

Geopolitics

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Glossary

Critical Geopolitics Rooted in post-structuralism, critical geopolitical inquiry is, at its core, concerned with the operation, interaction, and contestation of geopolitical discourses.

Discourse The setting or domain in which words are used and take on specific meanings.

Geopolitics The study of the impact of geographical distributions and divisions on the conduct of world politics.

Nation-State A state in which the territorial boundaries also enclose a claimed nation which the state represents.

National Socialism German political movement initiated in 1920 with the organization of the National Socialist German Workers' Party. The movement culminated in the establishment of the Third Reich, the totalitarian German state, led by the dictator Adolf Hitler from 1933 to 1945.

Post-Structuralism Influenced by Heidegger and Nietzsche, French philosophers such as Derrida and Foucault suggest that all text has ambiguity and because of this the possibility of a final and complete interpretation is impossible. This means first that language and society are shaped by rule-governed systems and second that it is impossible to step outside of discourse and survey the situation objectively.

Introduction

Geopolitics – that is nothing ‘real’. Nothing ‘real’ from an essentialistic point of view. Geopolitics is a social construct, a sort of social practice, a discursive formation depending on what theoretical perspective you take on this phenomenon. No wonder that there is no solid core of knowledge in this respect, geopolitics seems to be fluid, runs through your fingers.

As intangible as it might be, a significant impact it still has. This phenomenon is neither harmless nor innocent. It is highly politically relevant. Wars are led in the name of geopolitics. People are driven out and murdered to serve geopolitics. It is a clear proof for how discursive constructions turn into social practice, how representations and imaginations grounded in discourse turn into powerful instruments of political actions.

What exactly is geopolitics, though? What is so fascinating about it? Why does it have such an impact? In order to answer such questions the line of argumentation follows two consecutive sections:

In the first section, ‘Geopolitics as a discursive construction – some theoretical remarks’ the nature of geopolitics is considered from a conceptual perspective. The goal is to refine the nexus – created in terminology and practice of geopolitics – between society, space, and power; the nexus which is not essentially preexistent but that forms a fragment of the hegemonic discourses of modernity and has a powerful impact on social practice. These details are considered in subsections ‘The nexus between society and space as a basic element of the geopolitical imagination’ ‘The nation-state as the fundamental “territorial trap” of the geopolitical imagination’, and ‘Post-structuralism and discourse analysis as a basis for the deconstruction of geopolitical representations’.

Against this background the next section, ‘The tidal waves of discourse: geopolitics and geopolitical representations in different historical periods’, presents examples from the history and development of geopolitical discourses to show how and based on what historically situated framings geopolitical representations develop and grow their specific impact. The historical comparison shows how little the geopolitical regionalizations have in common even when they frequently choose to justify their social legitimacy and authority with reference to an ultimate ‘scientific objectivity’. From the beginning of the last century, when the term ‘geopolitics’ itself was first used by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén, the range of explanations widely extends. The subsections ‘Geopolitics as a discourse in the historical context of biological determinism and geodeterminism at the end of the nineteenth century’, ‘Karl Haushofer and geopolitics in national socialism’, ‘Cold War geopolitics’, ‘The pluralization of geopolitical representation after the end of the Cold War’, and ‘The new spatial organization of power in geopolitical representations after 9/11’ provide an overview of the subject.

Geopolitics as a Discursive Construction—Some Theoretical Remarks

From a political–geographical perspective, geopolitics can be seen as all those elements of discourse and/or social practice that deal with the construction of large-scale regional up to global worldviews. The expression

geopolitics is semantically plurivalent and according to theoretical perspective comprises:

1. geopolitical discourses as representations of space and power;
2. geo-policy-making of the political actors;
3. geo-policy-making of scientists, consultants (in international relations (IR), political geography, 'geos-trategic analysts' in scientific think tanks, etc.), and the media; and
4. the scientific deconstruction of geopolitics and geopolitical imaginations from a post-structuralist perspective.

These four aspects, which overlap and unify in the word geopolitics, show not only the broad range of contents that is represented by this expression, but also points out the different social groups that are engaged in the field of geopolitics – from politics over political advisors and the media to scientific consultants and critical scientists.

This heterogeneity also expresses in the various theoretical approaches that form the conceptual basis of geopolitics. These approaches partly vary to such a great extent that they lead to diametrically opposed forms of scientific analysis, practical recommendations, and political positioning. What scientists publish under the label of geopolitics today reaches from latently geodeterminist over positivist and structuralist to post-structuralist approaches.

This variety of concepts has made geopolitics a topic in various scientific disciplines (mainly in the fields of IR and political geography). Due to this variety geopolitics has quite heterogeneous options of political influence – according to the conceptual orientation. Considering the historical development these options reach from phrasing hawk, demagogic Darwinian policy of living space (*Lebensraum*) at the beginning and middle of the last century to nowadays' emancipated criticism of the politics of geopolitics.

The Nexus between Society and Space as a Basic Motive of the Geopolitical Imagination

From a theoretical point of view, geopolitics is the discursive coupling of social and spatial categories. The decisive point in linking social and territorially defined elements lies in the resulting 'purification of space'. By this kind of discursive practice the 'self' and the 'other' is framed along spatial categories and provided with borders. This results in the construction of culturally/socially homogeneous territorial groups. Such constructions can be found as geopolitical representations in all historical epochs (see below). As much as their contents may vary according to the hegemonic discourses of their time, (e.g., if they exploit expressions like race, class, or cultural diversity when constructing putative

homogeneous spaces), as uniform their decisive mode of distinction is in the construction of homogenous social spaces that separate from the other.

In this way, the politics of geopolitics is a structuring element in social negotiation processes and conflicts. Geopolitical imaginations offer the option to society to find something like orientation, straightforwardness, and assumed safety in the contingent diversity of being. They are historically alterable narratives and – apart from stable phases in which they may appear to be virtually objective formations – are subject to constant negotiation and renegotiation. From the geographical perspective space and place are of crucial importance in the construction of geopolitical representations.

The Nation-State as the Fundamental 'Territorial Trap' of the Geopolitical Imagination

Concerning this matter in the epoch of modernity, the nation-state advanced to be the territorial masterframe for countless political strategies of containment and exclusion. The nation-state was the basis of Friedrich Ratzel's biologicistic *Staatsorganismus*. He represented the territorial container of the nation-state as the putative logical outcome of a corresponding development of human history. Even though Benedict Anderson's long-standing conceptualization of nations as 'imagined communities' has once more characterized them as social constructions, the nation-state order has become such a persistently successful framing that it is taken for granted as a kind of 'realistic' entity in the discourses on identity over the last two centuries. Even in the times of increasing globalization its effect appears to hold its ground – despite the undeniable and partly grave power loss to the transnational networks of 'global governance'.

John Agnew calls this stiff fixation on the space container of the nation-state a 'territorial trap'. This expression characterizes the unreflected taking over of the concept of nation-states, or more precisely, a virtual ontologization of the territorial principle as a decisive framing of social, especially political structuring. According to Agnew, the territorial trap is based on three main assumptions that must be analytically separated but overlap in social practice. The territorial 'logic' of modernity expresses in the fact that

1. the sovereignty of the modern state requires defined regional authorities;
2. the internal and foreign policy are strictly separated; and
3. the territorial state serves as the spatial container of national societies.

Based on these assumptions the geopolitical order appears as a patchwork of separated, secluded, and independent entities, implicitly marginalizing the fact that

all individual elements of such a territorial structure are socially constructed and – when looking at the longue durée of historic eras – are constantly renegotiated.

Post-Structuralism and Discourse Analysis as a Basis for the Deconstruction of Geopolitical Representations

Though scientific methods of analyzing geopolitical representations are discussed in further detail in other contributions of this handbook (compare keywords such as critical geopolitics, political geography, post-colonialism, geographical imaginations, postfeminism, etc.), it may be helpful for understanding the following reconstructions of historic geopolitical narratives to mention at least some core aspects and basic principles out of the wider field of theoretical and methodological reflections concerning this matter.

Most of the theoretical framework can be found in post-structuralist theories, especially in discourse analysis and semiotic analysis. The deconstruction of geopolitical representations in particular works against the reemergence of strongly traditional, sometimes practically natural-determinist ideas, for which geopolitics is the doctrine of the influence of the physical space on the politics of a state. Post-structuralist reasoning in political geography show how such a conceptualization of geopolitics leads to an ideological as well as an epistemological *cul-de-sac*. Post-structuralist approaches are characterized by a general shift of perspective. They take the geopolitical discourses themselves as the object of their analysis. The issues to address from this point of view are: (1) the construction of discursive and cartographic representations and (2) how these representations intersect with political and social imaginations.

Beyond such lines of research more strictly oriented to post-structuralist discourse analysis, we can find a broad range of approaches that consider geopolitical narratives and imaginations more as a discursive strategy of intellectuals of statecraft serving toward the legitimization and achievement of their aims (critical geopolitics).

Both approaches follow a constructivist perspective and a linguistic (respectively semiotic) turn which regards geopolitical representations as constructions using geographical semantics, metaphors, symbols, etc. Such a perspective sharpens the awareness of the normative character of competing imaginations. The greater the extent to which their relativity and their subtle role become apparent, the less they can fulfill their occasionally problematic role in the geopolitical debate on power and space – both in political discourse itself and in the polarization and instrumentalization of public opinion.

The Tidal Waves of Discourse: Geopolitics and Geopolitical Representations in Different Historical Periods

The following analysis of selected geopolitical representations follows a more post-structuralist approach which directs its interest toward the discursive production of space. Echoing Said's *Orientalism* and Gregory's *Geographical imaginations* geopolitical discourses are regarded in Foucault's sense as linguistic formations of power and space.

Against this background, it becomes apparent how much geopolitical imaginations and representations are situated within their social and/or discursive context. This means that geopolitics is subject to change that – from a discourse-theoretic perspective – takes place along the slow oscillating of hegemonic discursive formations. In order to show this, some basic elements of the geopolitical framings of different historical eras are shortly and exemplarily discussed in the following. Even in this shortened form it becomes clear to what extent geopolitical representations – from Ratzel's bio- and geodeterminism to Huntington's cultural deterministic *Clashing Civilizations* – are interwoven with the hegemonic discourses of their times in order to construct the corresponding historical-specific context of society, space, and power. To illustrate these correlations the following phases (periods/eras) will be discussed:

1. discursive establishment of the sciences of political geography and geopolitics in the historical context of biological determinism and geodeterminism at the end of the nineteenth century;
2. political use of the (scientific) geopolitical discourse in context with imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, and national socialism;
3. discursive framing of the foreign policy and IR in the post-war phase (Cold War); and
4. development of new geopolitical representations after the end of the Cold War.

Geopolitics as a Discourse in the Historical Context of Biological Determinism and Geodeterminism at the End of the Nineteenth Century

Generally, it was argued that geopolitical representations have always been part of the hegemonic discourse of their time. Nevertheless, the kind of geopolitics that developed at the end of the nineteenth century is special in this regard for two reasons: first, this period is characterized by powerful discursive framings of territorial order. This expressed in political everyday life where the concept of the nation-state emerged to be one of the most important

structuring principles of society. The nation-state – following Foucault's considerations about the development of governmentality – had successively formed to be a crucial element in replacing the feudalistically organized society by a civil society. In the following period of a state-centered imperialism and colonialism, a geopolitics of nation-states and their global areas of influence established.

Second, this period lies in a phase in which naturalist and biologicistic narratives in European societies for the first time in history widely diffused into the discourse of the whole society. At the same time they worked as key concepts in science and thus greatly influenced newly developing disciplines, for example, sociology and – as the science of space – geography.

For the development of geopolitical framings it was essential that spatial and biologicistic fragments of discourse began to interact. Some examples can demonstrate this. As Schultz states geopolitics is founded on the traditional natural geographical concept, which, for example, is reflected in Herder's construction of nations as largely influenced by climatic geography. "Nature produces families; the most natural state therefore is a people with a national character. ... A people is a plant of nature as well as a family, but one with many branches". (Herder cited by Schultz, 1998: 87)

Ritter, one of the founders of modern geography, shows a similar understanding in combining fragments of spatial and naturalistic discursive fragments. In general, ideas concerning the power of space began to enter man's conception of the world at the end of the nineteenth century. As Windelbrand so aptly sums it up in 1809: "No matter what part of the earth we observe, we find religion fighting against religion, denomination against denomination, race against race, people against people in a tougher conflict than ever before. As the last century rationalised, ours wants to nationalize."

It is not surprising that such a construction of geopolitics in the political contexts of its time fell on fertile ground. As a scientific support to imperialism geopolitics gained sovereign tasks rather quickly. Consequently, the global space was segmented, conquered, and measured. Quantifying the earth according to exact space measures such as circles of latitude and degrees of longitude was only possible from the imagination of the world "... as a differentiated, integrated, hierarchically ordered whole" (Gregory, 1998). Geopolitical constructions served this imagination by dichotomizing along and with the help of spatial demarcations. The developing parts of the world became the excluded Other: West against East, North against South, Orient against Occident, and sea power against land power – these are only a small part of the broad range of such dichotomizations.

Some of these binary imaginations of the nineteenth century achieved prominence that partly can still be found in geopolitical discourses today. For example, the

construction of an antagonism between sea and land, between sea power and land power, formed the basis for Mackinder's (1861–1947) model that becomes an important part of Anglo-American geopolitics (Figure 1). In 1904, he presented a dichotomy of power to the Royal Geographical Society that separated the world in states of sea power and land power and thus formed the basis of many geopolitical imaginations still valid today. In this case, Russia is seen as the power center of the continental empire – the heartland ('pivot area') – without sufficient waterways to the ocean. All around it there is a seam of areas that do have access to the seas. They stand out due to their conflict causing middle positions and are subject to both oceanic and continental impacts. Around this seam the rest of the world is arranged being purely under oceanic influence (rimland). Among these we find Japan, Great Britain, and the United States. The 'balance of power' within this dual world system is the main drive of any development in the field of foreign policy. The conflicts are mainly carried out in the rupture zones. That is why Mackinder considers Eurasia to be the pivot of world politics. For him, controlling this area means reigning the world. From the perspective of the sea powers he sees the danger for them to be reigned by the land power center sooner or later. He confronted the sea-based British Empire with this horror scenario. The success of his representation is therefore mainly due to the construction of a discourse of threat and security understandable for the British Empire.

Nicholas Spykman (1893–1943) used this threat and security scenario for the American administration in the run-up to World War II. In contrast to Mackinder's attention to the heartland Spykman emphasized the rimlands. In order to prevent predominance of an individual power in the area of the rimlands he thought it was necessary to pursue an interventionist foreign policy. Otherwise the security of the USA would be at stake. This imagination was to become a central element of the geopolitical discourse during the Cold War.

The geopolitical representations in the field of German geopolitics in the late 19th century were completely different. They were based on the determinist concept of an exceptional geographical position of the German Reich. This thinking led Sombart to unanimous rejection of anything that was somehow close to English or Western European thinking or feeling. The aversion expressed here was directed toward liberalism, positivism, and subjectivism. These concepts were opposed by the ideas of community, entirety, and organism. In this nationalist-oriented climate the German protagonists of geopolitics – Friedrich Ratzel and Karl Haushofer – developed their geopolitical representations. They were so successful because they fit to the prevailing discourse, and so the way from their imaginations to Hitler's geopolitics of living space (Lebensraum) was not very far.

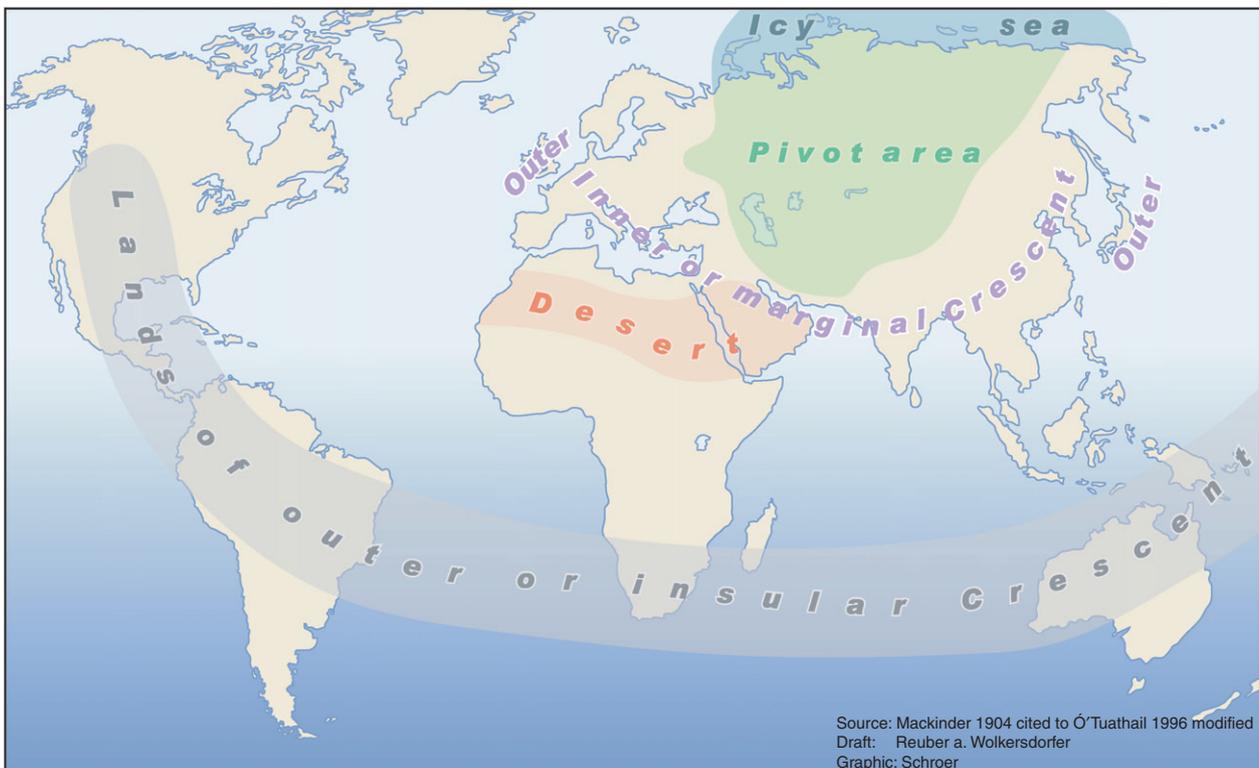


Figure 1 Geopolitical representations of intellectuals of statecraft: Mackinder's natural seats of power. Modified from Reuber & Wolkersdorfer, 2004.

The State as an Organism – Ratzel's Biodeterministic Construction of German Geopolitics

The basic element of Ratzel's mode of construction consisted of the nation-states' dependency on nature dynamic, namely, the biological plan of natural selection. Ratzel (1844–1904), who had moved from zoology to geography in his scientific career, built his political geography entirely on a positivistic natural-scientific conception of the world. His construction of the relationship between politics and space is determined by the physical basis of the nation-state. Societies, culture, and economics and their effects on the nation-state are hardly dealt with in his discussions. Another crucial point in his construction is his biological analogy of the nation-state as an 'indigenous organism'. The nation-state in this respect is attributed with the traits of a living being, an organism that only displays health and strength when it is capable of growth, in other words, territorial expansion. This form of geopolitics according to Darwin's hypothesis legitimates every form of imperialism and expansionism. Following Ratzel, as a result of a growing and healthy population, a nation-state needs more space to continue the development of its civilization. In this manner, a struggle for more space automatically develops between nation-states.

Repeatedly Ratzel makes a close connection between the growing population and the growing space and puts this claim into practice regarding the German Reich in the run-up to World War I:

Wherever you look space is won and space is lost. Set-back and progress everywhere; there will always be reigning and serving peoples. Even the peoples must be ambos and hammer. In no case Germany must limit itself to Europe; as a world power among world powers it can only hope to protect the ground for its people that it needs to grow. (translated from Ratzel, 1906: 377)

That is how Ratzel delivered with arguments of scientific repute the geopolitical basis for the colonial policy and fleetpolitics of the German Empire. Even after World War I the connection of politics and scientific geopolitical representations carried out here led to a fast expansion of political geography at the universities. With his discourse of the 'logic' of growing space Ratzel gave the essential impulse for the development of the ideology of living space (Lebensraum).

Thus Ratzel's theory could not only be connected to the classic concept of geography but also to the ideology of living space of the Third Reich. The reorientation to race as the decisive power in history was already started there." (translated from Schultz, 1998: 217)

The term 'geopolitics' itself was first used by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén. For him, geopolitics implied teaching about the state as a geographical organism or as an appearance in space. His geopolitics builds upon Ratzel's ideas and forms the basis for establishing geopolitical discourses both in science and politics.

Karl Haushofer and Geopolitics in National Socialism

Karl Haushofer (1869–1946) is of particular interest because in his person, as well as in the history of his family, the discursive significance of the geopolitical concept can be clearly portrayed. In this respect, Haushofer and his family are of interest within the line of argumentation in this article because of the effect on the development of the geopolitical discourse in Germany as well as in the USA.

Karl Haushofer, who considered Ratzel his mentor, shaped the German geopolitical discourse more than any other individual in that time. During World War I he was an officer, rising to the rank of major general. After release from the military after World War I, his career as a professor of geography at the University of Munich (1921–39) began. He published many books and papers, was editor of the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* (*Journal of Geopolitics*, 1924–44), and president of the German Academy. Haushofer's position in the Third Reich was shaped by his close relationship with Rudolf Hess and by the political standing of his sons Heinz and Albrecht in the Nazi regime. Through these contacts the geopolitical representations of Karl Haushofer had direct influence on the policy of the Third Reich and became eminently powerful. So in the years between World War I and II geopolitical representations achieved, at least in Germany, a hegemonic position in discourse.

For this development, Haushofer's chief pupil, Rudolf Hess, had special significance. Through the extensive contact between Hess and his mentor Haushofer, which among other things led to Haushofer hiding Hess for a few months at his place after the Putsch in Munich had failed, Haushofer's geopolitical imaginations became part of the Nazi ideology. During Hitler's and Hess' period of arrest in Landsberg, the ideological basis of national socialism originated with Haushofer's active participation: The myth of the Führer and the demand for more *Lebensraum* (living space) got into the writings in *Mein Kampf*. That Haushofer did not appear more visibly within the national-socialist government was, according to many historians, a result of seeing himself as an eminence rise in the background.

The historical evaluation of Haushofer's role, and the surviving myth surrounding him, will surely continue. Interestingly enough, the allegorical figure of Haushofer

offered an opposite picture in German and Anglo-American historical reconstructions. Especially in American reconstructions, all geopolitics in the German-speaking sphere seemed to be developed through Haushofer. As a consequence, part of the American geopolitics of the post-war era originated from the myth around the Geopolitical Institute and its director, Haushofer. At least here, Haushofer was considered the 'scientific brain' behind Hitler. His discursive excesses even got as far as Hollywood, where in an American propaganda film Haushofer and his Geopolitical Institute are represented as the headquarters of national socialism. As Ó Tuathail shows in his *Critical Geopolitics*, Haushofer and his imaginary Geopolitical Institute in Munich were considered the beginning of the conviction that "... geopolitics was something that America had to know." It was assumed that there were hundreds of scientists occupied with forming strategic designs of national-socialist expansion. When the Americans liberated Munich in 1945 their special mission was to locate this institute at the University of Munich. Reality remained well below the level of the visitors' expectations. Instead of the Geopolitical Institute, they only found a professor's office.

The American geopolitician Edmund A. Walsh, who was assigned to participate in the Nuremberg Trials, could not conceal his admiration for Haushofer and hence did not criticize the mode of geopolitical representation itself, but accused Haushofer of pursuing the wrong type of geopolitics. His demand for a 'true instead of a false' geopolitics locates the discipline within the democratic structure of Western society and can be explained at the level of modernizing basic theoretical assumptions.

Cold War Geopolitics

The years after 1945 were characterized by new forms of geopolitical representations that developed to a much greater extent than before in the scientific and political think tanks of the USA. Their goal was mainly a reframing of the American relation to the Eurasian continent. From the perspective of discourse theory, it is interesting to see to what extent these new representations rely on long-standing geopolitical imaginations like Mackinder and Spykman. They incorporated the old argument of a 'natural' line of conflict between a Western sea power (now the USA) and a central land power (now the Russian Federation). The practical consequence of such a geopolitical representation was the assumption that the political situation after 1945 did not allow for a stable order on the Eurasian continent without the permanent American presence. This was to prevent the expansion of the Soviet land power. The geopolitical construction of Mackinder's heartland theory is more

than apparent here – it is the core element of the new geopolitical doctrine of the Cold War.

The prevailing geopolitical representation led to a clear change or realignment of American foreign policy. You can distinguish here:

1. the post-war period with the Truman doctrine that brought the intervention decisions in favor of the outer margins of the Eurasian continent. They became apparent, for example, in the American engagement in the conflicts in Germany, Turkey, and Vietnam and
2. the relaxation of tensions phase under Nixon/Kissinger with its policy of opening toward China as the beginning of a genuine American geopolitics of 'realism'.

The geopolitical imagination of an upcoming 'Cold War' was first formulated by the American journalist Walter Lippmann in 1947. The discursive construction of geopolitical enmity was charged with ideological opposites. Seen from the perspective of the USA it was a fight between liberty, democracy, and market economy on the one hand and communism, totalitarian dictatorship, and command economy on the other. From the perspective of the Soviet Union, the framing of good and bad went just the other way round.

On 12 March 1947 the American president Harry S. Truman announced his new geopolitical representation in the American congress. With its dualistic approach and its universalistic claim (liberty vs. totalitarianism) it polarized even the parts of the world that so far had not been influenced by post-war geopolitics. After the Truman doctrine it became a basic principle of the foreign policy of the USA to deliver active support to all peoples whose putative liberty seemed to be endangered by communist or socialist states or by inner, left-wing, and militant minorities. The first examples were Turkey and Greece, but with hindsight also (Western) Germany. For decades the Truman doctrine became the discursive legitimation of the American containment policy and the basic leitmotif of the Cold War. A further milestone in this geopolitical representation was the domino theory that was announced by US president Eisenhower on 7 April 1954. It said that if one state falls, that is, it becomes communist, the neighbor states will also fall – like domino stones. Regarding, for example, the inner conflicts of Southeast Asia that meant: if South Vietnam becomes communist the neighboring states will become communist too. "Like apples in a barrel infected by one rotten one, the corruption of Greece would infect Iran and all to the east. It would also carry infection to Africa through Asia Minor and Egypt, and to Europe through Italy and France, already threatened by the strongest domestic Communist parties in Western Europe."

The politics of containment of the immediate post-war years formed, however, no consistent structure of

argumentation. It much more oscillated between different axes of argumentation. One scenario for the conflict considered the power struggle between the USA and the Soviet Union to be ended only at the level of international confrontation. The other argumentation assumed that sooner or later the Soviet system would erode internally so that in the political power struggles in Moscow those would win whose will for peace would lead to a quasi-self-containment of the Soviet expansionism. The perspective mentioned first implies that the own security and the security of the West as a whole depends completely on the USA, decisively and actively containing the Soviet Union mainly within the NATO alliance; the second perspective prefers solutions that give global security over to collective institutions like the United Nations in order to prevent history-based fears of Soviet threat. These two argumentations might be quite different contentwise; at the level of geopolitical representation, however, they both support the underlying binary worldview of ideological bloc-confrontation and the inherent blaming of the 'other'.

From a post-structuralist perspective it can be said that the geopolitical representation of the Cold War was successful because it could be connected to from both ends.

Historically ... the Cold War served the interests of both the USSR and the United States. For this reason neither sought to alter the nature of the relationship once it had been established. Their goal, therefore, was not so much victory over the other as the maintenance of balance. In this sense the Cold War was ... a carefully controlled game. (Cox 1990, cit. in Ó Tuathail/Dalby, 1998: S. 51f.)

The 1970s marked in many ways the turning point in international relations. Nixon's and Kissinger's geopolitical imaginations of the 'grand design' was the conceptual consequence of the developments since the beginning of the 1960s (mainly the war in Vietnam) which had not necessarily diminished the power of the US but had made its application in a more and more diversified world much more difficult. Kissinger called it the return to politics of realism and thus a policy closely oriented to the putative political facts and realities. Along with that the ideological discourses of American–Soviet power struggle were reduced whereas the geodeterminist framings were enhanced (referring to e.g., natural resources, economic potentials, and the geographical position).

The Pluralization of Geopolitical Representation after the End of the Cold War

With the end of the Cold War the geopolitical representation of a world of ideological blocs and iron curtains fell apart. Facing new processes of regional fragmentation

within a global network society, this imagination faded away within just a couple of years. New patterns of power on a global scale demanded for new interpretations, new geopolitical representations to deliver a frame for the ongoing transformations, worldwide conflicts and wars of the 1990s, and the new millennium (see Figure 2). Against this backdrop it is not surprising that, already in the early 1990s, a series of new geopolitical narratives began to appear. All of them claimed to offer plausible discursive framings for changing global constellations of power. They did not only arise from the classical field of IR sciences (see below). Among them were, for example, geoeconomic narratives, which the politicians of Western industrial nations and transnational organizations sometimes used to frame neocolonial policy. However, those kinds of arguments still did not lead to a stand-alone geopolitical regionalization on a global scale. This particular discourse rather goes along with established dichotomies with roots in colonial history and the debate on developing countries, that is, spatial dichotomies such as North versus South or developed versus less-developed countries, etc. A similarly implicit kind of global geopolitics came at the beginning of the 1990s in the form of an effort to substitute 'geoeconomics' for geopolitics. According to Luttwak, political conflicts were more and more fought with economic weapons in this era of increasing (mainly economic) globalization. Visions of a network society, including new forms of global governance, were challenging the traditional relationship of politics and space, especially the role of the nation-state in international relations.

The deployment of such alternative discourses changed due to the conflicts and wars of the last decade. Since

then new geopolitical framings developing during the beginning of the 1990s have been on an upswing in both politics and the media. To bring the recent master frames of these 'politics of geopolitics' into some kind of perspective, one might work out two lines of argumentation that can be separated only for academic purposes and that interact in the current geopolitical discourses in various ways: (1) the geopolitics of cultural difference, fragmentation, and conflict; and (2) the geopolitics of universalism and hegemonic superpower.

The Geopolitics of Cultural Difference, Fragmentation, and Conflict

In the aftermath of September 11 the discourse of a 'clash of civilizations', which had already been promulgated by Huntington in 1993 and immediately used by himself to discursively frame the Balkan Wars, appeared ubiquitously in the media and public opinion. Even though many politicians sought to emphasize repeatedly that the events did not represent a clash of civilizations, they still reified the basic idea of a geopolitics of cultural difference. Huntington was not solely responsible for this. He only gave new life to an underlying discourse of cultural difference that had developed over more than two centuries. Huntington updated the discursive mapping of the self and the other from the perspective of the 'modern' West. These representations had their roots in historic geographical imaginations of power such as Ritter's 'Gang der Kulturen über die Erde', Kolb's 'Kulturrteile', and the Orientalism discourse, which has been a central focus of Western thought at least since the era of colonialism. As Ó Tuathail (1996) so aptly sums it up: "Huntington's thesis is not about the clash of

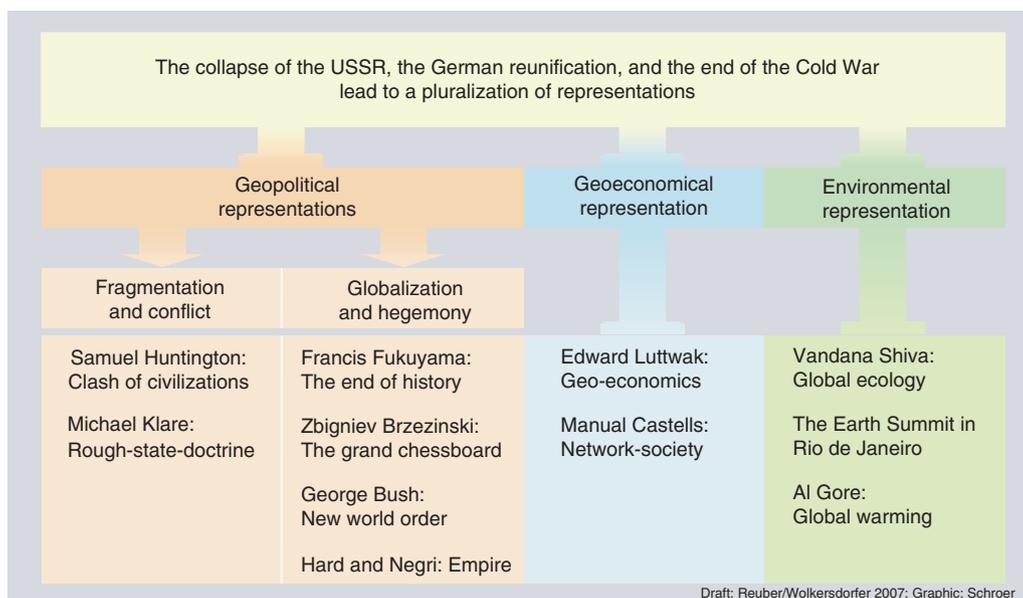


Figure 2 Different geopolitical discourses after the end of the Cold War. Modified from Reuber & Wolkersdorfer, 2004.

civilizations. It is about making global politics a clash of civilizations.”

The Geopolitics of Universalism and Hegemonic Superpower

The second major geopolitical narrative of the post-Cold War era serves the imagination of a new hegemon, the ‘only superpower USA’: Francis Fukuyama’s thesis of *The End of History* at first glance does not seem to aim for a geopolitical segmentation of the world after the Cold War. Nonetheless, it still has distinct geopolitical implications. Fukuyama believes that we are entering an era characterized by “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” Fukuyama or ‘George W. Bush’s Aristotle’ (a headline of the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*) represents the USA as the ultimate democratic state. His ideas are informed by a reductionist interpretation of Hegel’s idealistic philosophy of the end of history. This construction, in all its simplicity, marks the beginning of a geopolitical narrative that helps to pave the way for a new discourse of American hegemony after the end of the Cold War. Even if the ‘end of history’ thesis does not mark the beginning of geography in geopolitical discourse, it still contains an underlying geopolitical narrative which is only a short step away from the Bush (Sr.) doctrine in the first Gulf

War, and still continues in the geopolitical representations and mappings of US foreign policy after 9/11 (Figures 3 and 4).

The New Spatial Organization of Power in Geopolitical Representations after 9/11

The attacks on New York and Washington formed the ‘discursive event’ in the face of which the emerging geopolitical representations rose to prominence. At the same time these events may be regarded as a shift in the geopolitical representations of power. For the first time the traditional order of ‘modernity’ (the Westphalian system of territorially defined nation-states) was challenged by an enemy, who was organized (and acting) according to the principles of network societies. In response to September 11, politics and the media have impressively shown how difficult (if not impossible) it was to comment on and to react to the attacks beyond the spatial framings and representations established in traditional geopolitical discourses. Thus, the narration about the conflict had to be (and was) partly reframed as a ‘war between nation-states’. This was indispensable since, to quote Dalby, (2003) “the modern geopolitical reasoning ... operate(s) in terms of a political ontology of states.” In this respect, soon and once again the nation-state became the most important symbol framing

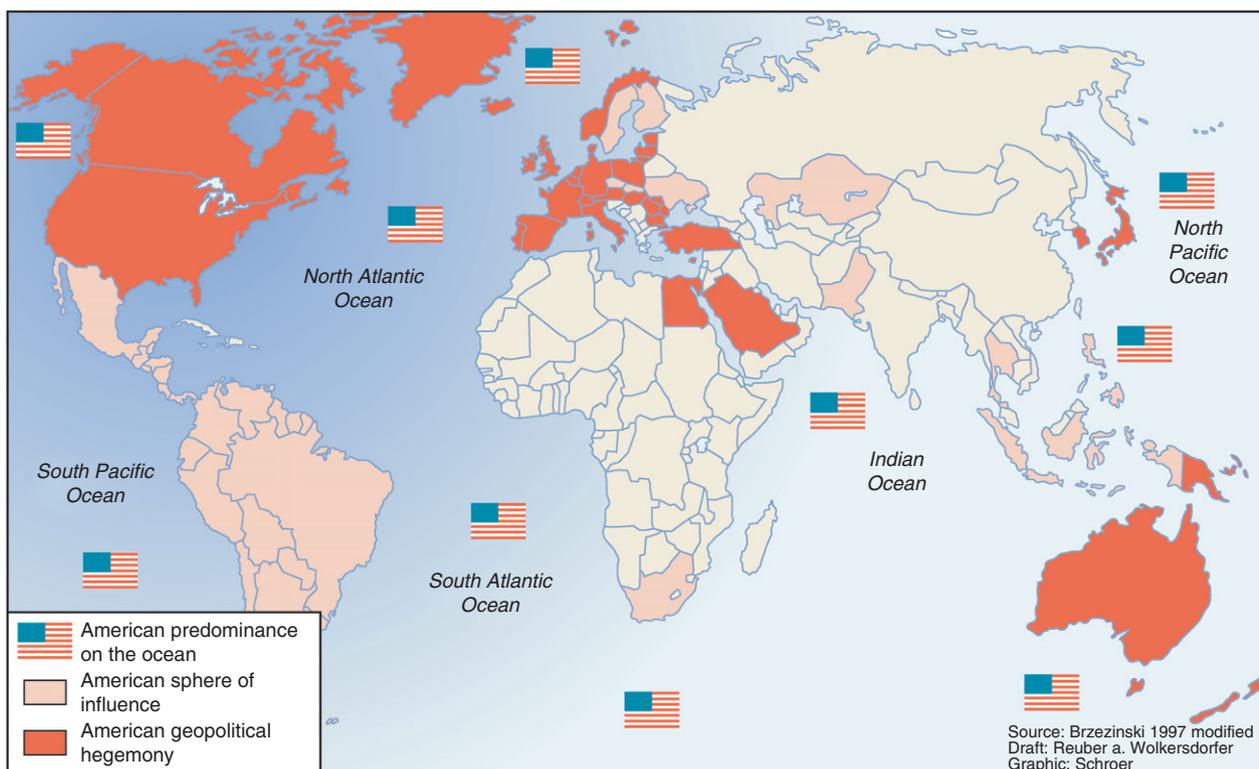


Figure 3 Geopolitical representations of intellectuals of statecraft: Brzezinski’s only superpower. Modified from Reuber & Wolkersdorfer, 2004.

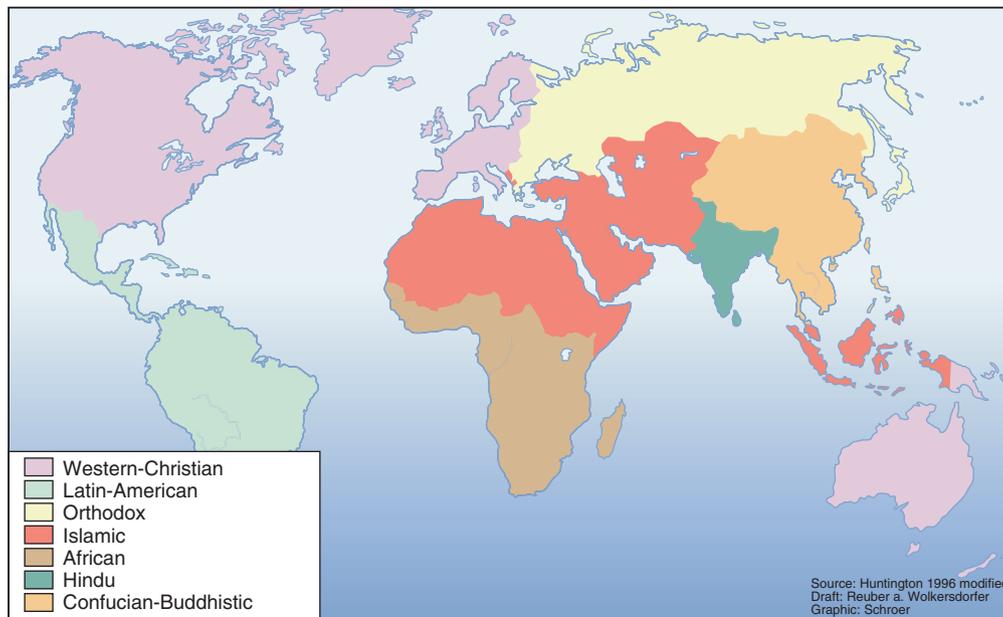


Figure 4 Geopolitical representations of intellectuals of statecraft: Huntington's clash of civilizations. Modified from Reuber & Wolkersdorfer, 2004.

political reactions as well as the innumerable reports in the media. Since the attacks were understood as 'national' affront and 'attack on America' (as a nation) – and the proposed counter measure was the 'international coalition against terrorism', this refers to the 'nationalization' of the 'terrorist attacks' on World Trade Center and Pentagon.

The demand to 'localize' the Al Qaeda terrorist network led to the necessity to attach them to a place respectively; and Afghanistan was established as a first target hosting the enemy. This framing rests on geopolitical imaginations, which have been developed already during the last decade, for example, by the 'rogue state'-doctrine of Michael Klare, George Bush's (Sr.) 'axis of evil', or more general by the discourse about 'failed states' coming from IR think tanks in the USA. Thus, the new storyline of a global 'war against terrorism' turned incredibly fast into one of the most powerful doctrines of international geopolitics.

For this change the subtle interplay of the two above-mentioned geopolitical representations of hegemony (the only superpower) and fragmentation (the clash of civilizations) were particularly helpful. Both of them served as framings for the numerous speeches of politicians as well as reports and comments in the media. Most of them reified the underlying concept of a cultural fragmentation of the world deriving from that the necessity of a strong US leadership within a 'coalition of the willing'. Based on such an imagination the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq could be justified toward the world public more easily. However, Huntington's rhetoric of conflict

did not only fit into the discourses of Western military strategists and politicians but also into the saga of the holy war of the opposite side. Thus, the narrative of the clash of civilizations offered a discourse that also antagonists such as Osama Bin Laden would easily accept. To quote Agnew, "Bin Laden is the Samuel Huntington of the Arab world ... He is a prophet and organizer of inter-civilizational conflict. Bin Laden is the modern Arab geopolitician par excellence" (Agnew, 2001).

As parts of the currently circulating representations of fragmentation and hegemony even traditional elements of classic American geopolitical imaginations reoccur. This is reflected explicitly, for example, in Brzezinski's remarks on the USA's political and military engagement in Eurasia. He suggests that in order to reduce the danger of the USA being on the geopolitical rim their troops always have to be stationed on the borders of the Eurasian hinterland in case of a conflict. Brzezinski calls Eurasia the grand chessboard and thus the region where a potential competitor of the USA for the world power might grow up. In his opinion, the priority of an American geo-strategy must be to support their geopolitical interests in Eurasia. Brzezinski's reasonings contain elements of geopolitical imaginations that were developed in the middle of the last century. In particular, Nicholas Spykman argued already in 1944 that the coastal areas of Eurasia or the 'rimland' (as he called it) are the key to control the center. With such a concept he updated the British geographer and geopolitician Halford Mackinder. To some extent, therefore, the geopolitical

representation of Mackinder serves as a persistent blueprint of the foreign policy of the USA: Who rules Eastern Europe – so this imagination – rules Central Asia, and who rules Central Asia rules Eurasia, and who rules Eurasia rules the world.

The Pentagon's New Map

Geopolitical representations like the ones mentioned above are, of course, not the end of all storylines. Due to the changing circumstances in IR at the beginning of the new millennium another couple of them entered the scene. To pick out just one of them, Thomas Barnett's geopolitics of 'core and gap' shall be discussed just in its very general terms in order to show some similarities and differences to the framings above. Thomas P.M. Barnett, professor at the US Naval War College and after September 2001 a close advisor of US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, has designed a 'new world map of the Pentagon' (Figure 5). It has been published in the *Esquire*, March 2003, and in different journals of political science and has called a lot of attention among advisors. In Barnett's representation, the war against Iraq marks geopolitically a kind of historical turning point – the moment when Washington 'really' takes over its role as a guardian of the strategic security in the age of globalization. Barnett's simplistic geopolitical world order is: regions with stable governments and a high standard

of living often are, at the same time, well connected within the globalized network society where democracy, liberal media, civil security, and human rights protection are part of the basic normative assumptions of society. These parts of the world he calls the 'functioning core'.

In opposite, regions that are hardly touched by globalization and suffer from repressive regimes with widespread poverty and diseases and – most important in Barnett's opinion – with chronic conflicts in which the coming generation of global terrorists is brought up, he calls the 'arc of instability'.

Barnett isolates his geopolitical representation in both a simple and radical way: he draws a line around the majority of US military interventions abroad, and by this he maps the 'nonintegrating gap'. Obviously, there are outliers excluded geographically by this simple approach, such as Israel isolated in the 'gap', a North Korea adrift within the 'core', or a Philippines straddling the line. Looking at this mode of representation, it is hard to deny the hidden logic behind the picture: If a country is either losing out to globalization or rejecting much of the content flows associated with its advance, so the implicit message of Barnett's suggestions, there is a far greater chance that the US will end up sending forces at some point. Conversely, if a country is largely functioning within globalization, it tends not to have US forces sent

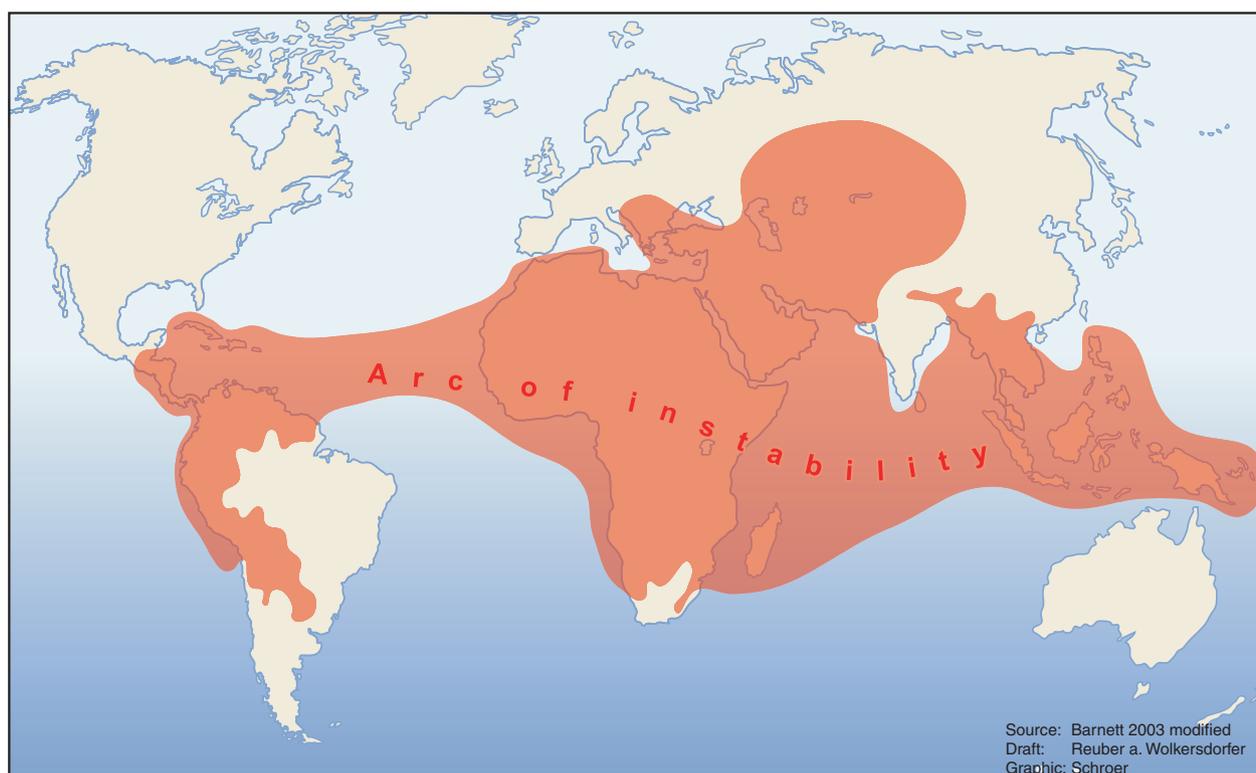


Figure 5 Geopolitical representations of intellectuals of statecraft: Barnett's Pentagon's new map. Modified from Reuber & Wolkersdorfer, 2004.

there to restore order and to eradicate threats. The scientist was selected as the 'strategist of the year' in 2003 by the magazine *Esquire*.

See also: Cold War; Critical Geopolitics; Discourse Analysis; Foucauldianism; Hegemony; Imperialistic Geographies; Political Geography; Poststructuralism/Poststructuralist Geographies.

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