

PEACE AND GEOPOLITICS: IMAGINING PEACEFUL GEOGRAPHIES

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"Only the dead are safe; only the dead have seen the end of war." George Santayana

PEACE, WAR AND GEOPOLITICS

This depressing epigraph, frequently erroneously attributed to Plato notably by Ridley Scott in his cinematic rendition of "Black Hawk Down", implies that war is a perpetual part of the human condition. It implies the futility of arguments for peace while invoking the tragedy of human organised violence that structures much of what has become called realist international relations scholarship. But the backdrop of Black Hawk Down was a failed humanitarian intervention, albeit one that took on imperial overtones rather quickly despite its efforts at peace-making (Dalby 2008). Now in 2011 as famine and violence once again plague the region, the relationships of war to insecurity, and the failures of American counter-terrorism policies to resolve many issues once again put the spotlight on this place. In doing so numerous questions of geopolitics are intertwined with matters of peace, the responsibility to protect, humanitarian interventions and reinvented banditry in contemporary times.

This paper suggests this focus on war and violence has to be read against rapidly shifting geographies and the recent general trend of reduced violence in human affairs. Whether this is the promise of the liberal peace, a transitory imperial pax, something more fundamental in human affairs, or a temporary historical blip remains to be seen, but substantial empirical analyses do suggest that violence is declining (Human Security Report 2011). This stands in stark contrast to realist assertions of war as the human condition as well as to repeated warnings about the supposed dangers to international order of rising Asian powers. Likewise the remilitarization of Anglo-Saxon culture since 9/11 has suggested that warring is a routine part of modern life. But the nature of war has changed in some important ways even if contemporary imperial adventures in peripheral places look all too familiar to historians. Peace, all this crucially implies, is a matter of social processes, not a final Telos, a resolution of the tensions of human life, nor a utopia

that will arrive sometime. In Christian terms the aspirational “Kingdom of God” is a work in progress.

Nick Megoran (2011) in particular has suggested that the geography discipline needs to think much more carefully about peace making and the possibilities of non-violence as modes of political action. The key question is focused on in the Megoran’s pointed refusal to accept the simplistic dismissal of the efficacy of non-violence given the obvious prevalence of violence. The point of his argument is that non-violence is a political strategy in part to respond to violence, to initiate political actions in ways that are not hostage to the use of force. In doing so, especially in his discussion of resistance to Nazi policies in Germany during the war, Megoran (2011) underplays the important points about legitimacy as part of politics, and likewise hints at the important contrast between non-violence as a strategic mode of political action. Implied here is that while war may be politics by other means, to gloss the classic Clausewitzian formulation, non-violence is politics too. But politics plays in the larger geopolitical context, and this must not be forgotten in deliberations concerning the possible new initiatives geographers might take in thinking carefully about disciplinary contributions to peace research and practice.

Contemporary social theory might point to Michel Foucault, and the argument drawn from his writings that politics is the extension of war rather than the other way round. Given the interest in biopolitics and geogovernance within the discipline these matters are obviously relevant but the connection to peace needs to be thought carefully beyond formulations that simply assume it as the opposite of wars (Morrissey 2011). This is especially the case given the changing modes of contemporary warfare and the advocacy of violence as an appropriate policy in present circumstances. The modes of warfare at the heart of liberalism suggest that the security of what Reid and Dillon (2009) call the biohuman, the liberal consuming subject, involves a violent series of practices designed to pacify the world by the elimination of political alternatives. The tension here suggests an imperial peace, a forceful imposition of a state of non-war. In George W. Bush’s terms justifying the war on terror, a long struggle to eliminate tyranny (Dalby 2009a). Peace is, in this geopolitical understanding, what comes after the elimination of opposition. In late 2011 such formulations dominated discussions of the death of Colonel Gaddafi in Libya.

The dramatic transformation of human affairs in the last couple of generations do require that would-be peaceful geographers look both to the importance of non-violence and simultaneously to how global transformations are changing the landscape of violence and social change, all of it still under the threat of nuclear devastation should major inter-state war occur once again. The re-emergence of non-violence as an explicit political strategy, and in particular the use of Gene Sharp’s (1973) ideas of non-violent direct action in recent events pose these questions very pointedly. Geographers have much to offer in such re-thinking that may yet play their part in a more global understanding of how interconnected our fates are becoming and how inappropriate national state boundaries are as the premise for political action in a rapidly changing biosphere.

But to do so some hard thinking is needed on geopolitics, and on how it works as well as how peace-full scholarship might foster that which it desires. Linking the practical actions of non-violence from Tahrir Square to those of the Occupy Wall Street actions, underway as the first draft of this paper was keyboarded, requires that we think very carefully about the practices that now are designated in terms of globalization. Not all this is novel, but the geopolitical scene is shifting in ways that need to be incorporated into the new thinking within geography about war, peace, violence and what the discipline might have to say about, and contribute to, non-violence as well as to contestations of contemporary lawfare (Gregory 2006).

Whether the delegitimization of violence as a mode of rule will be extended further in coming decades is one of the big questions facing peace researchers. The American reaction to 9/11 set things back dramatically, an opportunity to respond in terms of response to a crime and diplomacy was squandered, but the wider social refusal to accept repression and violence as appropriate modes of rule has interesting potential to constrain the use of military force. The professionalization of many high technology militaries also reduces their inclination to involve themselves in repressing social movements, although here Mikhail Gorbachev's refusal to use the Red Army against dissidents in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s remains emblematic of the changes norms of acceptable rule that have been extended in the last few generations.

A geography discipline seriously interested in peace needs to link the social processes on the relatively small scale such as the non-violent protests Megoran (2011) highlights, and the peaceful accompaniment actions that Koopman (2011) documents, to the larger geopolitical transformations of our times, to make the eminently geographical point that peace activities vary widely from place to place, but now are an important part of larger contemporary geopolitical transformations.

GEOPOLITICS IN HISTORY

Geopolitics has mostly been about rivalries between great powers and their contestations of power on the large scale. These specifications of the political world focus on states and the perpetuation of threats mapped as external dangers to supposedly pacific polities. Much geopolitical discourse specifies the world as a dangerous place, hence precisely because of these mappings, one supposedly necessitating violence in what passes for a realist interpretation of great powers as the prime movers of history (Mearsheimer 2001). Geopolitical thinking is about order and order is in part a cartographic notion. Juliet Fall (2010) once again emphasizes the importance of taken for granted boundaries as the ontological given of contemporary politics. Politics is about the cartographic control of territories, as Megoran (2011) too ponders regarding the first half of the twentieth century, but it also about much more than this, despite the fascination that so many commentators have with the ideal form of the supposedly national territorial state. Part of what geographers bring to the discussion of peace is a more nuanced geographical imagination than that found in so much of international studies (Dalby 2011a).

On the other hand much of the discussion of peace sees war as the problem, peace as the solution. Implied in that is geopolitics as the problem, mapping dangers turns out to be a dangerous enterprise insofar as it facilitates the perpetuation of violence by representing other places as threats to which our place is susceptible. But this only matters if this is related to the realist assumptions of the inevitability of rivalry, the eternal search for power as key to humanity's self-organisation and the assumption that organized violence is the ultimate arbiter (Dalby 2010). Critical geopolitics is about challenging such contextualizations, and as such its relationships to peace would seem to be obvious, albeit as Megoran (2011) notes mostly by way of a focus on what Galtung (1969, 1971) calls negative peace. Given the repeated reinvention of colonial tropes in contemporary Western political discourse such critique remains an essential part of a political geography that grants peoples "the courtesy of political geography" (Mitchell and Smith 1991). Undercutting the moral logics of violence, so frequently relying on simplistic invocations of geographical inevitability, to structure their apologetics, remains a crucial contribution.

Both the practical matters of recent history and the scholarly contributions by geographers do not allow simple binary distinctions of peace and war to be used as the premise of either scholarship or political practice. History and scholarship suggest rather that peace is what comes after war; the relationship is temporal, stages in matters of violence, geography and reorganizing facts on the ground. Historically in the era of European warfare, coincident with the rise of modernity, that many people hope is now near its end, peace was that which was imposed by the victors, who in turn were the most powerful in whatever contest was followed by a "peace". Much recent geographical scholarship suggests that post conflict re-construction is a mode of peace building literally (Kirsch and Flint 2011). But those of us who would challenge war as a human institution, or think about non-violence as a strategy for a better world, will not be satisfied with a geography that is concerned only to pick up the pieces and reconfigure them after they have been shattered by the latest round of organized violence.

The key points are that reconstruction is a violent transformation of society, a world where frequently neo-liberal globalization is seen as the imposition of social forms that will not resist its logics. Hence peace is what victors impose, an imperial peace that may eventually be quite welcome to those who benefit from the new arrangements. Is peace then post-war? Perhaps it can be understood in these terms. But the corollary is the equally important point that peace is also frequently what comes before the next war. The normal human situation these days is a matter of non-war, but it is far from clear where security is enforced that this is more than a limited form of negative peace. Without large-scale de-militarization then peace is just what happens between wars. But given this then one additional key point that geographers interested in war need to pay attention to is the matter of how peace fails, how conflict escalates and how geography matters in these processes (Flint et al 2009). Peacekeeping is frequently about geographical separation as the Orwellian names for contemporary walls in terms of lines of peace have it. But there is much more geographical thinking to be done about these matters and the scales of interactions across supposedly peaceful borders, not least where what matters most is state security and its ordering principles rather than local interactions across

frontiers. This is so not least because of the marked current trend to build fences around states as the supposed solution to numerous security challenges (Jones 2011).

Putting matters into historical context also suggests that war is not what it used to be, at least not after the events of the 1940s. Negative peace is about preventing conflict; non-violence is about political strategies to delegitimise violence, to challenge the human norms of behavior that allow cultures of violence. It is important to link this to the issues of what are now called lawfare (Morrissey 2011), the use of law as power and coercion to set the rules of social and political life too. This has been a key part of the US strategy for a long time; shaping institutions to the benefit of the US economy as been what much of international relations has been about, but the larger benefits of constraining conflict are part of the larger process that international law struggles to legitimize. Rules of conduct matter in the international system and the wide-scale repudiation of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 demonstrated this point clearly.

The United Nations effectively made war illegal although the number of ways round that formal restriction has been considerable. War departments were renamed defence departments the world over, and policing, surveillance, spying as well as military action became increasingly reconfigured in terms of security. The United Nations executive committee however was named the Security Council not the Peace Council, and the rhetoric ever since has suggested that peace has to be conjoined with security, with the latter not the former paramount. Apparently peace without security isn't worth bothering about. It's peace *and* security. Which suggests that war is perhaps the opposite of security as well as of peace. But perhaps security is to be contrasted to violence instead? All of which requires careful conceptual thinking about the current geopolitical borders.

Crucial, but unremarked upon by many political geographers, is the simple fact that there is now widespread agreement that borders between states are fixed finally (Zacher 2001). Demarcation disputes, and no doubt some very interesting arguments about changing coastal boundaries as sea levels rise in coming decades will continue, but the territorial fixity assumption has changed one fundamental facet of warfare between states. Given the importance of territorial disputes historically as a cause of wars this point is important. So too is the finding that it matters greatly how these disputes are handled. Treated as "realist" matters of power politics territorial matters are more likely to lead to war than if diplomacy and conflict resolution are taken seriously (Vasquez and Henahan 2011).

The exceptions here do seem to prove the rule: Palestine and Kashmir are two flashpoints where attempts to move borders, or at least the refusal to accept their imposition, are key to continued violence. Fixing geographical borders removes one major historical cause of interstate warfare. Territorial aggrandizement is now mostly a thing of the past, as the reconstruction of Bosnia and the refusal to change antecedent boundaries illustrates, albeit very painfully. The title of Gearoid O'Tuathail and Carl Dahlman's (2011) book is Bosnia Remade, not Bosnia Removed, and that matters in terms of how politics is now literally mapped. This norm matters greatly and the importance of agreement on frontiers

and their delimitation tragically continues in the southern areas of what until recently was the singular state of Sudan in particular.

CONTEMPORARY GEOPOLITICAL CHANGES

While there is optimism over the territorial covenant on both the small scale and the very large scale the fixity of boundaries has not prevented either the violence of what Mary Kaldor (2006) called the new wars after the cold war, nor imperial adventures by the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and other metropolitan states. Indeed looking at the macro-scale patterns of imperial power the question is whether current Middle East warring is but the latest phase of “Anglosphere” imperial violence (Megoran 2009). Robert Fisk's (2006) subtitle to his huge book on the region is blunt in posing the matter as the conquest of the Middle East. Understanding the United States and the United Kingdom, with various settler colonies as extensions of an Anglosphere suggests only that the patterns of conquest, and indirect but violent rule have shifted to another region of the planet, from North America in the eighteenth century to South Asia and then Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, finally now the pattern is extended to the Middle East in the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first century. This shifting pattern of Anglosphere violence is the updated logic of Kevin Phillips (1997) argument about the *Cousin's Wars* as key to the rise of British and subsequently American power. Thus focusing on the specific geographies of the war on terror is a useful antidote to the hugely exaggerated claims of Islamic threats as a global phenomenon invoking the need for an American lead world war (Podhoretz 2007).

But elsewhere violence has followed resources, at least to the sources of valuable ones and oil in particular (Le Billon and Cervantes 2009). Mary Kaldor's (2006) analysis of the new wars suggests both that globalization matters in terms of the patterns of connection that fuel and fund violence, and also in that the role of political violence is often about control of population and economic assets rather than a matter of territorial control. Militias and gangs, as well as would be micro-nationalists are not the warring entities of nation states in violent competition invading each other's territories; they are more diffuse arrangements, something more analogous to medieval geographies rather than the violent interactions of discrete clearly demarcated modern states. This is not unrelated to the imposition of the cartography of the territorial covenant, even if it has generated whole new categories of geopolitics, of ungoverned areas and regional peripheral regions where violence persists, and drones, interventions and mercenaries are commonplace.

Over the last few decades the potential for major power warfare seems to have lessened, whatever about great power interventions in peripheral places. The global economy has, of late, required much greater cooperation between political elites. The looming crises of climate change that make unilateral action less efficacious, suggest the possibilities of less confrontational assumptions as the premise in geopolitics. While resource wars get headlines, much of environmental politics is about cooperation and treaty-making rather than warfare (Dinar 2011). Much of the contemporary violence that grabs the attention of headline writers is matters of conflict, competition and rivalry but it is not the classical

war Clausewitz pointed to as the contest between two autonomous combatants in a struggle of wills fought until one forces the other to concede. Much of this might fit into his categories of small wars, but that in itself is significant if it supports the contention that great powers have given up the use of major war, if not police actions, as policy.

Simultaneously the rapid changes in military technology have changed the nature of potential warfare between great powers and the kind of violence they unleash in peripheral regions. Nuclear weapons add a great complication to calculations of violence, and the ability of intercontinental range weapons to strike rapidly adds to the difficulty of thinking through the possible scenarios for successful military action. This technology has been key to the recent revolution in military affairs (Dalby 2009a). The industrial powers now need capital and technology much more than they do military manpower to make war and this too has changed both the incentives to use violence and the costs of doing so. Drone wars are effectively casualty avoidance exercises for those who have drones. Cyber wars, if in fact the general bad behaviour, espionage and hacking that so troubles contemporary security thinkers is understood as war (Deibert and Rohozinski 2010), have neither territory nor physical combat at all. Hence they simply don't meet the standard social science definitions of war as a situation involving one thousand battle casualties within a year. Is this war or something else?

Over the last few decades, despite the re-militarization of American, British and much of the rest of the Anglosphere's political culture, in the name of homeland security and related themes, the long-term trend to reduction of violence seems to be holding (Human Security Report 2005). Another serious war in South West Asia may yet upset this trend, especially if Saudi Arabia and Iran come to blows and Israel and the USA get involved. The petroleum infrastructure in the region that literally fuels globalization would, in those circumstances be targeted, and the global economy disrupted; such is the current Iranian mode of deterrence. If states operate in narrow self-interest in response rather than in a collaborative way to deal with the disruptions all sorts of confrontations are possible. Narrow notions of national security may trump broader notions of peace, never mind regional or global security. If this happens all the dangers of escalation as states find themselves in position that force them to choose sides in a polarising situation may play out in the complex conflict space of another war (Flint et.al 2009).

PEACE AND SECURITY

Nick Megoran conjoins war "and" peace in his response to Derek Gregory's (2010) paper on War and Peace. But to think through the possible meanings of peace these days, and how geographers might make a useful contribution it seems that it is also necessary to think about peace *and* security. To do so requires tackling the dominant practices of legitimization that constructed huge infrastructures of "security" in the last century. Surveillance and spying aren't new, but the massive bureaucracies that now police political order in the West, justified in terms of the war on terror, now that communism has ceased to be an obviously threatening geopolitical phenomenon, are supposedly about maintaining peace and safety, and doing so by ensuring that the present political economy is maintained. Order is being secured in all this. If that requires repression, a matter or

emergency measures justified in terms of national security, then so be it. Security trumps democracy, order is, as Hedley Bull (1977) used to remind his readers, prior to justice. The major concern in terms of the infringements of the liberties of at least Western populations has been the grounds for intense legal contestations, most notably of Guantanamo (Gregory 2006), but elsewhere too, a matter that relates once again to authority and legitimacy as key to politics, a matter of lawfare in many places, but one that is crucial to arguments for non-violent direct action.

The militarization of responses to protests at international summit meetings in the 1990s raised the spectre of police states beyond the control of legal proceedings, but in the process challenged the legitimacy of many state practices. Finding appropriate venues to argue back against the injustices of the present is precisely the genius in the slogan of “Occupy Wall Street” and the related application of the principles of non-violence to make the political point concerning whose side the security forces actually are on. The Egyptian military finessed the point rather well in Cairo early in 2011; maintaining control while refusing to use violence against the protestors in Tahrir square.

The protestors in the Occupy Wall Street movement pushed matters of gross inequality, and the consequences of the present capitalist system squarely onto the agenda, raising the issue of peaceful protest, and likewise posing the persistent questions as to whence the source of violence in present political arrangements where officers of financial institutions make millions of dollars off derivative trading and dubious mortgages apparently immune from the disastrous consequences such things have for the lives of millions of people. This is now posing Johan Galtung’s (1969, 1971) questions about structural violence and its geographies rather pointedly and tying the discussion once again to what it is that is being secured if only a negative peace is considered important.

These issues are nearly impossible to consider without a discussion within Western states about the human security agenda. The aftermath of the cold war brought about a much wider debate concerning security, and the needs of many impoverished peoples for the provision of basic modes of security to allow development to happen. Codified in the 1994 UN Human Development program report, the human security agenda subsequently became tied into the Responsibility to Protect discussion notions of humanitarian intervention gained fairly widespread credence in international politics (Kaldor 2007). Tied into this is a series of arguments about warfare and intervention that frequently suggest that the only possible form of political order that is acceptable is a liberal one, populated by the biohuman consumer that has to be secured if peace is to reign (Dillon and Reid 2009).

More recently human security principles have been once again brought into disrepute by the cavalier use of it as justification for the bombing campaign to force regime change in Libya. The ostensible rationale for intervention was population protection, but effectively, as was done in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s NATO provided rebels with an airforce that greatly enhanced their capabilities. Law and lawfare need to be thought together if we are to link power and order on the biggest scale but this needs to confront the relationships of peace *and* security too (Morrissey 2011). This is necessary precisely

because there are important geographies to who is secure where and how decisions to “intervene” there are made by people here. Human security apparently requires interventions in some places and not others. Nowhere in the official documents is it seriously contemplated that Southern actors might “intervene” in the metropolises to ensure the safety of Southern populations in the face of climate change or other environmental dangers generated mostly in the North (Dalby 2009b).

All of this requires a geographical imagination that links something along the lines of John Agnew’s (2009) formulation of regimes of globalization where some rules apply, and only some boundaries apply some of the time in a very unequal global political economy, to Stuart Elden’s (2009) notions of contingent sovereignty, where effectively external powers decide when the normal rules of territorial integrity don’t apply and “interventions” are justified. Note that these interventions don’t change frontiers, they just suspend sovereignty until such time as the rulers judged to be no longer acceptable are replaced by more congenial figures, following which formal sovereignty is reasserted. If peacemaking is the replacement of regimes that are not enthusiastic supporters of the neo-liberal order of our times, then this looks more like imperialism than anything else, however much the pacification of peripheral polities may be justified in terms of the responsibility to protect.

Security for whom remains the key question, but nuancing it with security precisely where will undoubtedly help analysis in coming years. Key to this is focusing the militarization of security and the assumptions that force rather than negotiation and larger cultures of political engagement are most important in security provision. Challenging this assumption remains a key intellectual task, although one made easier recently for geographers where empirical work suggests both that peaceful strategies work best in dealing with territorial issues (Vasquez and Henehan 2011) as too with resource and environmental matters (Dinar 2011).

MILITARIZATION AND POPULAR GEOPOLITICS

In the Anglosphere in particular, although elsewhere too, the war on terror facilitated the militarization of many things and the incorporation of many political questions into the language and practices of security. This has spilled over into numerous matters of popular culture and in the process generated a rapidly growing literature within geography concerning popular geopolitics and the securitization of everyday life (Ingram and Dodds 2009) as well as revisiting the complicated matters of citizenship, territory and military violence (Cowen and Gilbert 2008). While cultural critique of the militarist assumptions informing contemporary citizenship and the formulation of endangered identities are part of the geographer’s task these days, what matters is how these themes are integrated into practices of peace, and peacemaking. How they are is a matter for empirical examination in particular places.

Ridiculing the simplistic invocations of identity, the violent tropes of xenophobia, and the representations of supposedly threatening others, as much of the popular geopolitics literature does these days (Dittmer 2010) is useful insofar as it undercuts the logics used

in mobilizing for war or the use of political violence, but the difficulty in this literature lies in the undoubted dangers of being seduced by the simple pleasures of movie criticism and in the process losing track of the political purpose of critique. Popular geopolitics this maybe but the links to critical geopolitics are tenuous at best without the key linkages with the larger matters of securitization and the implicit geographies of violence. Challenging the tropes of war and the rush to impose political solutions can be usefully done by making the connections between cultural activities and the formulation of dangerous places in need of virtuous violence. In so far as popular culture provides the political vocabulary to argue back against calls to securitize all manner of supposed threats this matters both as geographical scholarship and practical politics.

The discussions of popular geopolitics may have much to offer if the analyses are extended to popular representations of resistance to militarization. The movie *Avatar* works to challenge the identities of those caught up in the expropriation of resources from the peripheral areas of global commerce, but falls back on tropes of redemptive violence in the final denouement. It is precisely this return to violence that makes such efforts at resistance a reinvention of war. Undercutting this tendency is key to peacemaking, and has to be a matter for geographers trying to understand the complex relations between peace and place, and how these can be reinforced by practical actions, whether it is to insist on the possibilities of international agreements and international law as the arbiter of many things, or to engage in the practical matters of accompaniment and bearing witness to the violence used by the rich and powerful to maintain their privileges.

Related to this is the matter of confronting warrior identities. In so far as heroic masculinity has been part of the re-militarisation of the war on terror, it has worked to emphasize themes of a world in need of virtuous violence. But as that war winds down and the ongoing occupation of Afghanistan and withdrawal from Iraq proceed the sense of that world as dangerous is once again being challenged by larger humanitarian concerns that make the figure of the warrior much more complicated (Dalby 2008). Heroic masculinity is invoked in so many confrontations that this obviously needs to be tackled by geographers interested in linking the personal and the geopolitical. Here too it is precisely the refusal of such posturing and the rejection of the implicitly confrontational logic of competitive masculinity that non-violence as a political strategy emphasizes. Undercutting the social games of showing off, “*geltung*” in Wagner’s (1996) terminology, of assuming winners and losers, of politics as being first and foremost about winning, imposing will in contests in Clausewitzian terms, are all part of strategies designed to undercut the logics of violence that constitute war.

All this is also complicated by the fact that professional militaries in the Western states are increasingly a small social minority, one that frequently sees itself as under appreciated by a civilian population that thinks violence is uncivilized. On the other hand the professionalization of the military and the clear understanding that it is a technically specialist social organization, while frequently running up against long-standing military traditions, is also a casualty averse organization that now usually prides itself of technical proficiency rather than whole-scale slaughter as an appropriate *modus vivendi*. Extended into the rapid proliferation of robot weapons, only most obviously the aerial drones that

get most of the headline attention with their attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia, the technology of death now frequently too undermines the warrior culture (Singer 2009). How robots are figured in the logics of contemporary warfare matters; their peaceful possibilities needs attention too if we are to avoid Steve Graham's (2010) nightmare worlds of militarized urbanism in coming decades.

ASPIRATION, ANALYSIS AND ADVOCACY

Thinking intelligently about peace within the discipline of geography requires us to juxtapose our aspirations to a peaceful world, one beyond war and at least the most egregious injustices of structural violence, with careful analysis of how the world is being changed so that useful advocacy is possible. Contrary to arguments that construct a real world of politics separate from peace activism, one commonly formulated in terms of an autonomous realm of the international, the arguments from both critical international relations thinking as well as the early critical geopolitics discussions were precisely that the reasonings of politics are part of politics, and that thinking carefully about the ontological framings invoked in political discourse matter as part of the political world that constitutes the possible options for political actors.

The task for scholars in present times, as so often in the past has to be to keep aspiration, analysis and advocacy in creative tension; wishful thinking has to be avoided at each stage, but if intellectual activity is to be useful in making a more peaceful world then naivety is no help. Analysis can channel aspiration into useful advocacy precisely by acting as an antidote to either emotional impulse or thoughtless heroic gestures. It is crucial to the task of the academic and as such linking academic activity directly into practical action is simply part of our trade. Teaching matters greatly here, and careful advocacy of peaceful possibilities is key to teaching critical geopolitics. The scholarly research both on territory and war as well as discussions of environmental degradation and its security implications both show clearly that how these issues are handled matters greatly. Confrontation is not inevitable; political initiatives toward cooperation rather than real politik lead to constructive solutions. Continuing to challenge determinist arguments that argue otherwise remains a key task for geographers (Kearns 2009).

Delegitimization of violence is a key part of all this. Ending death penalties, reducing physical abuse, torture, Amnesty International campaigns and international solidarity in the face of suffering as well as extending the norms of politics and the appropriate cultural modes acceptable for ruling. It is precisely the failure of the US to live up to supposedly higher civilizational standards in Abu Graib, Guantanamo and now in the targeting of drone weapons that undermines its legitimacy in many places (Gregory 2010, Hannah 2006). Coupled with the great lengths to which the United States has gone to render its actions legitimate, and to avoid potential problems with the international criminal court, matters of legality offer considerable options for activist geographers to contribute to changing societal norms away from militarism. The links to critical legal geographies need further attention too; jurisdiction matters (Gregory 2006)!

The overall conclusion from this paper is that geographers should never forget that politics is prior to all the other discussions and understanding peace in the context of particular forms of politics is not unrelated to the forms of rule and authority invoked in particular situations. Contextualisations continue to matter greatly; there are complex geographies to all this. The world is changing rapidly but shaping that change is a matter of practical initiatives, and peacemaking. This simple point should never be forgotten neither should the opposite point that war may happen despite good intentions. No doubt in the next few years there will be further reflections on the processes that lead to the outbreak of the First World War, The Guns of August in Barbara Tuchman's (1962) famous terms, or what Niall Ferguson (2006) discusses in terms of metaphors of a train wreck. Building institutions that can negotiate and cooperate in the face of destabilizing crises events matters greatly, notwithstanding the popular animosity towards governments built up by a generation of neo-liberal ideology and right wing populist movements generously funded by those with an interest in turning states into the tools of capital.

In the face of endless neo-Malthusian fears of scarcities and disruptions to come, the possibilities of a more peaceful world remain achievable in many places. Challenging fearful cartographies, refusing the designation of difference and distance as necessarily dangerous has long been part of the geographers' potential contribution, as Nick Megoran reminds us all frequently with his repeated invocation of Peter Kropotkin's (1885) statement concerning what geography ought to be. Thinking long and hard about the diffusion of military technologies and the possible ways geographers might usefully contribute to the discussions of arms control, not least the key point about the implicit geopolitics in the supposedly technical arrangements of weapons limitation verifications matters too (Dalby 2011b). Arms control needs very much more attention.

Ultimately geopolitics is crucial in that if the dominant mappings of politics continue to specify the world in terms of territorial domains of rule in rivalry with one another, and with military force as the ultimate arbiter, then the possibilities of its use remain on the agenda. Realists will argue that this is inevitable. But if the pacification of international national, or perhaps that should be inter-imperial, relations that the United Nations system has begun, is extended then the possibilities of a pacific geopolitics open up. Now the challenge is to see new modes of rule that deal with the most important mappings of an interconnected globe where ecological matters require mappings of interconnection rather than borders of autonomous entities (Dalby 2009b).

Who decides the future of the planet matters greatly, but politics remains at least so far a matter of who decides long before it is a matter of what gets decided over. That too is a matter for peaceful geographers to tackle; the fate of the earth is at stake, and as a discipline with aspirations to study it as humanity's home, our attention is certainly warranted. In the circumstances of rapid global change and the potential disruptions that are coming, we now have additional compelling reasons to work towards making Santayana's dismal assertion concerning the inevitability of war a thing of the past.

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