ideals" (Bush, *Dispatch* September 3, 1990: 55), a "relentless assault on the values of civilization" (Baker, *Dispatch* February 11, 1991: 82). The crisis was an opportunity to reinforce "standards of civilized behavior" (Baker, *Dispatch* September 10, 1990: 69). Bush's frequently expressed admiration for Theodore Roosevelt is worth remembering for Roosevelt's Corollary of 1904 ("Civilized society . . . impotence . . . international police power") and whole subjectivity (the restless male hero who carries a big stick!) was re-enacted by Bush during the Gulf crisis. Implicated in such drawing of international political space are long-standing racist and orientalist positions that can be found in US foreign policy, dispositions brought into sharp relief by the emergence of Iraq's nuclear program as a further reason for US intervention and the necessity of war. Unlike the United States and other responsible "Western" nations (such as Israel), the Iraqis could not be trusted with nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Iraq's potential military potency, therefore, needed to be emasculated (see Quayle, "The Gulf: In Defense of Moral Principle," *Dispatch* December 24, 1990: 350).

Third, the Bush administration's vision of a "new world order" rested on the traditional myths of American exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny. In his State of the Union address on January 29, 1991 Bush declared that what was at stake was a "big idea: a new world order" in which "America" has a unique role and responsibility:

For two centuries, America has served the world as an inspiring example of freedom and democracy. For generations, America has led the struggle to preserve and extend the blessings of liberty. And today, in a rapidly changing world, American leadership is indispensable. Americans know that leadership brings burdens, and requires sacrifice. But we also know why the hopes of humanity turn to us. We are Amer-

icans; we have a unique responsibility to do the hard work of freedom (Bush, "State of the Union," *Dispatch* February 4, 1991: 65).

This rhetoric was traditional American universalism and the fact that it privileged idealism over strategic realities, and did not distinguish a hierarchy of vital places, brought criticism from generally sympathetic geopoliticians like Kissinger (1991). America's triumph in the Cold War, he noted, required adjustment of traditional concepts. But the vision of the Bush administration looked towards the past rather than towards the future. Bush's call to Americans "to prepare for the next American century" in the same speech recalled Henry Luce's similar appeal in 1941. The discursive horizon for Bush's proclamations was World War II.

World War II and Vietnam as Inscription Strategies

The mythic narratives of World War II are a deeply entrenched Anglo-American vision of a "just war" (Luke 1989, 1991). Socialization, the inscriptive power of the mass media (particularly cinema and television, where history is black and white footage), made these mythic scripts available to all. Bush, himself a World War II veteran, was steeped in these. He frequently cited Winston Churchill and his view that World War II need not have been fought if Hitler had been thwarted in his 1936 push into the Rhineland (e.g. *Dispatch* December 10, 1990: 312). This "historical lesson" was considered a timeless verity of statecraft. Ruthless dictators should be confronted and stopped. Appeasement eventually leads to war. "Naked aggression" must not be allowed to succeed. Bush's first address had set the tone: "if history teaches us anything, it is that we must resist aggression or it will destroy our freedoms. Appeasement does not work. As was the case in the 1930s, we see in Saddam Hussein an aggressive dictator threatening his neighbors" (*Dispatch* September 3, 1990: 53).

In Bush's nostalgic script World War II was a feel-good war, one where a dictator was stopped, nations fought together to resist aggression, American soldiers and citizens enjoyed their finest hour and the promise of a new world order was secured. Complex histories and the realities of place were overwhelmed and effaced by a script which lifted the conflict from its actual geographical and historical co-ordinates. In the Bush administration's re-make of World War II, Iraq was cast as fascist Germany, Kuwait as the victimized small nation, the exiled Kuwaitis as the free French, Saddam Hussein as Adolf Hitler, and the allies as their true heroic selves (Luke, 1991). Iraqi atrocities were like those of the Nazis in Poland. Addressing the troops in the Saudi desert

at Thanksgiving reminded him of November 23, 1944 when he and "another group of Americans far from home" also fought for freedom. "Once again, Americans have stepped forward to share a tearful goodbye with their families before leaving for a strange and distant shore" (*Dispatch* September 17, 1990: 94). *Life* magazine helped codify and circulate this nostalgic structure of feeling by producing a special weekly edition under the headline "In Time of War" where new and old photographic images of war mixed in mutual legitimization (see, for example, the March 11, 1991 issue "Heroes All" and the March 18, 1991 issue "Coming Home"). Lost in the reasoning of the Bush administration and its circulation in civil society was the real World War II, a war Fussell (1989: 132) writes was "indiscribably cruel and insane," a "savage, insensate affair, barely conceivable to the refined imagination and hardly comprehensible without some theory of mass insanity and in-built, inherited corruption."

The most threatening system of signification for war in US public life was Vietnam. The moral and political ambiguities of that war did not sit well with the Manichean moral universe created around the Gulf crisis. The Vietnam war became represented as a "syndrome," an impotence in the face of war, that had to be overcome by a demonstration of resolve and power (Bush stated: "Saddam is going to get his ass kicked"). Whereas the Arabian desert became simulated as scenes from a World War II movie in official reasoning, the same landscape had to be exorcised of flashback scenes from Vietnam:

... this will not be another Vietnam. This will not be a protracted, drawn-out war. The forces arrayed are different. The resupply of Saddam's military would be very different. The countries united against him in the United Nations are different. The topography of Kuwait is different. And the motivation of our all-volunteer force is superb (Bush "The Gulf: A World United Against Aggression," *Dispatch* December 3, 1990: 296).

Amazingly, considering the enormous free range pulverization and ecological sabotage of that country, Vietnam was cast as a slow war, one where America's troops fought "with one hand tied behind their backs" (Bush, *Dispatch* January 21, 1991: 38). Yet it was the mythic narratives of World War II, as worked by Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, which led the United States directly into Vietnam (Luke 1989: 168–69). Rewrites of the same narratives and representation of caution in the face of war as a medical condition eventually secured the Bush administration the war in the Gulf it ultimately appeared to want.

Speed and Space: Chronopolitics and the Gulf Crisis

The evisceration of the real (economic, historical, geographical, topographical, etc.) by the Bush administration's practical geopolitical reasoning was amplified by the role of technologies of time-space compression and destruction during the Gulf crisis. The case for the effective disappearance of space given the speed of military technologies is provocatively overstated by the French critical strategist Paul Virilio (Virilio and Lotringer, 1983; Virilio, 1986; 1989). Space, for Virilio, is no longer in geography but in electronics. "Unity is in the terminals. It's in the instantaneous time of command posts, multi-national headquarters, control towers, etc. Politics is less in physical space than in the time systems administered by various technologies . . . the distribution of territory becomes the distribution of time" (Virilio and Lotringer, 1983: 115). Speed is taken to be the essence of war. Whereas strategy in the past was dominated by geopolitics (defined as the control of territory), today it is dominated by chronopolitics, the politics of time and acceleration (Der Derian, 1990; 1992). "Territory," Virilio asserts, "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 . . ." (1986: 133).

Virilio's style is a mixture of hyperbole and richly suggestive insight (his arguments recall the themes of Lewis Mumford, and E.P. Thompson on "extremism"). Like Guy Debord (1983) and David Harvey (1989) he seeks to politicize space, time and speed, but whereas the latter ground their arguments in the turn-over time of production, space, time and speed for Virilio are ultimately military phenomena which are grounded in the means of destruction, in the technological weapons ("vehicles" and "projectiles") of the military. In a statement typical of his style he asserts: "Stasis is death, the general law of the world . . . history progresses at the speed of its weapons systems" (Virilio 1986: 68). Extending this general law into an analysis of history, Virilio provides a suggestive re-reading of conventional historical processes in terms of the speed of movement – the dromos – they allowed. For Virilio "there was no 'industrial revolution' but only a 'dromocratic revolution,' there was no democracy only dromocracy; there is no strategy, only dromology" (1986: 46). In his scheme it is the pace of production, the mobility of a population and the management of speed that is crucial.

The problematic Virilio engages – the relationship between weapon systems, speed and space in militarized states – is one that deserves careful consideration by geographers. The course of the Gulf crisis provides provocative evidence for the eclipse of place by pace. First, it

is worth recalling that George Bush's original reason for going to Aspen, Colorado on August 2, 1990 was to deliver a major statement on the reshaping of US power projection capabilities after the Cold War. In a homage to military technology, Bush pointed to how "the United States has always relied upon its technological edge to offset the need to match potential adversaries' strength in numbers." Speed and flexibility are explicitly recognized by Bush as crucial:

we must focus on rapid response. As we saw in Panama, the U.S. may be called on to respond to a variety of challenges from various points on the compass. In an era when threats may emerge with little or no warning, our ability to defend our interests will depend on our speed and our agility. And we will need forces that give us global reach. No amount of political change will alter the geographic fact that we are separated from many of our most important allies and interests by thousands of miles of water . . . A new emphasis on flexibility and versatility must guide our efforts (Bush, 1990: 678).

Holding a military lead in the logistics of acceleration and flexibility was clearly recognized in US strategy as vital to power projection. Under the Carter administration the United States had established a Rapid Deployment Force to enforce the Carter Doctrine in the Middle East. Bush's proposals amounted to an extension of the principles of rapid deployment into a new policy of "flexible containment" (Luke 1991). Rather than the static postures of traditional Cold War containment military force would be ready for use against shifting and variable enemies in a variety of locations (NATO had recently re-structured its forces in this way). In December 1989 the location was Panama and in August 1990 it was the Arabian desert. The domination of pace not place concerned the military. The air and sea-lifting capacity of the US military soon negated the significance of Saudi Arabia's distance from the United States. Geography was overcome by logistical power.

Second, subsequent debate within the Bush administration about Gulf strategy became a debate about pace and time, not distance and geography. For those who advocated the "containment" and "strangulation" of Iraq the key issue was one of letting sanctions have the time to work. The United States needed to be a patient power according to this line of reasoning. For Bush and Scowcroft, time was on the side of the Iraqi army for the longer it remained in Kuwait the more difficult it would be to dislodge it. Woodward (1991: 42) provides an account of the crucial October 23, 1990 meeting when the containment option was rejected by the Bush administration. In his account the president rejected sanc-

tions by stating "I don't think there's time politically for that option." Elections were approaching in November 1990 (the offensive deployment announcement was delayed until after these) and public opinion was considered unlikely to tolerate a long drawn-out war. The result was the establishment of a firm deadline for Iraq to disengage (measured according to Eastern Standard Time not local time in Kuwait) and a series of diplomatic battles over the timing of meetings (Baker-Aziz) and withdrawals (Bush's 24 hour deadline of February 22). The control of time during the crisis was all important.

Third, the US foreign policy debate beyond the administration also divided on questions of time rather than questions of whether the United States should be involved in a region so distant or not (see the opinions in Ridgeway, 1991 and Sifry and Cert, 1991). Sam Nunn, the leading Congressional expert on defense, opposed the Bush administration's policy of no rotation for the troops and its pursuit of the offensive military option. In a *Washington Post* article Nunn (1991) described his opposition in the following manner:

What guarantees do we have that a war will be brief and that American casualties will be light? . . . Our policy cannot be based on an expectation that the war will be over quickly and easily . . . I am afraid too many recall our most recent conflicts in bumper-sticker terms:
 – "Vietnam: long, drawn out – bad"
 – "Grenada-Panama: quick, decisive – good."
 . . . We in America like instant results. We want fast food and fast military victories.

For the administration a fast military victory was vital to sustain its public relations image of the war. In chronological terms Vietnam was a failure because it was not over fast enough. As Virilio would have put it, the Bush administration and the US military were dromomaniacs.⁹

Finally, the course of the actual military conflict provides further evidence for the significance of chronopolitics. The strategy of the Iraqi army was essentially one of static defense in the hope they could draw allied forces into killing zones and raise casualties to unacceptable levels (Freedman and Karsh, 1991). Schwartzkopf's strategy was one which placed its emphasis on the technological strengths of the allied forces, particularly the allied monopoly of the means of military acceleration. Because SCUDS were relatively slow missiles most were rendered ineffective by the faster Patriot missiles. Because allied air power was not only more numerous but faster than Iraq's, the allies soon gained air supremacy and a monopoly of sight over the battlefield. Schwartzkopf's

"Hail Mary" play was a rapid strike across the desert deep into Iraq. The military goal was not to hold and secure territory but to swiftly engage the Republican guard and quickly cut off the escape route for the Iraqi army retreating from Kuwait. Lastly, once the war was called to a halt, the overriding concern of US policy was to get the troops home as quickly as possible. Significantly, the ground war was measured in terms of time (100 hours) not territory.

The question remains whether these and other examples are evidence of the domination of geopolitics over geopolitics as Virilio suggests. The opposition between the two seems misplaced, a consequence of Virilio's (1986) totalizing style and refusal to play by the traditional representational rules of strategic writing. (Lotringer describes Virilio's writing as telescopic, writing in a state of emergency; Virilio and Lotringer, 1983: 38–42.) This is both the weakness and strength of Virilio's project for, like Baudrillard, the style of exposition is part of the argument. That argument challenges the rules of representation (including the temporal ones) that are assumed in geopolitical discourse. In exploding our received understanding of geopolitics, it opens up a general field of geo-politics (the politics of geographical inscription) and problematizes a spatiality implicated with but also beyond the language games of formal and practicing intellectuals of statecraft. A fragment of this beyond is the seductive spatiality produced by electronic screens of power (Der Derian, 1992; Luke, 1989).

The Electronic Spatiality of the Gulf War

One can argue that on January 15, 1991 the textual spatiality of the geopolitical crisis, the spatial understanding of the crisis produced by the discursive strategies of the Bush administration, gave way to the televisual spatiality generated by coverage of the actual war itself (Der Derian, 1992: 175). Verbal scripts were superseded by visual images and active debate by passive watching. The mass media coverage of the war was duplicitous, both a reportage yet also a covering of the war's actuality, both a transmission of its immediacy yet also a screening of its murderous results. The instantaneous coverage of the crisis and war by transnational television networks such as CNN (whose slogan – "Anytime. All the Time" – is pure chronopolitics) reinforced the disappearance of space and distance. World leaders in Baghdad, Moscow, London and Washington all received CNN and could watch each other talk and events unfold as the CNN's panoptic danced around different locations on the globe. The war began in prime-time (7:00 EST) and was brought to the world by US reporters (CNN supplies its news feed

to 103 countries) who represented the US-led attack by drawing upon exclusively American experiences ("sky lit up like the Fourth of July").

The spatiality generated by how the war looked on television had paradoxical features. Television presented the war as live yet distant, as instantaneous yet remote, as dramatically real yet comfortably televisual. A real war easily became a television mini-series war, its "live" drama edited into video tape highlights every night for the entertainment of the watching audience. The mass media itself demonstrated a certain awareness of the war's televisual spatiality and began to describe it as a "video game" or a "Nintendo war." The war seemed to unfold in the unreal dematerialized space and time of the video game, a discrete, self-contained, electronically generated space of colorful graphics, reflex action shots and an absorbing aesthetics of destruction (Der Derian, 1992; Levidow and Robins, 1991).

Confining analysis of how the war came to be seen to ruminations of its video-game nature, however, is hardly adequate. Not everyone experienced the war through the reception of televisual images. Nor should one assume these images were received passively and produced the same insidious effects throughout the world (imagine how CNN was received in Jordan). Tracing the origins of the electronic spatiality of the war allows one to move below the realm of media appearances into the institutional and material structures which produce particular ways of seeing places in wars. Inevitably this takes one into the overwhelmingly male microworld of the militarized state, its gaze, cybernetic technologies and techno-strategic manner of reasoning (Levidow and Robins, 1989). Physically such microworlds are far removed from the social world, in deep underground bunkers, in mountain cores, ocean waves, or high in the atmosphere. How the dematerialization of place is produced by these features of the military microworld is worth investigation.

First, the importance of seeing potential places of war is vital to the militarized state. Beside the "war machine" that has developed in certain states in the twentieth century there has always existed an ocular "watching machine" to provide military commanders with a visual perspective on potential and actual fields of battle (Virilio 1989: 3). The modern form of this geopolitical panopticon (key-hole spy satellites, AWACS, photo reconnaissance [PHOTINT], listening posts [COMINT], radar sweeps [SIGINT]: this panopticon extends well beyond the visible spectrum; De Landa, 1991) played its part in the origins of the Gulf crisis (the interpretative analytics of the National Security Agency and Webster's CIA). Its logic, both historically and now, has been to produce representations of places (maps, photographs, videos, digitized images, radar traces, GIS packages; Schulman, 1991; N. Smith, 1992) which have come to efface the materiality of the places themselves. The photo-

graphic images, GIS contours, and cyberspace grids appear thoroughly objective but they produce what Virilio (1989: 3) terms an "obliviousness to the element of interpretative subjectivity that is always in play in the act of looking." In the cybernetic optics of this watching machine, places become dematerialized into electronic traces and blips on a military screen (Der Derian, 1990). This representational dematerialization often portends their actual dematerialization as images become targets and whole countries "target-rich environments."

Second, the dematerialization of place is also produced by the mediating and distancing effects of modern technologies of war. For the Western military, at least, the Gulf war was the most comprehensively mediated war this century, the culmination of a process that reached a critical historical stage during World War I with the first sustained use of long-range artillery. This allowed the sustained separation of soldiers from the carnage their weapons inflicted on an unseen and therefore abstract enemy (Bauman, 1989; 1990). Since then long-range technological warfare has become the norm for most militarized states. Sherry's (1987) history of the US Air Force documents how the compartmentalization of destruction into routine technical tasks, and the remoteness of Air Force personnel from what their bombs actually did on the ground, sustained a moral detachment from the destructiveness of war. Modern fire-and-forget and over-the-horizon cruise missiles used by the United States in the Gulf war took this detachment even further. War was reduced to the remote controlled destruction of places whose only existence to military personnel was as electronic target coordinates on a screen. For those flying over the "KTO" (the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations; place as a stage for performing war) the quiddity of the place was derealized by the pace of their vehicles and the electronic eyes they relied upon to see. Even "frontline" (just where this is located in modern cybernetic warfare is uncertain) special forces and infantry soldiers did not always have unmediated vision for they often fought in the dark with night-vision goggles.

Third, the dominance of techno-strategic reasoning within the micro-world of militarized states further embellishes the dematerialization of place. Techno-strategy has its origins in the nuclear deterrence models of the RAND corporation in the 1960s when young specialists, trained in game theory, systems analysis and rational choice modelling, displaced older classical forms of strategic thinking (Klein, 1988). The institutionalized dominance of techno-strategy (which reduced politics to technical questions) has since led to the pervasive use of simulations within the US military microworld. Simulations construct an internal environment of meaning that is insulated from actual historical events, actors and places yet, as Der Derian (1990: 301) suggests, "they have demonstrated the power to displace the 'reality' of international relations they purport to represent." Frequent representations of the Gulf

War as a "game" (Schwartzkopf's strategy was based on a war game) by both military and public made it easy to view places within that "game" as obstacle course objects for "attriting" within the field of play.

The ability of the television media to challenge the US military's structured way of seeing the war was circumscribed by military censorship and self-censorship. There was a complicity of technologies between both for the eye of the military's watching machine and the eye of the television camera both converted material places into intangible electronic images. Yet the free movement of the media's camera could not be countenanced lest it puncture the official vision of the war. The video feeds of the major networks had to be cleared by the military, reporters were policed, live shots were carefully disciplined and only selected aesthetically engaging video kills were deemed fit for public release. But despite repeated attempts to destroy Iraqi television (and tag its vision as "censored") the harrowing carnage at the Al-Amiriya air-raid shelter on February 13, 1991 was recorded. For once the US military was faced with the real human consequences of its "operational success" and shown to be trapped in its own techno-strategic language (Aksoy and Robins, 1991). In most cases, however, the real carnage of the war was edited out or framed within a general heroic narrative such as those now evident in the photography books and videos instantly produced to commodify the war and sustain its after-image.

Coverage of the Gulf War by the mass media as a whole positioned citizens as spectators at an event over which they had no control. The mass media became a site for a politics of psychological participation. Patricia Mann (1990: 182) has argued:

As media viewers, we are politically passive, but we are often at the same time constituted as emotionally active observers.

Our judgements of these political events and processes are entangled with our reception of them as spectacles. Our emotions are engaged by spectacles, we clap or boo in response to the behavior of our football team, or our Congress, or our military forces in Saudi Arabia. We do not expect to influence the actions or the behavior of any of these entities.

Michael Mann (1988: 183–187) terms this form of passive participation yet active emotional engagement by a citizenry in war spectacles "spectator-sport militarism." Geopolitics, normally the preserve of the few, became a public sport during the Gulf War with colorful maps, studio terrain models, computer graphic simulations, and the array of defense "experts" all props in the televised game (Der Derian, 1992; MacArthur, 1992).¹⁰ In the phantasmagoria of the war, escaping the geopolitical framing of place (the conditions of possibility for the deadly pulverization of Iraqi and Kuwaiti locations) was only possible in moments of

disorientated shock, brought on by the rare screening of the charred bodies left in the wake of "smart" weapons.

Conclusion: The Effacement of Place?

Implicated in the very construction of this essay is a theoretical problem of how one describes the spatiality of the Gulf crisis. Although the official geopolitical spatialization of the crisis and its electronic spatiality are different, both can be described as effacing the "reality" of the places involved in the Gulf crisis and war. The Bush administration's foreign policy texts can be described, in terms inspired by Edward Said, as reducing the complexity of place to abstracted, Westernized, Manichean images. The spatiality of the Gulf crisis is thus read as a distorted Western writing of the reality of place and politics in the "Middle East" (de-pluralized as a region by the assumption that the West was the center of the globe). A nuanced and colored local identity was effaced and erased by a crude monochromatic Western work-up of the region.

Similarly, the chronological and electronic refraction of place can be described as erasing an ordinary presence of identity. Speed blurs the sociality of place while the electronic screens of the military war machine and the mass media dematerialize its everyday life presence. Bauman's (1989, 1990) departures from the moral philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas to analyze the Holocaust and modernity's "effacement of the face" provide a certain intellectual grounding for such arguments. Read spatially, Bauman's reading of Levinas is a chronicle of the effacement of place as much as it is the effacement of the face. Levinas describes humans as having an innate morality which is prior to ontology and subjectivity (Levinas, 1985). The "I" is always for the "Other." Responsibility for the Other is the essential defining characteristic of subjectivity. "Ethics does not follow subjectivity; it is subjectivity that is ethical" (Bauman, 1990: 18). From this perspective, the key question raised by the Holocaust (or the Gulf war) is not the social production of a murderous practice but the social suppression of moral responsibility. The "accomplishment of the Nazi regime consisted first and foremost in neutralizing the moral impact of the specifically human existential code" (Bauman, 1989: 185).

Responsibility arises out of the proximity of the Other as a face. "Proximity means responsibility, and responsibility is proximity" (Bauman, 1989: 184). Although described as both physical and mental, Bauman has a strong understanding of proximity as a geographically defined concept. Our inborn moral impulses can be blocked when we can no longer physically *see* and meet the face of the Other. Distance de-ethicizes our responsibility for the Other: "moral inhibitions do not act at a distance. They are inextricably tied down to human proximity"

(Bauman, 1989: 192). We can add, as Bauman tentatively does, that "place" or "neighborhood" is a condition of possibility for moral practice (1990: 23–30). Explaining such events as the Gulf war, therefore, is a matter of explaining the social production of distance which inhibits moral responsibility and pure seeing.

The concept of morality outlined by Levinas philosophically and translated into sociological terms by Bauman offers an attractive narrative of intelligibility which geographers could well use to explain events such as the Gulf war. It is flawed, however, in a number of ways. Very briefly, its notion of morality relies on an essentialist view of human nature. Social proximity is no guarantee of moral behavior (as the fighting in Somalia, Armenia, and the former Yugoslavia is graphically demonstrating). It also assumes the possibility of a pure, unmediated seeing of the face (Derrida, 1978: 99). In its geographical form, it holds out the danger of an innocentening of neighborhood or place. Place, like the face, is pure presence (Derrida, 1978: 100–109). Yet to hold to the view that place is an innocent, corrupted by the diabolical swirl of images in a postmodern world, is to refuse to acknowledge how place is always a contested and historically inscribed entity (a concept with its own historical geography). This fact is more apparent in "Iraq" and "Baghdad," with its didactic and totalitarian urban monuments, than in most places (Al-Khalil, 1991). Seeing the face or the sociality of place never reaches the possibility of transparency for seeing is already infested with codes of recognition. The effacement of place narrative, therefore, must always be followed with a question mark for "place" must not rest unexamined, an entity signified in and of itself, a concept independent of any relationship to language, inscription and signification. Critical geopolitics can only be constructed on "hollowed ground" (Doel, forthcoming).

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Notes

1. The Pentagon's three-volume study of the Gulf war omits all references to the Iraqi dead. In March 1992 a US Census Bureau report on the post-war demographics of Iraq estimated 158,000 "excess" deaths in 1991. Military fatalities were estimated at approximately 40,000, civilian deaths during the

war at 13,000. The violence surrounding the uprisings accounted for approximately 5,000 military and 30,000 civilian deaths. Deaths caused indirectly by the war were estimated at 70,000. The Census Bureau analyst who produced this report was initially fired from her position because of it but subsequently reinstated after threatened legal action (Ridgeway, 1992).

2. The danger of "euphoria" after the end of the Cold War was first influentially stated by Henry Kissinger in his attack on the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty signed by Reagan and Gorbachev in 1987 (Blumenthal, 1990). Bush's National Security Advisor (Brent Scowcroft) and Deputy Secretary of State (Lawrence Eagleburger) were former members of Kissinger Associates, Henry Kissinger's high-profile lobbying firm.
3. Once the Gulf Crisis was proclaimed Iraq was reinstated as a state which sponsors terrorism. See "Fact Sheet: Iraq's Support for Terrorists" (US Department of State's weekly *Dispatch*, November 5, 1990: 241-243).
4. The details of the US tilt towards Iraq are only now becoming part of the public record, thanks to the persistent efforts of Henry Gonzalez in the US House of Representatives. For an excellent exploration of the details of the illegal loans, credits and aid provided by the Bush administration to Saddam Hussein see Campbell (1992b).
5. An account of this meeting and other key moments during the Gulf crisis is provided by participants in an instant-history documentary called *The Washington Version*, a three-hour series sponsored and distributed by the right of center American Enterprise Institute. The documentary takes the form of heroic Western men telling how they made the tough decisions during the crisis and war. It was shown on British television in January 1992 to commemorate the first anniversary of the war.
6. It is worth recalling that Thatcher was under pressure at the time for her anti-European vision of "Britain" and "Britishness." She was likely to benefit domestically from any re-invigoration of the "special relationship" with the United States, a relationship which defined "Britishness" in Atlanticist not European terms. As it happened she was forced to resign soon afterwards because of her anti-European views.
7. The notion of a hyperreal is derived from the provocative and loose writings of Jean Baudrillard (1983). It is particularly useful for understanding contemporary geopolitical reasoning (see Der Dertian, 1990, 1992; Luke 1991; Ó Tuathail 1992a). Baudrillard's two published pieces on the Gulf War (1991a, 1991b) have generated extended polemic (Norris, 1992) and outraged dismissal (N. Smith, 1992). While there is much (perhaps too much) to fault with Baudrillard's flippant totalizing and bleak hyperbole, it does serve the purpose of forcing one to confront the limits and foundations (however hollow) by which one is enabled to write. Norris's (1992) readable polemic against Baudrillard has the merit of exploring these issues. He can, however, be accused of mischaracterizing Baudrillard's project (see Gane, 1991). His diagnosis of postmodernism as a "widespread cultural malaise" reveals an interesting disciplining commitment on his part. "Ultra-relativist" thought is a disease. Treating Baudrillard, neopragmatism and Lyotard as similar ignores crucial differences between their traditions. Most significantly, Norris's reading of the "truth" of the Gulf crisis and war is simply not adequate to explain why the crisis and war took the form they did.
8. On the sustained overestimation and exaggeration of Iraqi forces see Simpson (1991: 332-333) and Draper (1992b: 43).
9. According to Virilio (1986: 153) dromomaniacs is a name in psychiatry given to compulsive walkers. The compulsive energetic nature of Bush as a person has been noted by many. After the war the President was diagnosed as

suffering from a hyperthyroid problem, the symptoms of which include impatience and restlessness.

10. The sports/war intertext (Shapiro, 1989) was most graphically illustrated during the 1991 Gulf War Super Bowl when television coverage kept switching from the war on the sports field to the field of war in the Middle East. The ceremonies saw fans waving small flags in the stands, "we're #1" gestures from players in the same style as those of bomber pilots, a child singing "You are my hero . . ." and Third Reich style flag marching. Bush called the Gulf War his Super Bowl (Larsen, 1991).

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