

*Progress reports*

# Political geography III: dealing with deterritorialization

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Deterritorialization is the question for the end of this century (Paul Virilio, in Virilio and Lotringer, 1983: 142).

Powered by a poll-tested rhetoric of moderate centrism, Bill Clinton cruised to victory in the 1996 presidential election, leaving old-fashioned patriotism and scandal mongering in the dust. Clinton's 'bridge to the twenty-first century' and subsequent 'vital centre' themes, the latter echoing Schlesinger's (1949) codification of cold-war liberalism, were first vetted by focus-groups in malls all across America and subsequently deployed to capture the hearts and minds of 'soccer mom' suburbia (the demographic and lifestyle group considered key to the election by political pollsters and the media). The core message was optimism and faith in the technological future. Yet, anxieties about the wired nineties, technological and stress-inducing, were everywhere. In the hit movie of the year, News Corporation's *Independence day*, an emasculated America is despondent until aliens come along to blast the White House (ironically eliciting cheers in many cinemas) and toast a number of global cities and cold-war military bases. The Gulf war veteran president redeems his masculinity ('nuke 'em') as America takes charge of the world's counterattack. The independent first lady dies while another independent woman swoons as America's males rediscover their masculinity, independence and patriarchal destiny. Multicultural America learns to be all it can be as it embraces swaggering, cigar-puffing militarism (on films and masculinity in the USA, see Jeffords, 1989; 1994).

As a register of the anxieties provoked by sovereign-eroding globalization, patriarchal-deflating feminism and confusing postideological geopolitics, *Independence day* can perhaps be over-read. Nevertheless, its popular psychic structure reveals a nostalgia for the lost clarity, moral certainties and unambiguous enemies of the American imagination during the cold war. In the fast nineties, states, economics and identities appear less territorial than before, geopolitics and culture more complex and alien. No longer solidities and fixities grounded *in place*, forms of life look increasingly hybrid, flexible and *in transit*, 'moving at the speed of business' in the webs of the global economy and morphing online in cyberspace (Tapscott, 1996). Indeed, in our times and spaces, formlessness seems to be the fittest of forms (Bauman, 1995). Formations under the rule of speeding information are becoming flowmations (Luke and Ó Tuathail, 1998). Finding a

vital centre that holds in such a vertiginous and deterritorializing world is a transcendent yet vain quest.

In contemporary intellectual and anti-intellectual life these general tendencies find a wide variety of expressions: it is the problematic of globalization (Greider, 1996), Jihad versus McWorld (Barber, 1995), the clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1996), the discontent of democracy (Sandel, 1996), even the nation-dividing spectacle of the O.J. Simpson trials (Morrison and Brodsky Lacour, 1997). It finds expression in the geography and social science books published this year by established authors, many of which prove disappointing. Soja (1996) tackles the question of hybridizing identity in his elaboration of 'thirdspace' but his argumentation is thin. Harvey's (1996) work is a serious Marxist reading of the environmental question but its remarks on globalization and geopolitics reprise old nostrums which underspecify both problematics. The first volume of the *Information age* trilogy (Castells, 1996) is a typical Castellian synthesis with the virtue of being sensibly empirical in parts – Chapter 2 is excellent – yet also the vice of eclectic and overly ambitious synthesis. The book is remarkably Berkeley-centric, an odd product of an academic network society itself. Like Soja's book, it ends on the Hollywood note, just like *Star wars* or *Back to the future*, 'To be continued', anticipating a sequel coming soon to your neighbourhood bookstore.

In this report, I propose to consider three areas of political geography where the theme of deterritorialization finds varied resonance – electoral geography, globalization and geopolitics – each of which saw major new publications in 1996. In organizing this report around the problematic expression 'deterritorialization', I am using it as shorthand for the spatial problematics induced by the relentless revolutions of the *fin de millénaire* vortex of time-space compression. Deterritorialization is best interpreted, as Virilio remarks, as a question; it evokes the challenges posed to the status of territory and, by extension, our territorially embedded understandings of geography, governance and geopolitics, states, places and the social sciences, by planetary communication networks and globalizing tendencies. But it is deceptive when it becomes an answer polemically naming this challenge as a clear disappearance of territoriality. The problematic of deterritorialization is also the problematic of reterritorialization; it is not the presence or absence of state territoriality but its changing status, power and meaning in relationship to postmodern technological constellations, speed machines and global webs of capitalism.

Two notable new books that transcend the areas of research examined in this report are John Agnew's (1996b) *Political geography: a reader* and Peter Taylor's (1996b) *The way the modern world works*. Organized around six sections – approaching political geography, spatiality of states, geopolitics, geographies of political and social movements, places and the politics of identities, geographies of nationalism and ethnic conflict – with three types of theoretical viewpoint in each (the spatial-analytic, the political-economic and the postmodern), Agnew has assembled a Reader that reflects political geography's move beyond its parochial empiricist past to its emergence as a theoretically informed postdisciplinary field of inquiry engaging issues of global concern. Agnew's introductions and selections represent political geography as a contested intellectual terrain that is creatively engaging with the pressing political issues and intellectual currents of our time.

One example of just such a creative engagement is Peter Taylor's remarkable book within the world-systems tradition on the three world hegemonies of the United Provinces, Kingdom and States. A refreshingly culturalist as opposed to economic world-systems work, Taylor draws a series of dizzying connections between the

modernity created by each of these three states, elaborating the paradigms of modern politics they invent, the universalisms they championed, the future they projected and the trauma of hegemonic decline they suffered. The book concludes by outlining the world impasse faced by the modern world-system based on ceaseless capital accumulation. Like Harvey, Taylor is interested in environmentalism as critique, politics and the seed of a possible postcapitalist or postmodern world-system. Written in his usual accessible style, Taylor (1996b: 215) provocatively concludes that capitalism might actually be overthrown by the rich: 'while many of the poor of this world still scramble to join the good life, it is the world strata of rich people who will turn against the system'. An ecofascist world-system is one possible postmodernity, the other a deep green world-system induced by a conspicuous asceticism. Critics no doubt will object to the neatness of Taylor's systematization of the messy heterogeneity of history and his uneasy synthesis of realist and Gramscian conceptions of hegemony, but there can be no doubting that this is an intriguing and compellingly crafted work.

## I Deterritorialization and electoral geography

Capital-intensive, neuropsychology-driven, mall-tested, rapid-response polling which is subsequently translated into sound-bite policy statements, campaign speeches and, most important of all, quick turnaround TV spots; this was the techno-campaign model central to Clinton's presidential election victory in 1996. The advertising executives, script writers, video producers, number crunchers and campaign consultants needed to sustain such a high-technology operation have fuelled the need for more and more soft money in the political process, producing in turn greater levels of corruption and influence peddling (Leiken, 1996; Wills, 1997). With television so central to political campaigns in the nineties, the question of the significance of geography and place in elections is posed again and again. Are elections deterritorialized by television and other national-level mass media? Is place becoming less and less significant as politics becomes more and more televisual? With transnational campaign consultants and companies (the Americans advising Yeltsin and Blair, for example), and transnational interests and issues at stake, is all politics now global?

In the first *Political Geography* special-award lecture, John Agnew (1996a) reprises the arguments he first made in *Place and Politics* about the significance of geographical 'context' in political studies (Agnew, 1987). Behind Agnew's argument is a more general concern to reconnect the study of elections with serious theorizing about the geographical concepts of space and place. His argument is not reducible to the claim that geography is more or less significant electorally. Rather, the fixed, single-scale conception of geography that is dominant in so much of electoral studies, a conception that reduces geography and place to measurable statistical variables, needs to be challenged. Agnew's (1996a: 143) empirical work on Italian elections acknowledges the force of television in reconfiguring geography and sense of place, noting the use by Berlusconi of the 'only two major instruments of national identity in Italy – soccer and television' – in propelling the Forza Italia alliance to victory in 1994. However, he would probably hesitate to call this process deterritorialization, preferring, as Taylor (1996b) also does, the more sociological term 'detraditionalization' (Heelas *et al.*, 1996). This latter term suggests that the spatiality of political processes is changing, not that it is disappearing.

Agnew's social theory arguments, however, make little impression on the respondents to his article, whose approaches are broadly framed by unexamined methodological individualism and undialectical senses of place, geography and context (Brustein, 1996; Flint, 1996; G. King, 1996). The relative failure of this exchange is indicative of a persisting divide between a political geography in dialogue with contemporary social theory and a political geography more comfortable with the reassuring nostrums of variants of positivism. The conceptualization and centrality of electoral geography within the subfield are key markers of this divide. Contrast, for example, Joe Painter's (1995) text *Politics, geography and 'political geography'* with the new text by Shelley *et al.* (1996), *Political geography of the United States*. The former is an explicit attempt to open up political geography to social theory and blur the boundaries between it and other subfields like cultural and economic geography. Within this project, electoral geography is quite marginal, receiving only a few pages of analysis and critique (Painter, 1995: 71–73). Painter argues, quite rightly in my view, that statistical explanations of elections have an impoverished understanding of human agency and geography:

Understanding the process of identity formation requires much more detailed attention to the nuances of discourse, ideology and symbolic practices, and a recognition that their geographies are not just local or neighbourhood-based, but are stretched across time and space through communications media of all sorts (Painter, 1995: 73).

By contrast, electoral geography is at the heart of *Political geography of the United States*, an essential text for students of American politics and a worthy successor text to Stanley Brunn's (1974) *Geography and politics in America*. In this text, political geography is not a subfield in quotes and under erasure but an explicit and distinct *perspective*: 'The sub-discipline of political geography examines the interaction between location and political activity' (Shelley *et al.*, 1996: 4). While open to certain theoretical currents like world-systems theory, the book largely ignores most of the social, cultural and discursive theories Painter engages. Richly illustrated with maps and useful insets, the text is an impressive one. Three chapters are broadly historical, two geopolitical and four address the various dimensions and scales of electoral geography. However, the absence of any sustained theoretical engagement with identity politics, critical geopolitics, social movements and state formation (the great strength of Painter's text) leaves the work outside much of the new social theory informed political geography.

The divide marked by both these books is not geographical (European versus middle American political geography) nor generational (young versus established scholars) but ultimately over how political geography is conceptualized. Contemporary social theory problematizes political geography as a perspectivalist discourse where the textuality of the world is denied and/or reduced to objectified givens and observable constants which are then measured and described. Most conventional political geography operationalizes this unexamined anti-textual perspectivalism to contain the unruliness of questions of meaning, signification and discourse. In the case of quantitative electoral geography, election returns become raw material for scientific data manipulations and hypothesis testing. The discursive politics of elections is often reduced to a battle between models of electoral cleavage.

It is indeed a pity that many of those who work on electoral geography are hostile to questions of discourse and signification for attention to such issues can contribute much to their work. The burgeoning 'Boulder school' of political geography with its National Science Foundation powered surveys of the process of democratization in eastern Europe and the former USSR is producing important work yet it can also be described as

impoverished in Painter's sense (see, for example, the award-winning article by O'Loughlin *et al.*, 1996). Studies such as this, which incidentally refute the claims about the 'nationalization' of the Russian electorate by television, are valuable and necessary yet also run the risk of reducing democracy and democratization to the formalism of elections and election data returns.

Creative reworkings of the problematic of electoral geography are beginning to appear. Low (1997) offers one such reworking in his Derridean-inspired problematization of the notion of representative democracy and its philosophically dependent cast of characters such as 'the voter' and 'the representative'. With so many political discourses broadening the groups needing representation today (the unborn, future generations, animals, planet earth) representative democracy is straining within its ontological inheritance and territorial limits. Whether these deconstructive reworkings of democracy and the future refinement of electoral technology, geodemographic targeting and communicational techniques for engineering consensus (Ewen, 1996) herald the 'death of the voter' and the possibility of representative democracy as we know it is not only an intriguing but also an urgent political question.

## II Deterritorializing or actually existing globalization?

Although hardly new to most of the world, 'globalization' has become a defining drama and preoccupation of English-speaking social science in the nineties. No aspiring geopolitician or critical analyst of international relations can avoid addressing its supposed implications. Like so many buzzwords, the term is a floating sign of many different problematics (Waters, 1995): the transnationalization of manufacturing and the rise of 'soft capitalism' (Thurow, 1996; Thrift, 1998), the overstated decline of the nation-state (Dunn, 1995; Guéhenno, 1995; Ohmae, 1995), the need for institutions of global governance (Commission on Global Governance, 1995; Falk, 1995; Baxi, 1996), the deterritorialization delirium induced by global telecommunications networks (Castells, 1996), the enmeshing of states in transnational institutions and regimes (Held, 1995), the interconnectivity of worldwide financial markets and their informational panopticons (Gill, 1995; Leyshon, 1996; Swyngedouw, 1996; Ó Tuathail, 1997b). As many have noted, globalization problematizes the very geopolitical structure of international politics as sovereignty becomes increasingly fictive, territoriality is displaced by speed, and states diffuse governance upwards, sideways or abdicate it altogether (Bauman, 1995; Luke, 1996). 'At the heart of the international political economy', according to Strange (1996: 14) in a book that asks the right questions but remains superficial throughout, 'there is a vacuum, a vacuum not adequately filled by inter-governmental institutions or by a hegemonic power exercising power in the common interest'. The diffusion of authority away from national governments has created a condition of 'ungovernance'. The result, Strange (1996: 199) concludes, is not a system of global governance but 'a ramshackle assembly of conflicting sources of authority'.

In recent USA political discourse, the fear that unstable capitalist globalization has become a threat to democratic societies has been articulated by George Soros (1997) and William Greider (1997), both of whom argue that neoliberalism has become dangerous dogma. The spirit, not of Karl Marx but of Karl Popper and Karl Polanyi (1944), hovers over all these arguments (see also Mittelman, 1996). Soros argues that *laissez-faire* ideology is 'just as much a perversion of supposedly scientific verities as Marxism-Leninism

is'. It, together with social Darwinist thinking and geopolitical realism, threaten the possibility of a global open society. Greider (1997: 473) concludes: 'In this modern secular age, many who think of themselves as rational and urbane have put their faith in this idea of the self-regulating market as piously as others put their trust in God.' Friedman (1997) has suggested that this ongoing debate about the meaning and dangers of globalization is one of the great foreign policy debates of the late twentieth century, pitting globalization resisters (separatists) against proponents (integrationists) and those who seek to address the plight of globalization's losers (safety-netters) against winner-takes-all proponents (let-them-eat-cake). Thus, in Friedman's terms, Clinton is an integrationist/safety-netter, Gingrich an integrationist/let-them-eat-caker, Ross Perot a separatist/let-them-eat-caker and the Zapatistas separatists/safety-netters (after the latter proclaimed, not unlike the American far right, the World Trade Organization as their ultimate foe). One could add to these glib categories yet another emergent divide in political life between 'slow-laners' who want to resist the clamour towards globalization policies and the time-space compression it imposes, and 'fast-laners' who want to 'accelerate the transition' from the present territorially bound forms of capitalism towards a Utopia of fast, virtual, third-wave capitalism without borders (Bryan and Farrell, 1996; Luke and Ó Tuathail, 1998).

Political geographers have joined the many other disciplines and subdisciplines investigating globalization in recent years. Anderson *et al.* (1995) is a fine textbook introduction to the many political geographies of globalization. Merrett (1996) blends political geography with regulationist economic geography to provide an excellent account of the USA–Canada Free Trade Agreement of 1989. Most laudable for its success in bringing political geographers and international relations scholars together is the collection by Kofman and Youngs (1996) which emerged out of the 'Global politics: agendas for the year 2000' conference at Nottingham Trent University in July 1994. Unfortunately, many of the 22 essays in the volume are disappointingly superficial, though a number of essays, such as those by Pellerin, Cerny, Runyan, Marchand, Slater and Mohan, are exceptions. Due out in early 1998 are essays presented at the April 1996 'Crises of global regulation and governance' mini-conference in Athens, Georgia (Herod *et al.*, 1998). Related works of interest on the subject include Daniels and Lever's (1996) collection which is overwhelmingly economic in focus and, from political science, Shapiro and Alker (1996) which has diverse culturist essays, and Mittelman (1996) which has a few useful essays, especially that by Robert Cox (1996). Gibson-Graham's (1996) feminist-inspired exploration of the discourse of globalization is provocative but quite forced and overstated.

Charging that globalization has exposed 'the geographical poverty' of the embedded statism of the contemporary social sciences, Taylor (1996a) argues that a new heterodoxy of social science is emerging which is post-statist, actively spatial and historical, and holistic. In a wide-ranging set of responses to Taylor's article, a number of commentators challenge his analysis of the embedded statism of the contemporary social sciences and his optimism about a transdisciplinary future. Agnew (1996c) and Johnston (1996) rightly point to the institutional difficulties facing transdisciplinary work within the current university system while Gamble (1996) and Anthony King (1996) correctly argue that the social sciences are not as state-centric as Taylor's abstract and neat schema, which ignores imperialism and the historically fictive nature of many states, claims. Most useful are Michael Mann's (1996) remarks on scale and space in which he argues that 'we do not today live in a society constituted "essentially" by the transnational or the global' (Mann,

1996: 1960). Pointing out what is banal and obvious but often lost in the rush to chart the new, he notes that society 'consists of multiple, entwined networks of interaction', some of which are global, some transnational while others are international, national and local:

Human social organization has indeed expanded to have profound global effects, but these are not the expression of a single transnational or global system. A certain amount of mess is perhaps the most general characteristic of human society, past and present (Mann, 1996: 1964; see also Urry, 1996).

Mann's comments are a sensible antidote to the systematizing hyperbole that often accompanies globalization. Abstract and decontextualized generalizations on the political geographies induced by globalization – such as abstract proclamations about an inevitable unfolding deterritorialization of the state, economy and culture – are best avoided in favour of studies of the contingent and uneven world of 'actually existing globalization', the real messy world where, for example, Chinese Communists cut deals with American transnationals, Indonesian politicians take their percentage and the Mexican state scouts for its narco-capitalists (Oppenheimer, 1996). Actually existing globalization is not the globalization of neoliberal visions, the Utopia of friction-free global markets or Internet-driven virtual worlds, but the contingent and unsteady symbiosis of imperfectly transnational networks, institutions and firms, and the 'ramshackle diversity' of international bureaucracies, states, police, mafias and other sources of power struggling for shifting territorial authority in the post-cold war world (Herbert, 1996).

### III Deterritorialization and geopolitics

The deterritorialization of geopolitics has become a familiar theme in contemporary discussions of international affairs as threat discourses have broadened from an overwhelming concern with territorially defined 'enemies' during the cold war to embrace post-territorial 'dangers' (environmental degradation, infectious diseases, computer crimes, proliferating weapons of mass destruction, global webs of terrorism; see Dalby, 1996; Garrett, 1996; Nye and Owens, 1996; Sopko, 1996) and deterritorializing globalization (Rosecrance, 1996; Shapiro, 1997a). Yet, sticky questions of territoriality are at the heart of some of the most significant geopolitical dramas of our time. NATO is playing a dangerous game in pushing its expansion eastwards as Russia is crippled with economic crisis and mafia capitalism. The European Union states are hesitantly pushing further integration in the face of severe unemployment problems and growing xenophobic backlash at home. In Bosnia, the SFOR mission is proving expensive and the will to remain stabilizing the region is in question. In the Pacific, the post-Deng future of China as it reincorporates Hong Kong and continues to intimidate Taiwan is uncertain. Elsewhere, many states are failing, some in spectacular fashion as in Albania and Zaire (now the Congo once again), while others lumber on with low-intensity failure from year to year (e.g., Columbia, Mexico, Belarus and Russia).

Recently, critical geopolitics has consolidated itself as an approach with a double special issue of *Political Geography* (Dalby and Ó Tuathail, 1996) and book (Ó Tuathail, 1996), the merits of which others can judge. A new critical geopolitics inspired *Geopolitics reader* is due out at the end of this year (Ó Tuathail *et al.*, 1998). Evidence of the burgeoning critical engagement with contemporary geopolitics in general is found in four works published in 1996. The first is a political geography of the polar regions by Sanjay

Chaturvedi (1996) which uses critical geopolitics to powerful effect in its analysis of the geohistory of the Arctic and Antarctic. Chaturvedi traces how the geopolitics of these regions changed historically as science and technology, political alliances and regimes, global governance and consciousness of the environment came together to territorialize the polar spaces. With chapters on the emergent identity of indigenous peoples, international co-operation and dispute management, conservation and the environment, sustainable development and the Arctic, the book is an impressive synthesis which mixes the environmental and the cultural, the political and the techno-scientific, the geopolitical and the developmental.

*Global geopolitical change in the Asia-Pacific: a regional perspective* edited by Rumley *et al.* (1996) is a more traditional work of political geography. The volume is a collection of papers presented at the 1993 International Geographical Union's Commission on the World Political Map (CWPM) conference in Tokyo. Explicitly designed to break with the general Euro-American orientation of the CWPM, the volume contains a variety of essays by male scholars most but not all of whom are based in the Pacific region. While detailed, informative and valuable, the essays are regional in focus, geopolitically descriptive in ambition and largely atheoretical in method. The volume is thus a conventional perspectivist 'political geography' and not a 'critical geopolitics' of the Pacific region, with questions of discourse, identity politics, geopower and gender largely absent. Environmental questions, integrationism, transnational regions, export processing zones, APEC and the future of the powerful and small in the region are all addressed. Grant and Nijman's (1997) study of USA and Japanese foreign aid in the Asia-Pacific region compliments many of the volume's themes.

Presenting itself neither as a traditional political geography survey nor as critical geopolitics is Anssi Paasi's (1996) *Territories, boundaries and consciousness*, a book that sets new standards for excellence in the study of boundaries. An engaging hybrid of political and regional geography that is well informed by an eclectic breadth of contemporary social and cultural theory, the book uses the changing geographies of the Finnish-Russian border to explore problematics fundamental to all contemporary geography: the institutionalization of regions, the self/other dynamic in the construction of the nation-state, nationalism and boundaries, the process of national socialization, the formal and practical history of geopolitics, the meaning of place in everyday social practices and, finally, the intimate geopolitics of memory and place. The result is a deep and rich work of politicized geography, one that addresses all scales (the global, national, regional and local) while problematizing the operation of geography as a shifting discourse of power/knowledge.

Particularly well elaborated in Paasi's work are the processes by which the Finnish nation came to be socially spatialized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Finnish élites and also how this discourse in the form of geography textbooks came to, as he puts it, 'spatially socialize' generations of young schoolchildren as particular types of Finnish subjects. Describing his extensive analysis as a 'geohistory', Paasi's work is also a study of 'geopower', the historical congealments of Finnish geopolitical imaginations within cartography, literature, national icons, political movements, educational textbooks and border landscapes.

Content not simply to situate theoretically and to document historically the turbulent 'institutionalization of Finnish territory', Paasi presses further to examine how this dislocating geopolitics was experienced at the local and individual level. Examining the commune of Vartsila, an industrial town in Karelia, he provides a fascinating 'thick



description' based on extensive interviews, contextualized life-histories and local individual autobiographies of the intimate spatial memory of those displaced by the fighting and shifting border during the second world war. Destroyed by the war and incorporated into the USSR, Vartsila is now a dull Russian town that was only opened to those who grew up there in the early 1990s. Paasi accompanies a group on a nostalgic trip back to this 'place of memory' and records the power of folkloric senses of place. Geography, Paasi concludes, played a role of major importance in the exercise of power in the Finnish case. His work ends at a moment of relative deterritorialization (the opening of the Finnish–Russian border) and anticipates a 'global sense of place'.

Kevin Robins's (1996) *Into the image* explores the culture and politics of contemporary visual technologies, technologies of surveillance and screening that are already an intimate part of contemporary geopolitics. Sceptical of the technoculture of contemporary image technologies, from military satellites to the Internet and global television, Robins presents an elegant though somewhat abstract critique of what he sees as the fantasies of control and the flight from reality represented by these technologies. Rejecting glib deterritorialization claims, he argues (1996: 7) that 'localized and territorial investments and conflicts will remain a fundamental issue in the new world order'. Combining a Frankfurt-school lament about the corruption of the lifeworld by technoculture industries with a sweepingly abstract essentialist psychoanalysis of the modern, Robins earnestly critiques virtual reality, military panopticonism, the Gulf war, cyberspace, media society, urban CCTV, virtual communities and our contemporary visual technoculture in general. 'What is being idealized by the technoculture in terms of (visual) transcendence is, it seems to me, no more than the distinctive, modern strategy of retreat and flight from the world' (Robins, 1996: 13). Yet, for all his evocation of the real world 'we' moderns (his idealized universal subjects) are supposedly fleeing, Robins's own analysis rarely touches down in the messiness and stickiness of the real, whether it be the geopolitics of the Gulf war (where Robins indulges some frankly weird meta-psychological interpretations of the conflict) or the political economy of information technology. Robins's argument takes the cyberhype and boosterism of technoculture at face value and proceeds to lament its dis-connect from embodied experience and deplore its flight from the qualities that make us human. 'In our hyper-visual culture, we live without face (counting only on the pleasure of the interface)' (Robins, 1996: 30). In returning again and again to questionable universals from psychoanalytic meta-psychology (centring on fear of the touch of the unknown) and a starkly drawn human versus technology narrative, Robins's analysis ends up delivering less than it promises, certainly for the critical analysis of geopolitics. (Timothy Luke and I have sought to theorize the problematic of the power of television images in contemporary international politics by elaborating the concept of 'videocameralistics', the operational imperative to 'do something' created by postmodern media technologies in alliance with nongovernmental organizations and others; see Luke and Ó Tuathail, 1997; also Adams, 1996; Shaw, 1996.)

Other works potentially useful to political geographers include Haraway's (1997) mapping of the technoscience of life at the second millennium which is a zealous over-reading of this discourse without sustained consideration of its political economy, and Sherry's (1995) undertheorized study of militarism in American political history since the 1930s. One of the four sections in Mattelart (1996) considers 'geopolitical space' and its close relationship to technological and logistical systems of communication. A crusading champion of railways and 'national economics', Friedrich List appears in

Mattelart's account as a geopolitician *avant la lettre*. Contextualizing the history of geopolitics within the history of communicational and transportational technologies (both intimately connected, in turn, to military organization and technical innovations) is an important intellectual move that, unfortunately, yields only modest insight in Mattelart's account. Idiosyncratically eclectic, segmental and superficial (yet nevertheless provocative), Mattelart's account is significant more for the path of inquiry it opens up than for the depth or profundity of his observations and conclusions. Where this leads is towards the problematization of geopolitics as an ensemble of configurations of communications technology, logistics, political economy, state power, national(ist) ideology, military organization and delirious Enlightenment visions of progress as social and spatial engineering. Geopolitics, in short, is revealed in his account in all its dense complexity within larger histories and geographies of the Enlightenment, technology, states and war.

Clearly, the problematic of deterritorialization is as broad as it is challenging. As Murphy (1996) argues in his useful review of the history of the 'political-territorial ideal', challenges to this ideal and practice are intensifying while the functional meaning of territory is in flux. He (1996: 109) concludes that 'attachments to territory are as old as human society, and there is little to suggest that the powerful ideological bonds that link identity, politics, and territory will be loosened'. Yet, perhaps this longstanding postulate of political geographers is underconceptualized. Territory and territoriality are not discrete ontologies but social constructions entwined with technological capabilities, transportation machines, military logistics, social institutions, political authorities and economic networks. Human society produces, reworks and, creatively and otherwise, destroys territory and territoriality. Our task is to theorize critically the polymorphous territorialities produced by the social, economic, political and technological machines of our postmodern condition rather than refuse this complexity and reduce it to singular dramas of resistant territorialization or unstoppable deterritorialization.

In conclusion, I believe that the contemporary condition of political geography is robust and vigorous. It is engaging with histories of geopower and the problematics of our time in varied and critically informed ways. With a range of new historical (Bassin, 1996; Herb, 1997; Murphy, 1997), regional (Hall and Danta, 1996; Barton, 1997; Newman, 1997), feminist (Jones *et al.*, 1997; Sales, 1997), global political economy (Cox, 1997) and other geopolitical studies (Dijkink, 1997; Agnew, 1998; Ó Tuathail and Dalby, 1998) just or about to be published, political geographers publishing beyond the subfield (Murphy, 1996; Dalby, 1997; Ó Tuathail, 1997a), more and more political scientists engaging a broad geopolitics (especially within University of Minnesota's *Borderlines* series; see, especially, Doty, 1996; Kuehls, 1996; Krause and Williams, 1997; Shapiro, 1997b; also Gray, 1997), and interesting conferences being planned, this is an exciting and challenging time to be reading, writing and problematizing 'political geography'.

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