

Geopolitics

Global Problems and Regional Concerns

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Bison Paper 4

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Geopolitical Structures and Cultures: Towards Conceptual Clarity in the Critical Study of Geopolitics

Gearóid Ó Tuathail (Gerard Toal)

Introduction*

One of the notable contributions of the critical geopolitics literature to the study of geopolitics is its deconstruction of the god-trick that has long served as the condition of possibility of geopolitical knowledge.¹ The very act of declaring 'the geopolitics of' was interrogated, and the adoption of a natural attitude on the part of the geopolitician was subject to critique. This natural attitude holds that the real is that that is physically given, and which in geopolitics means the so-called 'material realities' of world politics. For orthodox geopoliticians these comprised geographic location, resource endowments and oceanic access, and the physicality of power as measured by 'military might,' 'economic strength' and 'manpower.' In some instances, organizations, doctrines, religious systems, and consciousness were included in the inventories of geopoliticians but only as naturalized physical facts about states.² Geopolitics presents itself as an objectivist science of world politics with the geopolitician as the detached god-like recorder of the 'realities' of power politics. Edmund Husserl critiqued this 'natural attitude' for taking the objective status of reality for granted and for neglecting the 'subjective' presuppositions that made the very act of recording the world possible in the first place. Put differently, he contextualized the 'natural attitude' as a particular cultural practice that required all sorts of unproblematic assumptions and presuppositions to function.³ Rather than being an objective recording of the realities of world power, *geopolitics is an interpretative cultural practice*. Further, this practice is not a narrow one confined to formal experts but a broad one shared by populations (popular geopolitics) and governments (practical geopolitics).

This basic insight has stimulated the invention and use of a variety of conceptual constructs over the last two decades. Works assert that geopolitics is a 'discourse,' an 'imagination' and a 'grammar,' and that states have distinctive geopolitical 'codes,' 'images,' 'visions' and 'traditions' (sometimes singular, sometimes plural). The relationship between these conceptual con-

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structs is not always clear.⁴ Nor is their relationship to familial conceptual constructs in international relations like *realpolitik*, 'strategic culture,' 'foreign policy traditions,' and 'diplomatic culture.' Furthermore, the relationship of these culturalist concepts to the analytical concerns of 'orthodox geopolitics' with technology, hegemony and the distribution of material power among states is unclear.⁵ The critical geopolitics literature recognizes the connections between the study of geopolitical discourse and the study of geopolitical structures but accounts connecting the two have tended to be totalizing, overly schematic and preoccupied with the *longue durée* rather than the everyday practice of geopolitics.⁶

I wish to make an argument for privileging a particular set of concepts within critical geopolitics organized around the key anchoring notions of *geopolitics as structure* and *geopolitics as culture*. The first concerns the structures that have generated and characterized the modern world as a historically globalizing political economy and interstate community. The second concerns the study of geopolitics as a series of dynamic cultures developed within and shared across an interstate society. I also want to make an argument for a conceptualization of the relationship of these privileged concepts to each other. This argument, which reviews how others use concepts, is brief and inevitably underdeveloped. The concepts that the paper highlights are summarized in Tables 6-1 and 6-6.

Geopolitical Structures

Agnew and Corbridge's *Mastering Space* is undoubtedly a key text in the development of a critical perspective on the theory and practice of geopolitics.⁷ Building upon earlier joint articles, they privilege a few foundational concepts to enable the study of critical geopolitics which they define as "the material spatial practices through which the international political economy is constituted" and "the ways in which it is represented and contested."⁸ In their earlier collaborations, Agnew and Corbridge introduce the concept of 'geopolitical economy,' which largely disappears in *Mastering Space* (it is used as an equivalent for geopolitics).⁹ The master concept, which replaces it, is 'geopolitical order,' which is expansively conceptualized. Orders, they write,

have necessarily geographical characteristics. These include the relative degree of centrality of state territoriality to social and economic activities; the nature of the hierarchy of states (dominated by one or a number of states, the degree of state equality); the spatial scope of the activities of different states and other actors such as international organizations and businesses; the spatial connectedness of disconnectedness between various actors; the conditioning effects of informational and military technologies upon spatial interaction; and the ranking of world regions and particular states by dominant states in terms of 'threats' to their military and economic 'security'.¹⁰

A geopolitical order, for Agnew and Corbridge, is an 'organized system of governance' which mixes cohesion and conflict. Drawing upon Cox, they outline three distinct geopolitical orders from 1815 to 1990 (the Concert of Europe, inter-imperial rivalry and the Cold War).¹¹ Agnew and Corbridge's arguments have significant heuristic value but their commitment to a grand schematic history of geopolitics can totalize complex historical periods, smooth out complexities within and across cultures of geopolitical thinking, and marginalize processes and tendencies that do not lend themselves to periodization by geopolitical order (e.g. the history of the technology of warfare). Building upon while also deepening their foundational work, I would argue for the identification of five related but also relatively distinct structures of geopolitics in world politics.

Geopolitical Order

This should be defined in a narrower manner than Agnew and Corbridge's broad definition as the prevailing system of hierarchy, alliance and antagonism in the interstate system. Rather than specifying this as totalizing historical epochs defined by a certain hegemonic structure or contest, the relative autonomy of diplomatic, economic, military, communications, media, institutional, and cultural forms needs to be recovered. Geopolitical order concerns the organization of state power and violence across the world. Its primary structure is dictated by the dynamic practices of war, peace and diplomacy, and there is often a disjuncture between these practices and the other structures of geopolitics discussed below. Some states, like Japan, Brazil, and India, may be first rank world powers yet marginalized by the international institutions of geopolitical order. The United States is widely conceded to be the 'sole remaining superpower' yet its economic and geopolitical position are in decline and its homeland and military are demonstrably vulnerable to so-called 'asymmetrical threats'.¹² Nor can geopolitical orders be easily categorized into discrete periods for continuities persist (a point reiterated throughout Agnew's work). The dominant geopolitical architecture of the contemporary period is a legacy of the Cold War. The United States has distinct geopolitical relationships across the globe with Japan, South Korea, and Europe through NATO, which leaves the security of all these states overly dependent upon the vagaries of the American political system. From a world-systems perspective, the fact that the largest economy in the world stations troops in the second and third largest economies in the world does not make much sense.

Geopolitical Economy

Agnew and Corbridge introduce this concept as a device to emphasize the embeddedness of geopolitical discourse in the dynamics of the global economy.¹³ However, its suggestive utility as a concept is underdeveloped,

and the analytical argument is subordinated to the dominant concept of 'geopolitical order.' Yet, it is worth underscoring 'geopolitical economy' as its own distinct structure of global geopolitics. Geopolitical economy addresses the management of the trading structures, corporate networks, and resource-financial flows that characterize the contemporary global economy. The environmental impacts of these structures of accumulation should also be included. This management obviously involves conflict, cooperation and coordination between trans-national elites within the largest corporations, world powers and across international governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. The geopolitical economy has always been securitized but its degree of vulnerability and securitization has undoubtedly increased in recent decades. On the one hand, geopolitical economy addresses some very old questions of geopolitics, namely controlling maritime choke-points, ports, pipelines and general access to classic 'strategic resources' like petroleum, natural gas, and uranium.¹⁴ On the other hand, it also encompasses some of the newest 'strategic flowmations' of the global 'space of flows' like stock market trading floors, fiber-optic networks, energy transmission lines, satellite towers and Internet routing stations. The less desirable and illicit side of these flowmations – acid rain, trade in toxic substances, trans-national smuggling, corruption, the global 'tubing' of organized crime – are also vital elements of the contemporary geopolitical economy that should not be marginalized.¹⁵ How geopolitical economy is rendered into discourse as a globalist geoeconomics and the operation of these story-lines (narratives of borderless and openness, for example) within yet also at cross-purposes with contemporary geopolitical culture (narratives of borders, security and containment) is a complex question.¹⁶

Hegemony and Primacy

Following a Gramscian rather than traditional IR conception of hegemony, Agnew and Corbridge specify hegemony as a "cultural complex of practices and representations associated with a particular geopolitical order without the requirement of a dominant territorial agent."¹⁷ The difficulty with this understanding is not that it allows the important and creative possibility for 'hegemony without a hegemon' but that the notion of hegemony needs depth of specification to be useful. Strictly speaking, it is difficult to specify a period without hegemony or geopolitical order – though moments of 'geopolitical disorder' and 'geopolitical transitions' are recognized – beyond generalized world war (even then certain 'laws of war' are hegemonic). Agnew and Corbridge seem to concede this when they write: "There is always hegemony, but there are not always hegemony."¹⁸ This sweeping claim seems to undermine the utility of the concept of hegemony which, even if recognized as something that breaks down, appears to have a crude 'hegemony/no hegemony' state rather than any finer grained opera-

tion. But, as they recognize, hegemonies do differ in intensity and their degree of variation is rooted in differing dynamics of historical development. Gramsci's writings discuss three forms – what Fernia terms integral, decadent and minimal – but they are not put to use by Agnew and Corbridge.¹⁹

The challenge for critical geopolitics is to document the particular historical specificity of hegemonic practices and their multiple domains of operation, evaluating these practices by their degree of 'institutional thickness' or 'thinness.' How are certain rules and codes of conduct about world politics created and perpetuated in the interstate system? What geopolitical institutions and associations are central to the manufacture and conditioning of legitimacy in international affairs? What happens when large powers pursue policies that provoke a crisis of legitimacy? This last question is relevant in the wake of the contemporary conjuncture where the world's self-styled 'sole remaining superpower' launched a largely unilateral invasion of Iraq with minimal support and legitimacy. Anti-Americanism has surged as a consequence yet millions abroad are still under the sway of the American dream. The Bush administration has spectacularly failed to persuade the world of the legitimacy of Iraqi policies yet support is strong for more generic ideals like 'democracy,' 'freedom,' and 'opportunity.'²⁰ The challenge for American leaders today is to convince both people at home and opinion leaders abroad of the wisdom of its policies, a multiple audience problem that even the best speechwriting cannot transcend.²¹

Related to the notion of hegemony is what Agnew in *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics* terms the 'pursuit of primacy' or interstate competition between large powers for power and position in world politics.²² Rather than conceding to the timeless 'anarchy problem' of realists, Agnew historicizes this tendency and connects it to the modern geopolitical imagination and the social construction of statecraft as anarchic by elites in dominant states. There is nothing inevitable about the 'pursuit of primacy' since what constitutes the national interest of dominant states is very much a matter of debate and interpretation. That some state elites choose to interpret world politics as so anarchic that their state should pursue a narrow pre-eminence strategy is an important tendency in international affairs. Ironically, this classic state hegemonic strategy may produce anti-hegemonic results in the international system as a whole. Given globalization and the 'emerging trans-national liberal order,' Agnew notes, "a return to the pursuit of primacy seems an unlikely recipe for anyone's success, except those interests in the military and defence industries whose careers and profits have come to depend on it."²³ With the vice-president of the United States a former CEO of Halliburton and the president closely tied to corporate energy and defence industries, this 'unlikely recipe' for success is nevertheless currently dominant within U.S. geopolitical culture.²⁴ What it has produced is a hegemon pursuing primacy – in the name of prevention and pre-eminence – in a man-

ner that is undermining the broader cultural hegemony of the trans-national liberal world order it helped build.²⁵

Techno-Territorial Complexes

In discussing geopolitical orders Agnew and Corbridge underscore "the fundamental importance...of the technological and economic circumstances of different eras that define the geographical contours of opportunity and constraint which set limits to both human intentions and their achievement."²⁶ Yet the longstanding concern of geopoliticians with the military and territorializing implications of developments in transportation, communications and military technology gets little sustained analysis in their work. This is a central concern in formal geopolitical theorizing since Mahan and Mackinder. Both were strong advocates of sea power but nevertheless were cognizant of how developments in transportation and military technology were changing the relationship of land to sea power. Mackinder, it will be recalled, argued that "trans-continental railways are now transmuting the conditions of land-power, and nowhere can they have such effect as in the closed heartland of Euro-Asia, in vast areas of which neither timber nor accessible stone was available for road-making."²⁷ What concerned Mackinder can be termed the 'techno-territorial complex' or the dynamic historico-geographical relationship of technological paradigms to territorial political entities. How do certain technological developments in transportation, communications and military technology transform the functionality, connectivity and meaning of territory?²⁸ Indeed, deepening the question, how do certain technological paradigms and systems enable new forms of territorializations and territoriality? How, for example, did the development of intercontinental bombers, ballistic missiles and radar defence produce a certain territoriality of military-industrial complexes during the Cold War?²⁹ How did the 'space race' transform the dominant horizontal dimensionality of geopolitics by adding a new vertical dimensionality?³⁰ Today, how are geopolitical relations trans-mutated by the so-called 'revolution in military affairs' and the drive for 'battle space' and 'full spectrum dominance' by the US military?³¹ Although central to geopolitical speculations of popular and academic providence over the last century, these themes have not received the degree of attention they deserve within critical geopolitics.

Geopolitical Condition

The interaction of geopolitical order, geopolitical economy, hegemony and techno-territorial complexes generates a prevailing cultural order of time-space communication within which geopolitics is experienced, processed and handled by leaders and the public alike. This can be described as a geopolitical condition, a technological structure of public communication and popular cultural reception within which the dramas of interna-

tional affairs unfold. Central to any analysis of this particular problematic is the power of the mass media and popular culture to enframe geopolitical events and dramas with layers of affect and meaning. William Randolph Hearst's famous telegram to his correspondent in Cuba before the Spanish-American war – "you supply the pictures, I'll supply the war" – may exaggerate what today is called the "CNN effect," but the role of popular mass media in establishing foreign policy crises, mobilizing affect and sponsoring particular interpretative scripts is something that cannot be ignored in the critical study of geopolitics. Today, speed, spectacle, and simulation define the medium of geopolitical communication and understanding.³² Geopolitical crises are driven by dramatic pictures, a 'if it bleeds, it leads' culture. A number of studies of popular geopolitics have appeared in recent years looking at the role of mass-market magazines, films, cartoons and sports in enframing geopolitical dramas.³³ Yet much work remains to be done on the power of globe-spanning television networks to determine the spatiality and pace of world politics. Critical investigations need to explore how geopolitics is often a domain of affect not intellect, a place where emotions – anger and resentments or empathy and idealism – and pre-discursive identifications get mobilized.³⁴ The generalized cultural condition within which geopolitics unfolds today – information saturation, instantaneous yet culturally ethnocentric global coverage, the domination of images over understandings, spectacle and scandal over deliberation and depth – deserves careful elaboration.

All of these geopolitical structures are merely modest theory-building heuristics for engaging the sprawling messiness of the historical practices constituting international affairs in the modern period (specified convincingly by the world-systems derived literature).³⁵ It is these historical practices – dense, plural, unpredictability and essentially contested – that should always come first.

Geopolitical Condition	The medium within which geopolitical events unfold and communication occurs; the time-space regime of geopolitical action
Techno-Territorial Complex	The dynamic relationship between technological systems of transportation, defence and communication and the territoriality of states
Hegemony and Primacy	The rules, regulations, institutions and processes of international order that acquire the broadest consensus; their relationship to the dominant state in world affairs
Geopolitical Economy	The prevailing structure of the global economy, including the global division of labour, trading regime, financial order and resource/energy flows
Geopolitical Order	The prevailing system of power, hierarchy, and antagonism in the interstate system

Table 6-1. Concepts for the Study of Geopolitics as Structure.

Cultures of Geopolitics

The concept of 'geopolitical discourse' is perhaps the one concept associated with critical geopolitics more than any other area of study.³⁶ Yet the specificity, context and meaning of geopolitical discourse are not always clear and consistent. To many still under the influence of Kissingerian usage, the term is a discourse of *realpolitik* to be distinguished from foreign policy discourse that draws upon international law and moral values. Others define the concept very broadly. Agnew and Corbridge, for example, define geopolitical discourse as the mode of representation that characterizes a geopolitical order: "The term geopolitical discourse refers here to how the geography of the international political economy has been 'written and read' in the practices of foreign and economic policies during the different periods of geopolitical order."³⁷ For them a discourse is equivalent to a theory of how the world works. It involves representations of space which guide the spatial practices that characterize particular geopolitical orders and hegemonies. This is interpreted by them over the *longue durée*. What they term 'modern geopolitical discourse' emerges out of the encounters between Europe and others during the overseas expansionism of European powers from the fifteenth century onwards. The portrait of others as "backward" or permanently disadvantaged if they remain as they are" is 'the singular trait of modern geopolitical discourse.'³⁸ Agnew and Corbridge go on to identify three regimes of geopolitical discourse which correspond to the three geopolitical orders they identify: civilization, naturalized, and ideological geopolitics.

Agnew develops these 'three ages' of geopolitics in a later work where he re-describes 'modern geopolitical discourse' as a 'modern geopolitical imagination' that has "provided meaning, and rationalization to practice by political elites."³⁹ Agnew highlights four features of this geopolitical imagination which all concern its Euro-centrism and ethno-centrism: the seeing of the world as a unified whole that powerful actors must survey and subdue, the operation of a putative 'view from nowhere' that normalizes a parochial western gaze as the universal one, the turning of spatial differences into temporal differences (representing other regions as a phase of Europe's past, for example) and the operation of a state-centric form of reasoning that traps world politics in a territorial-states-in-conflict grid of intelligibility.

Agnew's arguments proceed at the broadest historical level and his concepts are too sweeping to capture the particularities of geopolitical discourses and practices in concrete foreign policy crises. Also, how others use the concepts of 'geopolitical discourse' and 'geopolitical imagination' is not necessarily consistent with how he understands these notions. As a means of providing more meso and micro-level concepts for the study of particular foreign policy traditions and crises, I would argue for the development and elaboration of six concepts anchored around the notion of geopolitics as an interpretative cultural practice. Rather than considering interstate society as

a whole, these concepts concern geopolitical culture or the cultural ways in which dominant institutions (states mostly but also alliances and international institutions like the United Nations) make sense of their position in the world and theorize their role within interstate society.

Geographical Imaginations

In an article on the changing discourse of Israeli geopolitics, David Newman makes the argument that the state of Israel does not have a single geopolitical imagination.⁴⁰ Rather, he identifies five separate *geopolitical imaginations* which draw upon the geographical identifications of the various groups and the geographical connectivity of contemporary Israel. Asking the question 'where is Israel?' Newman elaborates five different answers based on perceived relationships to neighbours, region and the globe as a whole (Table 6-2).

Geopolitical Imagination	Summary Position	Social Sponsors	Cultural Expression
In the Middle East	Israel is and must become part of its geographical region, part of a 'New Middle East' (Peres)	<i>Mizrahim</i> of North African & Middle Eastern origin	Oriental music; lack of knowledge of English; Arabic
In Europe	Israel culturally part of Europe "somewhere between Paris and Prague"	<i>Askenazi</i> founders and elite of modern Israel. Strengthened by Russian immigrants	In European competitions; ties to Germany and Russia. Mediterranean identity
In the Jewish diaspora	A country without borders	Diasporic groups across the world; Jewish National Fund and Jewish Agency	<i>Aliyah</i> , the 'right of return'
Fifty first state of the United States	Israel as America's ally, 'best friend' and 'only democracy in Middle East'	American-Israeli lobby; Israeli American Jewish communities	Financial and military aid to Israel; Americanization of Israeli culture
Centre of the World	The 'holy land,' birthplace of Judaism & Christianity, third most significant Islamic site; metaphysical	Religious communities; tourist industries; media coverage of ongoing conflict	Battles over holy sites; Symbolic politics of religion. Global television spotlight.

Table 6-2. Newman's Five Israeli Imaginations.

Newman's notion of a 'geopolitical imagination' is distinctive from how that term is used by Agnew. What he describes is nevertheless an important foundation for higher order geopolitical reasoning in that state. Modifying and generalizing Newman's analysis, I would argue that what he is engaging is a contest of *geographical not geopolitical imaginations*.⁴¹ This term has the

virtue of being distinct from Agnew's broader notion of a 'modern geopolitical imagination.' It is geographical rather than geopolitical in that it concerns a contestation between images of where the state is perceived to be located in the world. This is a vital building block of geopolitical culture but not quite the same thing, as I will argue below. We can readily concede that geographical imaginations, or 'imaginary geography,' to use Said's term, are always already geo-political in the philosophical sense of being simultaneously political and geographical.⁴² But this form of reasoning leads to the banal position that all distinctions, to the extent that they specify a 'here' and 'there,' a 'self' and 'other,' are geo-political, and does not allow further analytical distinctions to aid critical geopolitics theory building.

In considering geographical imaginations we are inevitably drawn into debates over national identity and the specification of the boundaries – conceptual and cartographic – of 'the nation.' Some hyphenate the concept as 'imagi-nation' to foreground this debate over the imagining of the nation. In the Israeli ethnicity, certain groups have a Western secular conception of the nation, others a more religious conception, while most share a strong sense of solidarity and identification with Jews across the world before any sense of community with Arabs actually living in Israel and the occupied territories. While these questions are complex in Israel and national imaginings cannot be reduced to or summarized in geographical terms – not only the secular but also the Orthodox are European, for example – the operation of a classificatory logic of identity/difference, us/them, friends/enemies is what is worth highlighting.

A geographical imagination, thus, can be defined as the way in which influential groups in the cultural life of a state define that state and nation within the world. It addresses the primary acts of identification and boundary-formation that population groups within a state engages.⁴³ As such its study must engage 'geographies of the unconscious' and gendered conceptions as a primary foundation of spatial identification and exclusion.⁴⁴ How are notions of self and other assembled? How does a population situate its country within a world of geographical regions and collective identities? How are proximity and distance to other states and regions specified? How are a particular 'homeland' defined and a range of 'friends' and 'enemies' specified? How does a certain image of the nation get specified in these acts of geographical identification?

Geopolitical Culture

Geographical imaginations are the foundation of geopolitical cultures and, therefore, should not be seen as easily separated from them in concrete practice. Dijkink's discussion of national identity and geopolitics isolates the different discursive processes that, I would argue, are examples of the geographical imaginations informing geopolitical culture:

- Accounts and justifications of the 'naturalness' of territorial borders
- Discourses enumerating friends and enemies
- Identifications of model countries, countries to emulate
- Identifications of a national mission
- Identifications of impersonal trans-historical forces ('divine intervention,' 'providence, or processes like 'globalization') and collectivities (civilizations, religious communities, races, interpretative linguistic communities)

Geopolitical culture refers to the cultural and organizational processes by which foreign policy is made in states. It is a product of prevalent geographical imaginations, the particular institutional organization and political culture (including strategic culture) of a state, and longstanding geopolitical traditions. Geopolitical culture can be divided into popular, practical and formal manifestations and expressions.

Popular geopolitical culture concerns prevailing public opinion about the role and mission of a state in foreign affairs, and popular perceptions of the dangers, foreign policy priorities and security challenges facing a state in world affairs. Some states, like the United States, have a strong sense of 'mission' and 'destiny' in world affairs. Others define their relationship to the world in terms of their membership of a larger community of states (e.g., Germany within the European Union). Popular geopolitical culture is also shaped by cultural interpretations of the state's geographical location within the world of states. For example, US geopolitical culture has long been conditioned by popular perception of the United States as a 'sphere of its own' separated from Asia and Europe by two oceans. This perception made the 9.11 attacks all the more frightening to Americans because there was a popular, though unjustified, perception that the homeland of the United States was invulnerable from the terrorism afflicting other parts of the world. Russian geopolitical culture is shaped by competing popular perceptions of its territorial location as Western yet also as a sphere of its own, as partly European but also distinctly Slavic, Orthodox, and Eurasian. The dimensions of popular geopolitical culture can be determined empirically through public opinion surveys and through the analysis of the media and cultural products of a particular state society.⁴⁵

Within the contemporary United States, geopolitical culture is determined by the interaction of three distinct features of its political culture. The first is universalization or the proclivity of American geopolitics to take foreign policy crises and universalize these into abstract moral values and principles. This works to de-contextualize and detach foreign policy crises from their particular historical and geographical situatedness and re-contextualize them within celebrated themes of American history that express universal

values. By this practice, which presidents have resorted to since the birth of the republic, states and geopolitical conflicts become holders for clashing philosophical concepts. The United States is held to be less a territorial state than a territorialization of an abstract ideal, 'the homeland of freedom,' the 'last best hope for mankind,' the territorial form of the idea of liberty, equality, freedom and democracy. Americans are intoxicated by moral absolutes and view themselves, according to Reinhold Niebuhr, as "tutors of mankind in its pilgrimage to perfection."⁴⁶ The US's adversary represents some contradictory philosophical principles: despotism, slavery, authoritarianism, totalitarianism or terrorism.⁴⁷

The second is the countervailing practice of regionalization or the localization and isolation of particular foreign policy crises to their context and location. Rather than creating bonds of connection and proximity to certain crises, this tendency works to isolate, contain and distance foreign policy challenges. This tendency is ostensibly more geographical in that it asserts a more explicitly regional consciousness upon world affairs. However, this 'geographic consciousness' is often merely an exclusivist version of the universalism underpinning American national exceptionalism. It is a boundary-drawing exercise, which distinguishes between a domesticated hemisphere, civilization or region of moral responsibility, on the one hand, and zones that are beyond a frontier of identification, responsibility and even civilization. 'America first' sentiments are often termed 'isolationism' but they are perhaps better represented as a proclivity within American geopolitical culture to view American exceptionalism as a philosophy grounded in geography rather than a placeless universalism. America is unique because it is the antithesis of European corruption, because it represents a 'New World' that has avoided the mistakes of the past and steered clear of 'entangling alliances' which might ensnarl it in affairs where there is no American national interest.

The third feature is less a tendency than the cultural reality that a considerable majority of Americans have a pronounced geographical and geopolitical ignorance about the world. This is partly because America is a vast continent and is easily a 'world unto itself' for many of its people. It is also a consequence of the poverty of the American educational system and the parochial self-absorbed culture that predominates in many regions of the country. American political leaders seeking to justify a foreign policy initiative or intervention usually have to explicitly employ geographical learning strategies to make their case as they adopt either universalization and regionalization rhetoric. One of the persistent challenges for a US President is to foster a certain degree of geographical consciousness and knowledge about places well beyond America's borders that are considered by the geopolitical elite to be important to US national security interests. The US President, in effect, must provide colour to America's map of the world and its map of its vital interests. In times of international crises he must become

a 'geography teacher.' We can see this quite explicitly in FDR's 'fireside' chats when he urged his listeners to take out a map of the world (and cartographic aids to his chats were soon produced by the publishing industry).⁴⁸ And this is why, over the last few decades, we have seen Presidents in addresses to the nation about US military action with cartographic props and aids prominently displayed.

Geopolitical cultures are inevitably shaped by the particular institutional organization and design of the foreign policy bureaucracies in particular states. How power is distributed in a state, how the foreign policy process works and who gets to make decisions inevitably shapes the geopolitical culture of states. Conflicts between and within ministries of foreign affairs and defence sometimes produce a geopolitical culture that is powered by division and contradictory impulses and drives. A state's strategic culture – its military institutions, war-fighting style, and service infrastructures and traditions – will also condition its broader geopolitical culture and shape how it decides to deploy and employ force to achieve its objectives.⁴⁹

These general observations can be illustrated by the practical geopolitical reasoning used to make U.S. foreign policy towards the Balkans in the 1990s. At the outbreak of war in Croatia in 1991 and 1992, American foreign policy leaders considered intervening militarily but, given the strong institutional resistance of the Department of Defence, decided against doing so, falling back on a regionalization geopolitical strategy. Thus, rather than unfolding in Southeast Europe – a sub-region of a historically established area of US interest and identification – the wars were represented as occurring in a 'Balkan backwater' where the United States, in the words of Secretary of State James Baker, had 'no dog' in 'the fight.' Bosnia was Balkanized and represented as a region outside the universe of Western strategic obligation.⁵⁰ Not all agreed with this representational policy practice, however, and two antagonistic story-lines of the Bosnian wars developed.⁵¹ Three years and many scenes of carnage and genocide later, the reputation of the United States and NATO was suffering as a consequence of the persistence of warfare in Bosnia. Intervention there and later in Kosovo was justified by President Clinton as intervention in 'the heart of Europe.' Yet, most Americans did not know where these places were located. In meeting with a Congressional delegation before the bombing of Serbia on March 23, 1999, the president was urged to become a geography/geopolitics teacher. At a talk that night Clinton related:

I've been in a meeting with a very large number of members of Congress in both Houses and both parties, including the leadership, to talk about the problem in Kosovo. And one of the members who was there, a man from my part of the country, he said, you know, Mr. President, I support your policy, but most of my folks couldn't find Kosovo on a map. They don't know where it is, and they never thought

about it before it appeared on CNN. And you need to tell people what you're doing there and why – why it's important to us.⁵²

In his address to the nation the next day announcing a circumscribed bombing campaign, Clinton not only used a map but referred back to it again and again, marrying moral to strategic interests in his arguments:

Kosovo is a province of Serbia, in the middle of South Eastern Europe, about 160 miles east of Italy. That's less than the distance between Washington and New York, and only about 70 miles north of Greece. Its people are mostly ethnic Albanian and mostly Muslim... Ending this tragedy is a moral imperative. It is also important to America's national interest. Take a look at this map. Kosovo is a small place, but it sits on a major fault line between Europe, Asia and the Middle East, at the meeting place of Islam and both the Western and Orthodox branches of Christianity. To the south are our allies, Greece and Turkey; to the north, our new democratic allies in Central Europe. And all around Kosovo there are other small countries, struggling with their own economic and political challenges – countries that could be overwhelmed by a large, new wave of refugees from Kosovo... We must also remember that this is a conflict with no natural national boundaries. Let me ask you to look again at a map. The red dots are towns the Serbs have attacked. The arrows show the movement of refugees – north, east and south. Already, this movement is threatening the young democracy in Macedonia, which has its own Albanian minority and a Turkish minority....⁵³

Clinton firmly geo-graphs Kosovo to familiar European space (Italy and Greece), the NATO strategic alliance (Greece and Turkey) and the zone of an expanding NATO (Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland). Clinton's acts of geopolitical emplacement parallel those of Ronald Reagan about El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Grenada, or George H.W. Bush about Panama and Kuwait. A small state is constructed as strategic by describing its value in terms of its proximate location to familiar American allies, interests and objectives. America's interests are described as strategic but its motives are also moral. The persistent feature of this 'national security' discourse is its geographical elasticity.⁵⁴ While there are certain common features of American geopolitical culture, different administrations draw upon different geopolitical traditions to assemble their geopolitical scripts, their ways of practicing and performing geopolitics.

Geopolitical Traditions

Geopolitical cultures are characterized by a series of competing traditions of interpreting a state's position in world affairs. A geopolitical tradition is a historical canon of thought on state identity, foreign policy, and the national interest, which is usually defined in opposition to alternative

Tradition	US National Interest	Social Basis	Cultural Identity
Jeffersonian	Preserving American democracy at home, limited foreign adventurism, narrow interests abroad, liberty before commerce	Farmers, independent small businessmen, Libertarians, Isolationists, American Civil Liberties Union	Anti-elitist and populist, some with exclusivist anti-immigrant tendencies
Wilsonian	Spreading its values throughout the world; democracy, human rights, freedom of religion	Missionaries, international lawyers, human rights community	Multicultural
Jacksonian	Keeping America militarily strong, democratic populism, fighting pre-emptive wars with all available force	Military and popular culture of honour, individualism, KKK, National Rifle Association	Folk nationalism, exclusivist male-dominant Anglo-Saxon nation, Nativist
Hamiltonian	Promoting American enterprise at home and abroad, freedom of the seas, protectionism then free trade, open door for American exports	Merchant and business class, bankers	Pluralist

Table 6-3. American Geopolitical Traditions (after Mead 2002).

traditions. Within critical geopolitics the term is usually used to describe histories of formal geopolitical thought. This approach, however, tends to be too nominalist and neglects the geopolitics that does not explicitly call itself geopolitics. All large states can be said to have well-established geopolitical traditions that go back to the very process of state formation and development.

Walter Russell Mead's book *Special Providence* argues that American foreign policy is characterized by strong historical continuities.⁵⁵ Mead argues against the traditional division of American foreign policy, by Kissinger and others, into a *realpolitik* and an idealist tradition.⁵⁶ His argument identifies and discusses four distinctive traditions in American geopolitical culture (see Table 6-3). The details of these traditions need not concern us here except to note that Mead attributes more historical continuity to them than is warranted. His book contains no consideration of power and the political economy of ideas. But his identification and ethnographic elaboration of geopolitical traditions as relatively durable foreign policy story-lines within a broader geopolitical culture is suggestive.

In the work of Graham Smith we have an example of the connection between geographical imaginations, geopolitical traditions and geopolitical culture in Russia and the difficulties of separating them. Smith identifies three broad geographical/geopolitical imaginations or conceptions of Russia's place in the world that are also much more. The first places Russia within Europe and is associated with the long historical tradition of Westernization associated with Peter the Great and the city of St Petersburg. This vision of Russia in Europe was not simply descriptive but normative and performative: Russia should be made more like Europe. For Russia's Westernizers (*zapadniki*),

Tradition	Russian National Interest	Social Basis	Cultural Identity
Liberal-Westernist	Good economic and trading relations with the West	International business class	Pluralist Russian: <i>Rossiiskii</i>
Neo-Nationalist	Strong Russian state and Tsarist empire, hostile to the West	Orthodox religion, Slavophiles, Romantic nationalism	Ethnic Russian: <i>Russkii</i>
Neo-Soviet	Return to Communist values, hostile to Western capitalist powers	Communist Party members and supporters, Communist ideology	Pluralists but Russians as 'first among equals'
Democratic Statist	Neutral or implicitly hostile to West, pragmatic pursuit of development and strength	Institutional power structures and economic interests willing to play by rules established by the Kremlin; synthesis of nationalism and Westernization	Pragmatic Slavic-Turkic, yet chauvinistic when the occasion warrants it

Table 6-4. Russian Geopolitical Traditions in the 1990s (after Smith 1999).

Russia was a backward country that needed to adopt Western models and institutions in order to achieve modernity and economic development. A competing geographical imagination is the idea of Russia as a distinctive Eurasian territory and state. This notion is closely associated with nineteenth century Slavophilism and twentieth century Eurasianism, geographical imaginations that also are normative geopolitical traditions and visions. The third geographical imagination is of Russia as a bridge between East and West, between Europe and Asia, a perspective that developed particularly as part of the ideological message of the Soviet Union as a 'union of diverse peoples' rather than a Russian empire in Communist garb.

In his analysis of post-Soviet Russia, Smith identifies four competing 'discourses of homeland' characterizing contemporary Russian geopolitical culture (see Table 6-4). Smith does not conceptualize these in the same way as Mead, namely as historical foreign policy schools. Rather they are a contemporary synthesis of geographical imaginations and geopolitical traditions. Again the details of his account need not concern us. What is useful is his connection of images of the place of the state in the world to conceptions of national identity and to a normative geopolitical philosophy. Analyzing the normative brings us to consideration of the concept of geopolitical vision.

Geopolitical Visions and Geopolitical Subjects

Gerijan Dijkink's work *National Identity and Geopolitical Visions* (1996) explores geographical imaginations, national identity, geopolitical culture and geopolitical traditions under the rubric of 'geopolitical vision.' As might have been expected, the meaning of this concept for him is broad and flexible. He is interested in the 'particular structure of information-processing

pertaining to each place' (p. 3), and appears to conflate Said's interest in 'imaginative geography' with his idea of geopolitical visions (pp. 3, 7-9).⁵⁷ But he also offers a formal definition, albeit a broad one: "I define geopolitical vision as: *any idea concerning the relation between one's own and other places, involving feelings of (in)security or (dis)advantage (and/or) invoking ideas about a collective mission or foreign policy strategy*" (p. 11; emphasis in original).

He takes care to not attach it to a state – thus he can speak about Kurdish geopolitical visions – and summarizes his definition thus: "A geopolitical vision requires at least a Them-and-Us distinction and emotional attachment to a place" (p. 11).

This understanding of 'geopolitical vision' is equivalent to what I have termed here 'geographical imaginations.' This seems transparent when he writes of geopolitical visions as "translations of national-identity concepts in geographical terms and symbols" (p. 14). However, Dijkink's concept gets unwieldy and overly ambitious when he also relates it to the concept of a 'foreign policy belief system' (p. 14).⁵⁸ Here the notion of 'vision' is tied to 'sets of lenses' and 'images,' cognitive organizational devices which enable foreign policy-makers and leaders to perceive and order their environment. The psychologism and methodological individualism of this approach are deeply problematic and are not explored by Dijkink.⁵⁹ In stating his 'argument in brief' Dijkink renders geopolitical visions as aspects of universal individual psychological processes: "Each human being yearns for a kind of world order, a sensible pattern of people, things and behaviour in the world. This disposition involves a defensive response to changes, not merely a response to any arbitrary change but particularly a sensitivity to events that conflict with one's vision of order" (p. 15). Geopolitical vision becomes, in this account, a form of individual mental mapping and a psychologized imposition of order upon the world.

The theoretical elaboration of Dijkink's concept of 'geopolitical vision' is thus somewhat confused, mixing discursive theory with psychologism. One concept tries to explain too much and the subsequent chapters combined descriptions of geographical imaginations, geopolitical culture, geopolitical traditions, and elaboration of key figures from classical geopolitics. The book ends up being a 'history of national ideas' in their popular, practical and formal expression.

Kearns uses a different and, I would argue, more theoretically precise concept of 'geopolitical vision.'⁶⁰ It refers to discursive accounts of the reorganization of world space and the emergence of a new world political map by intellectuals of statecraft he takes as representative of broader political philosophies. For him geopolitics is a "discourse that describes, explains and promotes particular ways of seeing how territorial powers are formed and experienced."⁶¹ A geopolitical vision is a normative world picture, "a wish posing as analysis."⁶² Kearns contrasts the geopolitical visions of three figures

Geopolitical Subject	Mackinder	Wilson	Lenin
Teleology	Nature: races Consolidation of empires, emergence of single world empire	Meaning: ethnic nations Break up of empires, emergence of mosaic of ethnic nation-states League of Nations United States	Social Relations: classes Collapse of capitalism, diffusion of socialist revolution Third International Soviet Union
Institutional Support	British Empire		
Constitution of State with Geopolitical Subject	Great Britain		

Table 6-5. Contrasting Geopolitical Visions (after Kearns 2003).

– Halford Mackinder, Woodrow Wilson, and Lenin – on the future of the world political map but his analysis is less a documentation of individual writings than a utilization of these figures as exemplars of competing geopolitical discourses. These discourses are distinguished by their placement of a different ‘geopolitical subject’ or “basic agent shaping global political and economic relations” at the centre of their account. This subject is essentialized and naturalized, with other competing subjects marginalized or ignored. For Mackinder and racial imperialism, the geopolitical subject is race, for Woodrow Wilson and liberal capitalism it is nations and national self-determination, for Lenin and Marxists it is class struggle (see Table 6-5). Each account has a different teleology of geopolitical change and constructs particular states as embodiments of the universal interests of the privileged geopolitical subject.

Kearns’ account traces the contradictions inherent within these geopolitical visions and the ‘empirical embarrassment’ they face when the claims they make about the world turn out to be false or not as represented. He notes that “the world did not appear as simple as it appeared to be.”⁶³ Marginalized subjects prove to be not so marginal after all. Thus, Britain found itself facing rebellious imperial subjects using British ideals of democracy against its anti-democratic utopia of an Empire organized around bonds of respect and mutual affection. The United States did not live up to its own ideals of liberal citizenship and not all accepted its naturalization of capitalism. The Soviet Union faced ‘awkward classes’ and non-Russian nations that never bought into its classless utopia. Dynamics of race, nationalism and capitalism are interconnected and can never be treated in isolation. Similarly the domestic social, cultural and economic order is connected to international imaginings and projections; geopolitics is never only an international phenomenon.

Kearns’ analysis does not engage geographical imaginations, cultures or traditions; his analysis is too clean and ‘ideal type’ to handle historical detail. Nevertheless his specification of a geopolitical vision as a normative picture of the world political map organized around an essentialized subject and naturalized social relations is a very useful concept for critical geopolitics.

Instantiated in the writings of particular thinkers, these geopolitical visions are a point of entry into a larger geopolitical culture and its normative visions of world politics. To the extent that these geopolitical visions become a hegemonic ‘moral order’ within a geopolitical culture, their critical analysis helps us understand how powerful states construct the world political map in ways that conform with their own imaginings of it even as their practices contradict the moral order they espouse. The point is particularly apt today.

Geopolitical Discourse and the Discursive Policy Process

O Tuathail and Agnew argue that geopolitics “should be critically re-conceptualized as a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft ‘spatialize’ international politics in such a way as to represent it as a ‘world’ characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas.”⁶⁴ This definition treats geopolitics as equivalent to foreign policy discourse in general rather than one so-called ‘realist’ type of foreign policy. It implicitly points to how geopolitical discourse is dependent upon geographical imaginations but is not equivalent to them for the focus is on ‘intellectuals of statecraft.’ This latter group can be divided into practical intellectuals of statecraft, who help shape and formulate geopolitical discourse through the foreign policy process, and formal intellectuals of statecraft in the public sphere whose ideas help codify foreign policy perspectives or challenge them and articulate new geopolitical visions.

In the contemporary era, practical geopoliticians include not simply key decision-makers but the whole support staff that help test, craft and spin a foreign policy discourse. Thus, a serious investigation of geopolitical discourse in modern media-conditioned states needs to consider the role of public opinion consultants and pollsters in informing politicians about effective foreign policy phraseology and argumentation. It also needs to consider the role of speechwriters and communications specialists in crafting geopolitical scripts for public delivery by foreign policy principles. I have outlined elsewhere a ‘grammar of geopolitics’ that focuses on how geopolitical discourse specifies what (situation description), where (location specification), who (protagonist definition), why (attribution of causality and blame) and so what (interest enunciation).⁶⁵ The process whereby competing geopolitical story-lines get created around foreign policy challenges involves taking a building bloc approach that begins by examining primary classifications and specifications, the emergence of key metaphors and analogies, and the development of relatively coherent story-lines out of the discursive processing of policy challenges and news stories. A geopolitical story-line is a relatively coherent foreign policy narrative and argument about a policy challenge that is defined in debate by competing antagonistic story-lines. Story-lines are discursively fashioned from geographical imaginations, traditions, visions and other aspects of geopolitical culture. In debate they help delimit the policy space

within which a certain issue, event or drama is debated.

A geopolitical script is what foreign policy leaders agree to say and perform publicly about a foreign policy question. It is a formulaic and diplomatic way of speech acting that sometimes articulates one geopolitical storyline to the exclusion of others but sometimes deliberately chooses not to decide between them and acts in a manner that retains ambiguity, flexibility and superficiality in making foreign policy. Scripts are composed from bureaucratic briefing books and public relations 'talking points' but they are about situational practices rather than narrative and discourse alone.⁶⁶

The critical analysis of the geopolitical discursive process needs, in addition, to consider the reception of geopolitical scripts by the foreign policy establishment or what we might call 'geopolitical power ministries' and 'geopolitical civil society.' The former constitutes the foreign policy state apparatus. It is worth considering them for the foreign policy positions, and perspectives of those in elected office that are often not shared by the professional military, intelligence and foreign service communities. The US 'humanitarian script' towards the Bosnian war, for example, was determined at the top by key decision makers but this script was not shared by many junior State Department desk officers, some of whom resigned in protest during the Clinton administration, nor by some diplomats in the field. Similarly, many military officials strongly resisted US interventionism in Haiti and Bosnia during the Clinton administration and undermined policy initiatives which they considered violated the prevailing 'common sense' within their strategic culture.

Geopolitical civil society is most prominently represented by television and print media, with particular programs, magazines and networks having mass market or niche audience significance. Newspaper editorials and 'punditocracy' – people anointed by the media to give their opinion and voice certain perspectives – help condition the spin of particular foreign policy stories and the policy scripts designed to respond to them.⁶⁷ A second line of this community are established and rising foreign policy 'think tanks' who function as producers of knowledge about foreign policy challenges and also as commentators endowed with 'expertise' and *gravitas* as a consequence of their position. In the United States, the Council on Foreign Relations (established 1921) is the oldest and most prestigious foreign policy group mainly due to the influence of its journal *Foreign Affairs*. Time-honoured Washington-based think tanks like the Brookings Institute (established 1927), the American Enterprise Institute (founded 1943), Woodrow Wilson Centre (established 1968 by an Act of Congress), and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (originally part of Georgetown University) have been joined over the last quarter century by generously endowed conservative organizations like Heritage Foundation (founded 1973), and the Cato Institute (established 1978). Other ostensibly non-partisan institutes include

the US Institute of Peace (established 1984 by Act of Congress) and the New American Foundation (established 1999). The power of money to institutionalize particular points of view and set up personnel as policy intellectuals, ideological apologists, and 'representative voices' is transparent (despite hollow 'strictly nonpartisan' claims). Washington D.C. is a small city and there is considerable personnel movement and social interaction between the geopolitical power ministries and the well-connected think tanks that are at the centre of the city's geopolitical civil society.

Countering the influence of powerful think tanks with funding ties to defence contractors and the corporate power structure in the United States are more critical think tanks, like the Institute for Policy Studies or the Economic Policy Institute, but their power is limited by their small funding base and hostility from the established power structure. Non-governmental foreign policy organizations like the International Crisis Group are relatively new players and different in that embed young policy intellectuals in the regions they cover so they can write detailed policy reports and serve as commentators from there.

Geostrategic Discourses

Traditionally geopolitical discourse was seen as *realpolitik* foreign policy discourse – defined in opposition to *moralpolitik* – rather than foreign policy discourse in its totality. Since this narrower strategic understanding of geopolitics is important as a particular type of foreign policy speech acting, it is useful to specify it by means of the concept of 'geostrategic discourse.' Geostrategic discourse can be understood as a form of geopolitical discourse that makes explicit strategic claims about the material national security interests of the state across a world map characterized by state competition, threats and dangers. Geostrategic discourse is a self-defining and self-referential performative discourse; its claims are its basis. Institutionalized in national security bureaucracies, and preoccupied with scenarios of state competition, war fighting, resource scarcity, pervasive danger and insecurity, it claims a privileged position for itself beyond established foreign politics on the basis of the claim that it addresses transcendent national interests and existential security concerns.

For much of the twentieth century geopolitics was seen as equivalent to geo-strategic discourse, with geopolitics taught at military academies as a philosophy of national security and championed by bureaucratic authoritarian leaders in Latin America.⁶⁸ This association tarnished geopolitics, for geostrategic renditions of geopolitics have tended to be grounded in reactionary conservative, fascist and authoritarian ideals. While both geopolitics and geostrategic discourse are forms of knowledge that have transcended military academies and right-wing institutions, strategic discourses have long been instrumentalized by conservative political interests to advance

agendas of polarization, militarization and chauvinistic nationalist politics. These tendencies persist as geo-strategic discourse is more likely to be produced by right-wing think tanks staffed by retired generals and defence intellectuals with close ties to interest groups profiting from increased defence spending and imperial adventurism. Geo-strategic discourse strives to become the dominant centre and lodestar of geopolitical discourse

In his survey of American Cold War strategies of containment, John Gaddis discusses national security policies using the concept of 'geopolitical codes' which he also terms 'strategic codes'.⁶⁹ Taylor also uses this notion in his study of Britain and the early Cold War.⁷⁰ Drawing upon the ideas of Alexander George, Gaddis defines 'geopolitical codes' as "assumptions about American interests in the world, potential threats to them, and feasible responses, that tend to be formed either before or just after an administration takes office and barring unusual circumstances tend not to change much thereafter" (p. ix).⁷¹ Gaddis's rendering of the notion is administration-centric though not particularly president-centric. He tends to focus on certain key doctrinal documents and intellectuals of statecraft – Kennan's conception of containment, NSC-68, Dulles's New Look, Kennedy's advisors and flexible response, Kissinger and détente – and he provides an account of the dialogical content and policy context within which strategic story-lines get created. Nowhere is the notion of 'codes' really elaborated which is not accidental since the notion is not helpful for it conveys a mechanical conception of strategic thinking. Geopolitical reasoning does not proceed by an administration translating its discourse into a series of codes which are then operationalized throughout policy-making and transmitted through policy speeches and actions for others to decode. The process, as Gaddis's account illustrates despite itself, is a more dialogical and discursive one in which certain policy intellectuals forge competing story-lines in opposition to prevalent story-lines for political and other purposes. Gaddis account is too much a 'history of ideas' and not sufficiently a history of geopolitical culture, traditions and clashing visions within a context of a struggle for power between different American interest coalitions and bureaucracies. His notion of 'geopolitical codes,' I would argue, should be abandoned for a more constructivist conception of strategic thinking as itself a strategy of power.⁷²

Geostrategic discourse can be conceived as operating in the same manner as 'securitization'.⁷³ What we might call *geo-strategization* is the making of a discursive claim that a particular foreign policy crisis or challenge has the locational and transcendent material interest qualities that make it 'strategic.' Competition for a particular national resource is at stake, for example, or its location directly affects agreed national security interests. An inventory of these dimensions is constructed and represented as part of the material self-interest of the state. A contrast to moral or idealistic interests is often elaborated in this process though moral arguments are often

asserted as complimentary to or reinforcing the strategic claims.

An example of the contested and performative nature of strategic claims is a discussion, on the American program *NewsHour*, between Zbigniew Brzezinski and Lawrence Eagleburger on the Russian bombing of the Grozny in December 1999.⁷⁴ The interviewer asks "Does the U.S. have a dog in this fight?" Eagleburger argues that US should stay out of the conflict for there is little it can do whereas Brzezinski makes the claim that there is a moral issue involved – "how should a people be treated by other people" – yet he quickly transitions to a strategic game form of reasoning in which Russia's war aids...

the takeover of power by the worst elements in Russia, of which Colonel Putin, the KGB colonel, is a symbol, and he will be the next president of Russia. And, secondly, in the region, and particularly in the south Caucasus, there's going to be greater instability. And we – and the international community – have a shared interest in an open Caspian Sea region, an open Central Asia, which we can reach. But if southern Caucasus is destabilized and subjected again to Russian control, that access will be shot, and all of the talk about the Baku-Ceyhan Pipeline...

Eagleburger contests this reading arguing that the US may actually have an interest in the defeat of the "very unpleasant types" – "fundamentalist Islamists of the worst sort" – that are the Chechen rebels. Furthermore, the likely failure of the war to end the rebellion may actually, by Brzezinski's logic, strengthen reformers and weaken the party of war in Russia. The US's strategic interest is to do nothing. Not so for Brzezinski who argues that the US should isolate Russia from international institutions and finances to make it "pay a heavy price" for its actions. For Eagleburger, Chechnya is of little strategic value to the US in itself; for Brzezinski it is central to the future of Russia.

What this debate between two equally conservative intellectuals of statecraft underscores is the how geostrategic interests are a matter of performative speech act claims. Depending upon the particular geopolitical culture and power structure of a state, these claims will gain adherence or be marginalized. Geostrategic discourse is whatever intellectuals of statecraft and a state power structure makes of it.

Conclusion

Figure 6-7 presents an idealized organizing image of how the 'geopolitics as cultures' concepts can be organized in relation to each other. This schema is presented as an argument, subject to debate and open for modification, a form of heuristic theory building designed to outline the complexity and clarify the potential dimensions of critical research on geopolitics as a cultural practice. While all geopolitical thinking has a relationship

Concept	Definition	Related Notions
Geostrategic discourses	Particular discursive speech acts about 'national security,' and the 'strategic interests' of the state	Strategic culture, securitization – security speech acts; <i>geo-strategization</i> ; formal geopolitics
Geopolitical discourse & the discursive process	The crafting and design of a particular spatial account of international affairs by institutions, and practitioners of foreign policy	Intellectuals of statecraft, geopolitical civil society, story-lines – foreign policy arguments – and scripts – ways of performing & doing foreign policy
Geopolitical vision & subject	A normative picture of the world political map, and the basic agent shaping global political relations	Naturalization; certain social and geopolitical orders assumed beyond question and part of 'nature'
Geopolitical traditions	Historical schools of foreign policy theory and practice	Interpretative foreign policy communities
Geopolitical culture	The culture of knowledge, and interpretation of the state as a foreign policy actor in world affairs; institutional setting and communicational culture of foreign policy making	Geopolitical power complexes and their shaping of the foreign policy process; degrees of geopolitical ignorance and knowledge in a state; popular and practical geopolitics
Geographical <i>imagi-nations</i>	Location of a national identity in the world; maps of friends and enemies in the world; assertion of territorial borders, national mission, and trans-national collective forces in world affairs; inclusions and exclusions	Imaginary geography; <i>self/other</i> , <i>us/them</i> boundary creating practices; national exceptionalism; geographies of the unconscious, popular geopolitics

Table 6-6. Concepts for the Study of Geopolitics as Culture.

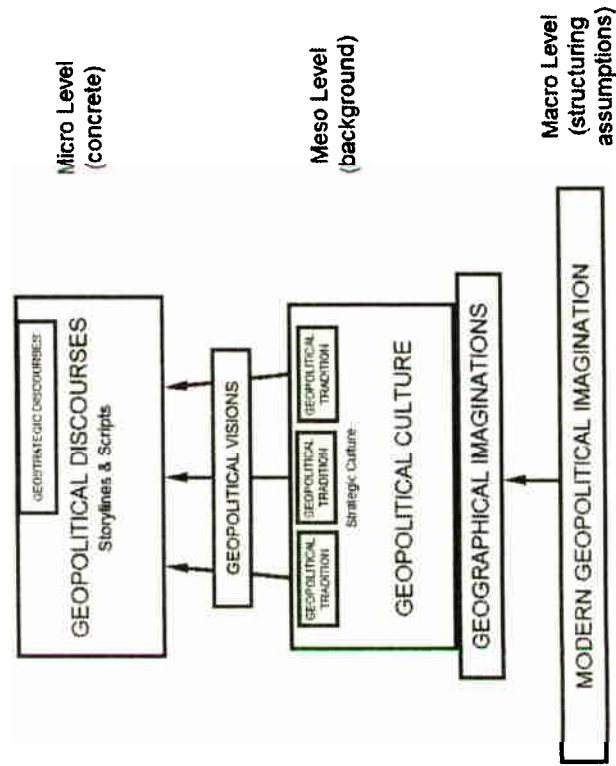


Figure 6-7. Geopolitics as Culture: Key Concepts.

to the 'modern geopolitical imagination' outlined and discussed by Agnew, it is important to move beyond grand historical schema to look at geopolitics as an historical accumulation of meso practices that provide a common cultural background for interpreting international affairs, and a set of micro practices that characterize concrete geopolitical measures.

Geopolitics should be studied as both structure and culture, as part of the *longue durée* of the modern world and the cultural life of its most powerful institutions.⁷⁵ The study of geopolitical structures is itself geopolitical culture. The reasoning that gets assembled to create prevailing geopolitical visions and cultures needs to be de-naturalized and its interpretative assumptions contested. This is the task of the critical geopolitics project. A general theoretical scheme and precisely defined concepts will allow fine-grained historical and contemporary studies of geopolitical practices. It will allow us to more closely explore the interface of structures and cultures, how in today's world certain geographical imaginations and discourse underpin alliance structures like NATO, for example, yet other prevailing geopolitical traditions like Jacksonianism in the George W. Bush's foreign policy undermines the shared international geopolitical visions associated with transnational liberalism. Understanding the multiple contradictions of contemporary geopolitics makes the critical geopolitics project more relevant than ever.

Notes

¹ Simon Dalby, *Creating the Second Cold War*, London: Pinter, 1990; Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

² Ray Cline, *Power of Nations in the 1990s: A Strategic Assessment*, Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1994.

³ See Richard Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986, pp. 12-27; Simon Dalby, *Environmental Security*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

⁴ Simon Dalby, "Codes, vision, knowledge: The reasoning practices of critical geopolitics." Paper presented at the *Canadian Geographers Conference*, Victoria, British Columbia, 2003.

⁵ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, "Understanding Critical Geopolitics: Geopolitics and Risk Society," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22.2/3 (1999): 107-124.

⁶ Fernand Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980; Nigel Thrift, "It's the little things," *Geopolitical Traditions*, ed. K. Dodds, Atkinson, D. London: Routledge, 2000.

⁷ John Agnew, Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy*, London: Routledge, 1995.

⁸ Ibid. p. 7.

⁹ Ibid. p. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 15.

- ¹¹ Robert Cox, *Production, Power and World Order*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- ¹² U.S. trade and budget deficits are at record levels while the dollar's global role is declining. As the Iraq invasion debacle demonstrates, the US has great difficulty translating military predominance into legitimacy and power on the ground. For a provocative if flawed geopolitical declinist argument see Charles Kupchan, *The End of the American Era*, New York: Knopf, 2002.
- ¹³ Stuart Corbridge and John Agnew, "The US trade and budget deficits in global perspective: an essay in geopolitical-economy," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9 (1991): 71-90. John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, "The new geopolitics: the dynamics of global disorder," *A World in Crisis? Geographical Perspectives*, ed. R. J. Johnson and P. Taylor, Second ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.
- ¹⁴ Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001.
- ¹⁵ Manuel Castells, *Rise of the Network Society: The Information Age: Economy, Society & Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996; Richard Friman, Andreas, Peter, ed., *The Illicit Global Economy and State Power*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998; Peter Landesmann, "Arms and the Man," *New York Times Magazine* 17 August 2003.
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