# Geopolitics

# The Geopolitics of Migration and Mobility

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# INTRODUCTION

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Migration has long been a barometer of geopolitics, from human displacement generated by war to containment practices in particular territories or camps. When I first wrote about the "geo-politics of mobility", I brought displaced migrants into focus with states' attempts to contain them and prevent them from seeking asylum (Hyndman, 1997). The idea that states manage migrants, and that migrants aim to subvert such tactics, is not necessarily new. Meanings of migration and the shifts in dominant geopolitical discourses across space and over time, however, have changed dramatically. The securitisation of migration, in particular, is a defining feature of current geopolitics, and a small industry of scholarship critical of these deeply exclusionary and reactionary 'homeland' politics has emerged in response to it (Coleman, 2009; Cowen and Gilbert, 2008; Huysmans, 2006; Squire, 2009). Many of the papers in this issue of *Geopolitics* illustrate such efforts, and show how migration is the medium of geopolitics as we know it.

My brief commentary on geopolitics here seeks not to create a linear story of progression or a new theory of geopolitics. Rather, I along with the authors in this issue aim to interrupt dominant thinking and practice in three main ways: first, by bringing geopolitics to bear on biopolitics in relation to migration; second, by displacing attention on borders to the crossers of borders themselves; and in a related vein, third, by shifting focus from state-defined subjects (as objects of analysis) to emerging techniques of governance and/or government(ality) (Huysmans, 2006). In particular, I eschew any particular pattern or mapping of geopolitics that effaces the multiple relations of power that *produce* that pattern (Sparke, 2005, p. xxix):

> When they [geographers] invoke geography and space metaphorically,
> there is a metaphysics of presence at work – what might be called a

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metaphysics of geopresence – that fixates on the "geo" of a particular spatial pattern or a particular poetics of location while simultaneously downplaying the geographic diversity of the constitutive processes that produced it.

While Sparke cautions us not to essentialise maps, territories, places, and people, he is also tacitly talking about scale: the quotidian processes, practices, and politics that comprise geopolitical cartographies must be taken seriously. Such a cautionary tale is consistent with other interventions in geopolitical scholarship, such as feminist geopolitics and Matt Hannah's (2006) biopolitical take on the torture of 'terrorists' and the entanglement of geopolitics at the most intimate scale of the body for abject subjects. In *The Spaces of Security and Insecurity,* edited by Ingram and Dodds (2009), the spatial vocabulary of political geography and international relations is likewise interrogated as a step towards changing geographical imaginations and framings of war (Agnew, 2003). Terms like 'homeland', 'international community', 'failed/rogue state', 'illegal immigrant', and 'terrorist network' are too often rendered as already-given and unproblematic.

Geopolitical scholars have essentialised 'the territorial' at the expense of examining how power relations render specific bodies objects of surveillance and discipline. In a similar vein, Jef Huysmans's (2006) exegesis on the politics of insecurity focuses squarely on the securitisation of migration, particularly in the European Union (EU), and on 'de-securitizing migration' (Chapter 8). While his project is as much about recasting security studies not as a study of referent objects (territorial states), but as analysis of techniques by which states rule, he also expresses his unease with the shift towards migration as a security concern through its politicisation: "security knowledge represents a particular way of arranging social and political relations" (p. xii). If his central question relates to how one conceptualises the politics of insecurity as a contested process of framing political and social relations in security terms, then various answers about how such framing is contested and such readings undone are provided in the papers that follow.

To say that Cold War geopolitics were most salient in international relations from World War II to the late 1980s is to tell only a partial story, one complicit in state and superpower-centric power struggles (see Sharp, 2000). Asylum seekers in this period enjoyed generous hospitality compared to the DPs (displaced persons) after World War II, as analysed by Arendt (1976), and the asylum seekers often scuttled by externalisation practices today (Dikec, 2009). The demise of the Soviet Union, accompanied by continued migration and asylum claims, also stoked a project of economic integration fostered by the world's remaining superpower.

During the 1990s, geopolitics was accompanied by a more finely tuned 'geo-economics' that coincided with the rise of neoliberalism as dominant political discourse, including practice (Roberts, Secor, and Sparke, 2003).

Neoliberalism is often read as an economic project, but it is also a profoundly political one; neoliberalism is a "contingent *articulation* of free market governmental practices *with* varied and often quite illiberal forms of social and political rule" (Sparke, 2006, p. 153, italics in original). In a similar vein, Cowen and Smith (2009) argue that geoeconomic relations are supplanting geopolitical ones, but not in any linear historical succession.

Securitisation and neoliberalisation are not the only processes politicising borders in the contemporary context. The demand for skilled labour in most countries of the global North has created a competitive global market place for potential migrants with expertise and professional backgrounds. Migration thus becomes a highly disparate affair, where neoliberal efforts to bring in the 'best and brightest' meet stringent efforts to digitise, trace, and exclude uninvited migrants (Sparke, 2006, 2007). As processes of economic integration deepen, and globalisation proceeds, defensive pockets of existing political and economic alliances, like the European Union, have expanded and strengthened their capacity to monitor and control border crossings, or perhaps more accurately, border *crossers.* So migrants are welcomed in, or at least their labour is, actively recruited through de facto immigration vis-à-vis EU expansion. This predominantly white labour force, from places like Poland, appears to be far more palatable and desirable in public opinion, compared to a potential workforce envisaged as uninvited asylum seekers to the EU.

During the 1990s, responses to asylum were far less generous, with a new impetus to assist displaced persons 'at home', before they had to cross an international border and become refugees. A respatialisation of forced migration occurred, keeping refugees in their 'regions of origin' where possible (Hyndman, 2000). Borders and popular attitudes towards asylum seekers are increasingly fortified against these unwanted intruders (Squire, 2009). This respatialisation of forced migration has continued apace into the 2000s. The de facto containment approach to human displacement, known at the UN refugee agency in the 1990s as 'preventative protection,' has been problematic at best. At worst, it has been lethal, as the tragic mass killing in 1995 of some 8,000 Bosnia Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica attests.

As the importance of international legal frameworks governing migration shrinks, that of geopolitics arguably expands to fill the space (Hyndman, 2008). If the liberal democratic discourse of human rights has proven inadequate, then the politicisation of human rights and other basic provisions in the guise of 'human security' attempted to revive them as geopolitics through the 1990s and early 2000s. Just as the 'war on terror' has invented the 'enemy combatant' to replace the prisoner of war, politicised spaces have emerged to protect civilians in conflict zones. Such 'geopoliticisation' of humanitarianism in relation to human displacement illustrates how the flotsam and jetsam of conflict are indeed 'extra' worries that can be sequestered spatially out of view or in between the cracks of territorial jurisdiction.

## SECURITISATION AND 'WAR ON TERROR'

While the securitisation of migration certainly predates 11 September, 2001, the events of that day have only advanced and legitimated such measure. The 'war on terror' was launched largely by George W. Bush and his government in 2001, after the shocking airplane attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and Pentagon in Washington. While these events constituted a genuine threat to US national security, they also inaugurated a period of heightened but indiscriminate fear, anxiety, and insecurity throughout much of North America and Europe, sentiments that were capitalised on by governments in the global North. People's geopolitical imaginations ran wild, as *The West Wing*, a US TV show about life at the White House, conjured a weak link at the imaginary Ontario Canada–Vermont USA border, propagating the idea that the perpetrators were illegal migrants from Canada when this was never proven. All of the attackers were, in fact, in the US legally at the time of the 9/11 events, fifteen of nineteen Saudi nationals, despite the government of Saudi Arabia being a US ally. The idea of migrants as a vector of insecurity prevailed, creating potent fear that could be used for draconian measures.

The biometric management of outsiders with its assemblage of new laws, policies and border practices render geopolitics and biopolitics inseparable (Squire, 2010). Several of the authors in this special issue of *Geopolitics* distinguish between the biopolitical management of populations and the geopolitical management of territory. These grids of intelligibility come to bear on one another at borders, in detention, during deportation, and at ports of entry where asylum claims are made. These examples of embodied statecraft trace geopolitics 'trickling up', and capture the intersection of biopolitics and geopolitics well. The state is once again unsettled as territory, and as the assumed unit of analysis.

Derek Gregory (2007, p. 207) shows how the Bush administration did not simply wage the 'war on terror' as a "war on law" but also *through* law (law as a tactic): "law is a site of political struggle not only in its suspension *but also in its formulation, interpretation, and application*." Drawing on Giorgio Agamben, Gregory notes that the sovereign is the point of indistinction between violence and law. He also links Agamben's exclusionary vision of an omniscient sovereign with Foucault's inclusive reform of the aberrational subject through discipline of the population.

With subsequent bombings on 11 March 2004 in Madrid and 5 July 2005 in the London tube, fears were stoked further. These latter events were not necessarily executed by foreigners, but instead pointed to more insidious threats: enemies within the nation-state. Discourses of fear at a variety of scales are mobilised to fuel migration wars (Pain and Smith, 2008). The production of fear creates crises in need of response: stricter migration controls, less porous borders, tighter visa restrictions on travellers, and the exclusion of those who are perceived as threats (Mountz, 2010).

The securitisation of borders (Huysmans, 2006), the rise of biopolitical modes of their management (Adey, 2004; Amoore and Hall, 2009), as well as laws and practices that render borders less porous (Hyndman and Mountz, 2008) to asylum seekers and other uninvited migrants proliferated. The civil rights of people of Arab descent whose families immigrated to the US were suspended through the Patriot Act, and the rights of non-Americans were perhaps most thoroughly disregarded with the establishment and rendition of foreigners captured by American forces in the 'war on terror' at Guantanamo Bay (Paglen and Thompson, 2006).

Matthew Hannah (2006) explores the treatment, and specifically, the torture of 'terrorists' such as those held at Guantánamo Bay. To simplify his carefully substantiated and nuanced argument, Hannah contends that if the threat 'terrorists' pose is high, then torture becomes justified as a modality to extract life-saving information for the greater public good. Hannah's (2006, p. 636) analysis of the 'ticking time bomb' thesis shows how all means of interrogation are allowable "in order to gain access to the bodies holding life-saving information" from prisoners in the 'war on terror.' As Butler (2004, p. 79) points out, "The postwar prison becomes the continuing site of war."

What transpires at Guantánamo is important because it could only happen to migrants. Omar Khadr, a Toronto-born citizen of Canada, endures a quasi-judicial military commission at Guantanamo because his own government has effectively abandoned him. No other OECD countries have allowed their citizens, regardless of their alleged status of 'enemy combatant', to stay in this extra-legal space (Hyndman, 2010). No American citizen could be detained, interrogated, and kept for such long periods without a court hearing, legal representation, and conviction. Acts of 'infinite detention' (Butler, 2004), then, are part and parcel of the geopolitics of migration and mobility.

The management of insecurity and risk outside exceptional spaces like Guantánamo has developed apace through the collection and management of information contained in elaborate databases in the global North. Using these biopolitical approaches, fear of conjured geopolitical threats is fostered regardless of actual risk, and then managed by states through practices such as extraordinary rendition (Paglen and Thompson, 2006). Fear and insecurity are linked across scales from the bodies of migrants (Mountz, 2010), and states may even create crisis in order to legitimate grounds to implement what might otherwise be controversial security measures. Such biometric practices include collecting data rooted in retinal scans, fingerprints, and even DNA.

## MOBILITY AND MIGRATION

Doreen Massey (1993) has raised the notion of a 'politics of mobility and access', arguing that different groups of people have distinct relationships

to mobility: "Some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it" (ibid., p. 61). Massey raises two important points: first, the production of space through power relations; one's mobility in it are not simply acts of individual choice; and second, in a related vein, mobility is inherently political. "Movement is rarely just movement; it carries with it the burden of meaning and it is this meaning that jumps scales" (Cresswell, 2006, pp. 6–7).

Research on migration and mobility in social and cultural geography can productively be read alongside that in geopolitics in ways that demonstrate parallel critiques and claims. What is the difference between mobility and migration? "If movement is the dynamic equivalent of location, then mobility is the dynamic equivalent of *place*" (Cresswell, 2006, p. 3). Mobility includes all types of territorial movements, including but not limited to migration. As Domosh and Seager (2001, p. 110) note,

> Mobility is greatest at the extreme ends of the socioeconomic spectrum. The mobility of the destitute is a hardship-induced rootlessness: the homeless, refugees, people on the margins of job markets, and people pushed into migration out of need or crisis are all clustered at this end of the mobility curve. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the highflyers (literally and metaphorically).

Mobility is always constrained. The mobility of all persons is subject to the calculus of Massey's (1993) power-geometry, but conditions of highly restricted mobility, even containment, are more common for those bodies that are criminalised, displaced, and/or construed as a security threat to the state and its citizenry (Cresswell, 2006). Katharyne Mitchell (1997) has cautioned against representations of unfettered migrant mobility, particularly in the context of transnational migration that claims that migrants forge social fields across international borders, by living and working in distinct locations.

In the early 1990s, Liisa Malkii (1992) traced the sedentarist bias that underpinned state and societal views, specifically in relation to refugees in the East African context. Refugees were, of course, liminal to the state, an aberration to state-centric understanding of citizenship and belonging, but something more profound – 'a sedentarist metaphysics' – created conditions of possibility for such discourse.

Building on and in conjunction with the work of sociologist John Urry (2000, 2007), and of anthropologist, Malkki (1992, 1995, 1996), Cresswell argues for a metaphysics that privileges mobility over sedentarism:

> Mobility has become the ironic foundation for anti-essentialism, antifoundationalism and antirepresentation. While place, territory and landscape all implied at least a degree of permanence and flexibility, mobility seems

to offer the potential of a racial break from a sedentarist metaphysics. (2006, p. 46)

Cresswell also argues that mobility is a root metaphor for contemporary understandings of the world culture and society, and that it is largely defined by the metaphysical assumption of sedentarism. "The metaphysics of sedentarism is a way of thinking and acting that sees mobility as suspicious, as threatening, and as a problem. The mobility of others is captured, ordered, and emplaced in order to make it legible in a modern society" (Cresswell, 2006, p. 55).

While perhaps tangential to conventional geopolitical reasoning, such re-ordering of foundational assumptions about mobility is seminal to a discussion of securitised migration and mobility. Liisa Malkki (1995) wrote about the problematic focus of research *on* refugees per se. Her study of Burundians in Tanzania instead examined the technology of the camp for these exiled Burundians, and its influence on identity formation in Tanzania. Shifting from essentialist readings of itinerant people to the tactics of governing and managing their displacement is a vital move in migration studies and geopolitics as much as cultural politics.

Just as Malkki (1995) and Huysmans (2006) argue for a shift from states as the (sedentarist) referent objects of security studies to a focus on the techniques of government, political geographers like Alison Mountz (2010) and Michael Samers (2010) show us how such techniques are increasingly transnational in scope, extending far beyond the formal boundaries of sovereignty. States and governmental bodies representing multiple states reach across international borders to places where migration can be preempted through offshore documentation screening by airline liaison officers, intelligence gathering, and security collaborations with other governments. As I wrote in 1997, "a geo-politics of mobility" juxtaposes the speed and dexterity of states and intergovernmental organisations to manage people out of place with their own capacity and resources to flee danger and seek safety elsewhere (Hyndman, 1997).

Distinguishing between the empirical expression of migration, as a barometer of geopolitics and global economic conditions, and mobility which is replete with meanings of such movement, is important not only to cultural geographers, but also those committed to tracing the geopolitical pathways of migrants, shaped by state policies, intra-state conflict, and other geographically inflected political processes.

## THIS ISSUE *IS* SPECIAL

The idea of this special issue was initially spawned at a small conference organised at Durham University on Critical Geopolitics in October 2008.

Organised by Marcus Power and David Campbell, the meeting also pro-
duced another special issue based on papers in critical geopolitics in *Political
Geography* in 2010, though not with the migration focus featured here. The
engaging collection of papers that follows has been adroitly edited by Mat
Coleman to *show* us how vital migration is to understanding the current
geopolitical landscape, and to disrupting the securitisation of migration.

The papers that follow use carefully conducted research in specific sites
to unsettle rationales given by governments for deportation, detention, and
exclusion. Geopolitical shifts are illustrated and extended through exam-
inations of the forced migration of people across borders through issues
of exclusion, diaspora, nationalism, securitisation, and asylum, all concrete
moments in a world where rendition and exceptionalism have become
commonplace.

Bringing biopolitics and geopolitics together in original and incisive
ways, Lisa Bhungalia analyses strategies of population management on
the Gaza Strip in the context of Israeli 'disengagement' from the area.
Disengagement, she contends, is a guise for engagement of a different order.
Based on her research in the region, and Foucault's concept of biopower,
Bhungalia links mobility to the ways in which human life is enabled, con-
strained and denied. In September 2005 Israel unilaterally disengaged from
the Gaza Strip, yet two years later, it declared Gaza 'hostile territory', thus
collapsing the distinction between civilian and combatant for all people liv-
ing there. The entire population was effectively codified as hostile enemies
of the state, or combatants. Only humanitarian 'don't die' foodstuffs would
be provided, and the residents of Gaza would effectively be put on a diet
against their will through blockades of other materials. The orientalist and
strategic production of Gaza as 'hostile entity' generates the very threats iden-
tified above, warranting a show of force by the threatened state, in this case,
Israel. Bhungalia effectively argues that biopolitics and territoriality are being
dually reconciled by the Israeli state's military strategists at the contested
borders of the Gaza Strip.

Michael Collyer bring geopolitics and biopolitics to bear on one another
in his exploration of the role of deportation in the international sys-
tem, and specifically of deporting Sri Lankans from Britain. Drawing on
Matthew Gibney's work on the 'deportation turn', Collyer traces the way
a rise in deportations has resulted in more diplomatic negotiations around
readmission agreements at the international scale. The paper contributes to
analysis of the transnational reach of immigration regulation beyond the terri-
tory of the state (see also Ashutosh and Mountz; Hiemstra; and C. Martin, this
issue). Exploring exclusion measures such as readmission agreements, spe-
cific to the securitisation of migration, Collyer analyses the rising obligations
of 'sending countries' to receive those who have arrived in Britain unin-
vited. Readmission agreements normally require home or transit countries
to 'take back' migrants who have departed their shores. The terms of these

agreements are opaque, and most represent bilateral deals between asymmetrically situated parties, in this case the UK and Sri Lanka. The role of international organisations that are contracted to execute the will of states is also explored here, with a focus on the International Organization for Migration – an agency literally without a purpose of its own, except to do the work states devolve or subcontract to it.

In pioneering research that traces the impact of Ecuadorean migrant detention in the US and deportation on families in countries of origin, Nancy Hiemstra contends that scholars and policymakers must look beyond the borders of the territorial state to trace the geopolitical meanings of immigration enforcement policies and practices. Her research in Ecuador with the families of detained migrants in the US traces the impact of detention and deportation in everyday ways at the scale of the household. While groundwork for US detention policies was laid largely in the 1990s, both detention and deportation have proliferated in the 2000s. The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the branch of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) focused on enforcement, detained almost 379,000 migrants and deported ("removed") nearly 360,000 in 2008 alone. Employing a feminist geopolitical approach that attends to finer scales of geopolitics, Hiemstra persuasively demonstrates that the geopolitics of immigration policy changes the meanings of borders. Moreover, Hiemstra deftly shows that detention and deportation do not meet US policymakers' underlying objective of deterring future migration.

Lauren L. Martin outlines how US immigration detention more than doubled in the decade spanning 1999 to 2009, with most of this growth occurring after 2005 when the Secure Border Initiative was introduced. Her paper in this issue demonstrates how the detention of non-citizens is a spatial strategy of immigration enforcement, yet for detainees its effects are experienced more in terms of their relationships and access to broader support networks. Her work contributes, like that of Ashutosh and Mountz, to ethnographies of detention that incorporate close readings of quotidian state practices as an expression of geopolitics.

The influence of geopolitics on the reception of refugee claims has been alluded to above, but the close reading provided here by Ishan Ashutosh and Alison Mountz illustrates exactly how governments shape migrant mobility through the asylum seeking process, another expression of 'geopolitics of mobility.' As the authors note, refugee movements have always been geopolitical projects, even before their codification in the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The authors' focus on boat arrivals (from Fujian, China and Sri Lanka to Canada) as both a mode of transport for seeking refugee status and as a catalyst of fear and intolerance in Canada. This is a timely and important paper, given that Canada received two boatloads of Tamil Sri Lankans within the last year. The authors analyse the trope of the 'bogus refugee', and aim to go beyond the usual citations of

geopolitical disparities that asylum seekers face: in the US, refugee claimants fleeing communist regimes such as Cuba and Nicaragua had much higher rates of acceptance than those fleeing non-communist regimes supported by the US government, such as El Salvador and Guatemala. The paper offers a much finer analysis of asylum *seeking* as geopolitical process and of ports of entry as hotspots where power relations congeal, morph, and conceal. Drawing on refugee flows and other incidents of uninvited migration, the authors show us how everyday state practices serve to securitise migration in myriad ways.

The 'desperate mobilities' of undocumented migrants are juxtaposed with the smooth surfaces of global flows by Craig Martin in this issue. He interrupts the high-tech logistics and supply chain management of highly integrated economic relations across borders by setting them in contrast with the migrants who seek a piece of this elusive pie. Martin builds on the geoeconomic analyses mentioned above, examining the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS) as a technology of securitisation. The underbelly of these relations of global capitalism, however, Martin notes are potentially dead migrants, the unintended outcome of efficient containerisation procedures that fail to account for the oxygen needs of unexpected travellers.

In her piece, Virginie Mamadouh advises that critical geopoliticians, and critical security scholars more generally, attend carefully to anti-immigrant discourses and practices, in this case in Western Europe. Mamadouh's specific object of interest is the geopolitical grammar (a term borrowed from critical geopolitics) of "invasion", so often at the core of anti-immigrant pronouncements, policies, and practices – in name or otherwise. Mamadouh argues that an appropriately critical lens on popular anti-immigration (geo)politics means looking at "invasion" tropes in terms of their historical and geographical specificities. To this end, Mamadouh sketches out the broad contours of several invasion narratives, in France and The Netherlands, since the oil crisis of the 1970s. What Mamadouh proposes is that whereas some aspects of the "invasion" motif repeat themselves, others are very specifically scaled (and dated) such that what counts as "invasion" in France in the late 1970s at the neighborhood level and what counts as "invasion" at the supranational scale in the post-Cold War context is not the same. Invasion may be a common trope, but what animates the invasion trope is not necessarily a constant across time and space.

Mathew Coleman's comprehensive 'coda' in this issue makes a vital contribution to geographies of deportation and exclusion in a historical, long durée approach to extra-legal immigration to the US. Coleman traces how older forms of territorial exclusion have been supplanted by more contemporary forms of legal exclusion. The antecedents of these forms of exclusion date back more than a century in Coleman's analysis, starting from the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the late nineteenth century then moving into

a prevailing Cold War period of deportability and exclusion. For Coleman, 'il-legality' is about extra-legal measures enacted in the name of sovereignty. While many people have scrutinised rendition and extra-legal spaces like Guantánamo with such an approach, Coleman's original contribution here lies in his close readings of spaces and use of legal cases on or within US territory.

Geopolitics and their relation to migration and mobility remain an underdeveloped area of scholarship, but a rich field of embodied politics, processes, and patterns to be critically analysed. Such embodied state-craft distinguishes the theme of 'geopolitics and migration', not just by the sovereign processes that govern displaced and mobile subject, but also by the accountable productions of 'geopolitics from below', analyses that build upon close readings of specific groups from particular historicised places that create new grounds for 'doing geopolitics.'

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