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Off the Map
On Violence and Cartography

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Abstract

This article explores the link between the territorial imperative of the modern state, the exercise of violence and the practice of cartography. After first tracing the ways in which the exercise of 'non-state' coercion has been either eliminated historically or isolated ideologically, the question of the map is brought to bear on the issue of violence and territoriality. The article thus illustrates the importance of cartographic violence: the way the state and its violent constitution of territory have been sanctified through the project of the map.

Key words

▪ cartography ▪ mapping ▪ maps ▪ state ▪ violence

In the modern world, the globe is dominated by states. Virtually every landmass that is not uninhabitable, and even most of those that are uninhabitable, is the territory of one state or another (Morris, 1998: 1, 36, 46; Archibugi, 2000: 137). This is a process that has been achieved through the systematic exercise of violence.

The use of violence in founding societies is now well established in social theory. Similarly, a great deal of work has emerged in recent years which has convincingly shown the importance of the spatial dimension to social order. Drawing on these two trends within social theory, this article aims to tease out some of the issues surrounding the link between the territorial imperative of the modern state and the exercise of violence. After first tracing the ways in which the exercise of 'non-state' coercion has been either eliminated historically or isolated ideologically, I bring the question of the map to bear on the issue of violence and territoriality. The outcome is an argument which aims to show that the state and its violent constitution of territory have been sanctified through the project of the map. From this it follows that social theory concerning the state could do a lot worse than take into account what as a theoretical provocation I shall call cartographic violence.

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The Terror of Territory

The contrast between the political organization of space in modernity and that of pre-modern society is stark. Under the feudal system of rule, boundaries overlapped and multiple authorities existed within any particular region; communities were united by allegiance and personal obligation rather than abstract conceptions of individuality or citizenship within a geographically circumscribed territory. Space was thus organized concentrically around many centres depending on personal-political affiliations constituted as a natural hierarchy formalized by God and centring around precedence and honour. The key question concerning sovereignty was less the question of space and more the question of time: how could sovereignty be passed on through time? As sovereignty shifted from the person of the monarch to the institutions of the state, an important shift took place concerning sovereignty and space. As the contest between the church and the emergent state was gradually resolved in favour of the latter, the concepts and symbols of secular power took on spatial connotations. The body politic came to be understood as continuous not only in time, but also space. It became connected, in other words, with the concept of territory (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 85; Bartelson, 1995: 98). The plurality of hierarchical bonds was replaced by an exclusive identity based upon membership in a common territorial space with a singular centre and established territorial boundaries defined by the sovereign powers and recognized as such within a developing international state system. This development was encouraged by the natural law critique of feudal space: there was no political space in the state of nature, but in creating civil society the social contract authorized just such a political space, whether bounded by absolute authority (Hobbes), private property (Locke) or the general will (Rousseau). Such emergent political space not only separated the modern polity from feudalism, but did so by creating a territorial grounding within which constitutional discourse and political exchange could take place (Lowe, 1982: 63).

The question of space is therefore inherent in the idea of the state. The term 'state' is an etymological hybrid, combining roots from *estate*, referring to land and the property rights over that land, and *status*, referring to authority and the rights associated with a certain standing. In the earliest idiom the state was thought to represent the territorially grounded object of the property rights of sovereign monarchs embodied in a particular *dominium*. In feudal law the same word *dominium* stood for both *ownership* and *lordship*. At the same time *dominion* involved a conjunction of *domain* (space) and *domination* (power). As a form of property right, then, sovereignty is the highest, most complete right of ownership, combining both perfect title and possession. Thus the origins of the modern state as a body with its own domain are based not solely on sovereignty, but upon specific property rights, of which sovereignty comprises a distinct set (Burch, 1998: 143–8). The state could thus see in a particular domain, including the persons within it, its own property.

This domain became thought of as 'territory', a word which comes into its

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own in the same period in which 'state' comes to the fore. Territory has been defined as 'a portion of geographical space that coincides with the spatial extent of a government's jurisdiction . . . the physical container and support of the body politic organized under a governmental structure'. As such, it is often presented as the 'link between space and politics' (Gottman, 1975: 29). Similarly, one of the preconditions underlying the authority and unity of the state since its inception has been that the supreme authority within each independent *regnum* should be recognized as having no rivals within its own territories as a law-making power and an object of allegiance. And the word 'frontier' (*frontière*) originally referred to the façade of a building or the front line of the army, but in the 16th century came to mean the boundaries or borders of a particular space and has been associated with state borders ever since (Febvre, 1973: 208–18).

Thus in the modern state system the overlapping frontier is as anathema as the idea of multiple sovereign bodies within a territory. The edict of Pope Alexander VI in 1492 which gave impetus to the idea of a spatially divided earth by drawing lines delineating certain parts of the globe and specifying which part 'belonged' to which European power was extended and formalized in the 17th century with the Peace of Westphalia (1648), strengthened in the 18th century with the emphasis on territorial ('national') unity in the French and American revolutions, and consolidated in the 20th century with an international state system – a system which became so entrenched that the territorial state became *the* political form to be adopted by all nations. The 'modernization' of politics was thus as much a process of territorialization as it was a process of secularization and rationalization. The form of sovereign power that developed in Europe from the 16th century onward conceived space as bounded. 'Sovereignty', like 'state', implies 'space', and control of a territory becomes the foundation of sovereignty (Lefebvre, 1974: 280; Foucault, 1980: 68–9; 1991: 87). This division of territorial sovereignty between states is most explicit at the point where the fields of power interface: there must be no overlap and no uncertainty about the borders of the territory. As Michael Hardt and Toni Negri (2000: 167) put it, 'modern sovereignty resides precisely on the limit'. This requires a new kind of political geography in which neither overlapping margin nor multiple sovereignty is permitted. (It is precisely because of this exclusive territoriality that Embassies exist. Having created mutually exclusive territories, states found that there was little space left for the conduct of diplomacy. The outcome was little islands of alien sovereignty within the state's territory: the Embassy [see Mattingly, 1955].) At the same time, it requires the permanent policing of territorial boundaries. States become and remain 'sovereign' not just in the sense that they are all-powerful within their territories, but also because they police the borders of a particular space and claim to 'represent' the citizens within those borders.

The consequence of this mutually constitutive relation between territory and state power is that the earth's surface has been inscribed in a particular way – according to the territorial ambitions of the modern state – and space has come to assume absolute priority in the statist political imaginary. Without this essential conjunction of space and politics, sovereignty would lose its meaning. As

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such, we might say that the modern political imaginary is a *territorial* imaginary. That this is so is illustrated by the policy of 'containment' in which a political counter to the Soviet Union was thought to be necessary for territorial reasons, and the broader 20th-century terminological distinction between East and West as friend and foe, with Cuba somehow belonging to the East and Japan co-opted for the West (Buck-Morss, 2000: 22–5).

But there is more to territory than just space. The notion of 'territory' is derived from a complex of terms: from *terra* (of earth, and thus a domain) and *territōrium*, referring to a place from which people are warned off, but is also has links with *terrēre*, meaning to frighten. And the notion of region derives from the Latin *regere* (to rule) with its connotations of military power. Territory is land occupied and maintained through terror; a region is space ruled through force. The secret of territoriality is thus violence: the force necessary for the production of space and the terror crucial to the creation of boundaries. It is not just that sovereignty implies space, then, but that 'it implies a space against which violence, whether latent or overt, is directed – a space established and constituted by violence' (Lefebvre, 1974: 280). As macrosociologists have pointed out time and again, it is the use of physical force in controlling a territory that is the key to the state, for without it any claim to the territory would mean nothing. Put more simply: 'borders are drawn with blood' (General Mladić, cited in Campbell, 1998: 45). A founding violence, and continuous creation by violent means, are the hallmarks of the state.

Part of the construction of the state's territory took the form of defining the *legitimate* use of violence – this is the key to Weber's famous definition of the state as involving a monopoly over the means of violence. To do this, the distinction between the 'legitimate' use of force *by the state* and 'illegitimate' use of force *by non-state actors* had to be made coherent and acceptable to the members of states. During its early history, the state exercised violence alongside and often in conjunction with a range of 'non-state' or 'semi-state' organizations. (These terms are misleading because 'state' itself had not been fully developed, but for the sake of the argument we will leave that issue aside.) Piracy and banditry, for example, were once entirely legitimate practices within the state system, bringing, as they did, revenue to both the sovereign and private investors and weakening enemies by attacking their ships. Piracy on the seas was conducted with the full co-operation and support of cities and states, while banditry, as a form of terrestrial piracy, was conducted with the continual aid of lords. International agreements now have it that piracy, as an act of violence divorced from the authority of any state, is a crime. To reach this state of affairs required a campaign against piracy which relied on a change in the state's attitude from one in which non-state violence was an exploitable resource to one in which it was a practice to be eliminated. The catalyst appears to have been a clash of British interests in the 18th century, when the British East India Company began demanding British Royal Navy protection against British pirates who were operating in collusion with British colonists to plunder British commerce in the East. When the Navy was sent to patrol the Eastern waters, the pirates moved to the Bahamas. Suppressing

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it in American waters in turn pushed the pirates back to Madagascar. Since other states and companies connected with other states found themselves in the same situation, a broader and lasting solution to the problem was sought, and an agreement was reached among the European powers that each state was responsible for controlling piracy in its own waters. But this required that states distance themselves from piratical acts.

> No clear norm could develop, much less be universalized, until the state system produced a clear definition of what constituted piracy. *And this was impossible so long as states continued to regard individual violence as an exploitable resource*. Simply put, piracy could not be expunged until it was defined, and it could not be defined until it was distinguished from state-sponsored or -sanctioned individual violence. (Thomson, 1994: 117–18)

Distinguishing it from state-sponsored or state-sanctioned violence required that states be defined as the sole legitimate organization in the exercise of violence, a process that only occurred towards the end of the 18th century. By challenging the state's claim to a monopoly of the means of violence within a particular territory, piracy and banditry threatened the state system as a whole. Crucially, the delegitimization of piracy relied on pirates being defined as *stateless* persons – persons, that is, for whose actions no state could be held responsible.

Similarly, the word 'bandit' derives from the Italian *bandire*, meaning 'to exile or banish', and thus contains the notion of frontier or border within its very meaning. A bandit is by definition one who exists on the physical borders of the state as well as at the edge of law. In struggling against banditry, states were thus involved in a struggle over the *frontiers of territory* as well as the *exercise of violence*.

> Bandits contributed to the demarcation of territorial states and were partly responsible for the consolidation of state power [through] the 'border effect'. Boundaries took on concrete form in space through the interactions between border guards and bandits who seized upon the jurisdictional ambiguity of these liminal zones as cover for their depredations. (Gallant, 1999: 40)

It is because the bandit throws down a challenge to law, state violence and the territorial imaginary that the state sees in the bandit not just a criminal but a political opponent and, conversely, why many bandits become 'primitive rebels' (Hobsbawm, 1969; 1971). The bandit, like the pirate, was slowly but surely 'banned' from the kind of political order emerging under the state. The 'ban' is symptomatic of the connection between sovereignty and territory being drawn here. The ban designates exclusion from a territory, but also refers to the command and insignia of the sovereign power. The banned are not merely set outside the law but rather are *abandoned* by it, an abandonment that has the full force of state violence to implement it (physical exclusion) and which identifies a territory within which the ban holds: one who has been banned is outside the juridical order of this or that particular state (Agamben, 1998: 29, 109; Nancy, 1993: 44).

In a contemporaneous development, mercenarism was also gradually eradicated. It is often claimed that the absolutist states of the 16th and 17th centuries

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pioneered the professional army. But such armies were far from being the kind of national conscription force which are now the norm. Rather, they were a mixed mass constructed from the 'foreign' and 'professional' soldiers then available to any state. The *condottieri* hired by the 15th-century Italian city-states were essentially contractors – a *condotta* was a contract to make war for a particular sovereign. The German *Unternehmer* conveys the same commercial tone, while etymologically 'soldier' means 'one who serves in an army for pay' not 'one who serves his country'. The extent of mercenarism and its significance to the state is illustrated by the fact that in the 18th century, all the major European armies relied heavily on foreign mercenaries for troops, as Janice Thomson (1994: 10, 88) has shown:

> Half the Prussian army was comprised of mercenaries. Foreigners constituted one-third of the French army. Britain used 18,000 mercenaries in the American war for Independence and 33,000 mercenaries in its 1793 war with France . . . The last instance in which a state raised an army of foreigners was in 1854, when Britain hired 16,500 German, Italian, and Swiss mercenaries for the Crimean war.

For several reasons, however, states gradually stopped hiring their soldiers and sailors from anywhere, and began substituting them with standing armies based on conscription. Following the example of the French Revolution and Napoleon, in which huge effective armies were raised from within France, the practice of mercenarism gradually died out through the 19th century. One factor was sheer cost: states began to realize that fighting forces could be constructed more cheaply from its 'own' citizens. But a further factor was reliability: states realized that an armed force whose relation to the state was purely contractual often dragged its feet and was always ready to rebel; its 'own' citizens, however, were more reliable.

To form mass national armies states therefore had to lay claim to a *monopoly* on the acts of military violence carried out by its own citizens. The US Neutrality Act of 1794, for example, prevented citizens of the United States from enlisting in the service of a foreign state, and prohibited all persons in the US from 'setting on foot' military expeditions against states with which the US was at peace. Such practices of neutrality soon became the standard for other states. In other words, to prevent the enlistment of those individuals increasingly seen as being the state's 'own' citizens, states prevented their citizens from either joining the armies of foreign states or of forming their own armies.[1] On the one side, then, states began to develop an international code on mercenarism. Only at this point does mercenarism become mercenarism – just as 'contraband usually becomes contraband when rulers decide to monopolize the distribution of the commodity in question' (Tilly, 1992: 54), so mercenarism only becomes mercenarism when states decide to use and monopolize the exercise of violence by its own citizens. This was crucial to the states' claim to a monopoly over the means of legitimate violence within its own borders. (It is also one reason, though by no means the only reason, why states felt threatened by the International Brigade in Spain in the 1930s.) On the other side, however, to legitimize this monopoly, each state had to foster a national consciousness among its citizens,

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in order that they would more easily imagine that allegiance to the state of which one is a member is stronger than any allegiance formed through contract. Perry Anderson (1975: 30) suggests that the most obvious reason for the mercenary phenomenon was the natural refusal of the noble class to arm its own peasantry; the nobility understood that it was impossible to train its subjects in the art of war and to simultaneously keep them obedient. But by the late 18th century, the semi-disciplined peasantry had been more or less converted into a working class jointly disciplined through a combination of the new rules of wage-labour and the rationalization of the legal process. Ideologically, the newly emergent citizens were expected to imagine themselves as part of a community held together by and through the state. It is this imagination which has meant that many people are now more repulsed by the mercenary, and especially the citizen who fights against his own state, than by the genuinely foreign enemy. This 'nationalization of the masses' was both material and ideological. It was a component of both the politically centralizing tendencies of the bourgeois class and the ideological tendency to imagine political formations in national rather than international terms. This can be understood as the ideological generation of 'one national class interest' (in Marxist terms) or 'national identity' (in sociological parlance). Either way, what is at stake is the generation of a subjectivity rooted in a political imaginary centred on the state and its national institutions. It is partly for this reason that writers on nationalism stress the importance of the late 18th century for the forming of the nation state. The 'imagined community' of the nation that emerges at this time was a product of the imagined community embodied in the state's territory.

Little is heard these days of the bandit, pirate and mercenary, but thinking about them allows a greater sense of the historic importance over the struggle to delegitimize their practices. This struggle was central to the struggle over the means of violence and thus to the consolidation of the notion of territory. They were the unwitting instruments of history, as Carlo Levi comments on the bandit (1947: 137), in that their existence acted as a major catalyst in the shaping of the state, a process in which they themselves were (almost) swept from history.

One effect of this ideological isolation of non-state violence from other modalities of violence has been to endow state violence with a special sanctity. Since the Peace of Westphalia, the state system has seen non-intervention in a state's domestic affairs as the corollary of the ideological commitment to the protection of state sovereignty. As Cynthia Weber has shown, in modern global political discourse, 'intervention' generally implies a violation of state sovereignty. 'Intervention discourse begins by positing a sovereign state with boundaries that might be violated and then regards transgressions of these boundaries as a problem' (1995: 4, 27).[2] In violating sovereignty, intervention violates the norms of the international state system and the sanctity of the state. As a consequence, intervention comes to function as an *alibi* for the actions carried out in the name of the sovereign state, to such an extent that states use their claim to territorial sovereignty to legitimize genocidal practices against peoples under its rule. The United Nations (UN) has generated for itself a humanitarian air, refusing a seat on the

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General Assembly to such states, but in accepting the state's claim to sovereign territorial control the UN has effectively condoned the sacrifice of human beings to the demands of the territorial state and thus accepted genocide as regular tool of sovereign power (Kuper, 1981: 161–85).

Conversely, while state violence has been endowed with a special sanctity, non-state violence is either ignored entirely or is invested with a unique danger. Identifying 120 wars in 1987, Bernard Nietschmann found that only 3 per cent involved conflict between two sovereign territorial states; the vast bulk of the wars were struggles between states and insurgent groups or nations. Yet these struggles receive very little media or academic attention. One reason for this is that the statist imaginary is so deeply entrenched in our political and intellectual culture that the predominant tendency is to consider struggles against the state to be illegitimate or invisible. They are hidden from view because the struggles are against peoples, movements, formations and countries that are often *not even on the map*. In this war, as Nietschmann (1987) puts it, only one-half of the geography is shown and only one side of the fighting has a name. This last point is only half the story, however, since the 'other' side of the fighting, when it is mentioned, often does go under a generic name intended to capture the unique danger of non-state violence: 'terrorism'.

'Terrorism' retains part of the original double meaning of territory, in that it refers not only to violence, but to space too. Things are usually labelled terrorist when the acts of violence in question are not sanctioned by the state. Where they have been sanctioned by a state, then they always take place outside of that particular state's territories (and usually result in the state in question being labelled a 'rogue state'). What this means, in effect, is that 'terrorism' is in fact *generated* by the international state system; it is the 'other' generated by the system of states. As William Connolly notes (1991: 207), terrorism 'allows the state and the interstate system to protect the logic of sovereignty in the international sphere while veiling their inability to modify systemic conditions that generate violence by non-state agents'. Thus while terrorism appears to threaten the state, any such threat is ultimately superficial, since the production of 'terrorism' by the state in fact protects the identity of particular states and the state system as a whole. The statist political imaginary uses terrorism to effect a political rationalization of violence under the firm control of the state. The declaration of a war on terrorism by the US state and its allies in 2001 proves nothing other than the state's own misunderstanding of the world it has created. (And note that such a declaration was immediately expanded to include designated states which it could then properly confront.)

The standard Left-liberal critique of the category 'terrorism' is to point to the lack of any internationally agreed definition of the term (the UN, NATO and the EU have all struggled to come up with an acceptable definition); or to point to the contradiction involved in the once-denigrated 'terrorist' being feted as 'world statesman' (Mandela), or to the once-celebrated 'freedom fighter' being castigated as terrorist (Bin Laden); or, finally, to object to the hypocrisy of western liberal democracies training and funding armed rebellions in some parts of the globe

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while objecting to armed rebellions elsewhere. While pertinent, these points miss the central point, which is that terrorism is defined according to the *raison d'état* of hegemonic powers. States define terrorism according to their own interests, and the predominant interests are necessarily those of the hegemonic forces. In other words the terrorist, like the mercenary and pirate, is treated as part of a particular (rogue) state's violence. Alternately, they are simply 'off the map'.

Cartographic Violence

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'off the map' as a description of something 'out of existence . . . an insignificant position; of no account; obsolete'. This plays on the usual and common-sense understanding of maps: that they show what exists and that they do so accurately. Maps are generally perceived to be an accurate mirror or graphic representation of some aspect of the real world; cartography is defined as a factual science. But as a wealth of research within the 'new geography' has argued at length, the map is an intensely political object. In the rest of this article I aim to bring some of the insights from this research to bear on the question of violence and territory.

In 1400 few people in Europe used maps, other than the Mediterranean navigators with their portolan charts; by 1600, however, maps had become essential to a wide variety of professions (Buisseret, 1992). This was the very period in which the state came to the fore, and it is the emergence of the state and the need to delineate the borders of states, combined with the search for new trade routes, to which the theory and practice of cartography were committed. The early history of cartography is inseparable from the affirmation of monarchic power and a rising merchant class. Political theorists, advisors, diplomats, courtiers and spies all commended maps to statesmen, who in turn were their systematic collectors. As the abstract state replaced the personalized monarch and the nascent bourgeoisie replaced an aristocracy on the wane, so cartography remained inseparable from the affirmation of state power and integral to the fiscal, political and cultural hegemony of Europe's ruling elites. In this context the state became the principal patron of cartographic activity, and maps of the globe represent the contest between the major European powers for ownership of commercially valuable territories. As territory became more and more obviously central to the state and the multiple sovereignties of the feudal era were replaced by the unitary sovereign state, cartography – as a means of identifying the boundaries of the sovereign state's territories as well as its core features, a means of asserting ownership, sovereignty and legitimacy – emerged as a political discourse concerned with the acquisition and maintenance of state power. To map a territory means to formally define space along the lines set within a particular epistemological and political experience – a way of knowing and dominating – transposing a little-known piece of concrete reality into an abstraction which serves the practical interests of the state, an operation done for and by the state (see Black, 1997; Edney, 1994; Harley, 1988a; Lacoste, 1978).

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The map, then, has been an instrument of power. On a superficial level it is easy to see why the map appears to be a graphic representation of some aspect of the real world, for it presupposes the existence of borders and boundary lines. Logically this would appear to mean that boundary lines must exist *before* the map. But in reality the reverse has been true. As Thongchai Winichakul comments, 'it is the concept of a nation in the modern geographical sense that requires the necessity of having boundary lines clearly demarcated. A map may not just function as a medium; it could well be the creator of the supposed reality.' Sovereignty does not just imply space, it *creates* it; left to itself, the earth has no political form. We need to therefore appreciate the political function of maps in *constructing* rather than merely reproducing the world and in *creating* rather than merely tracing borders. Borders are constructed through a socio-political process; to the extent that the map helps create the borders, so it helps create the thing which is being bordered: the geo-body created literally on paper (Winichakul, 1998: 56; also see Black, 1997: 18; Ferguson, 1996: 177; Turnbull, 1996: 5–23; Wood, 1992: 17–19). Given that the world being constructed is one in which the earth's surface is carved up under the territorial ambitions of political states, mapping is thus a crucial instrument in concretizing the territorial desire of states on to the earth's surface, constituting the social order by shaping the way land is imagined. In fabricating the territorial foundation of order, it is no exaggeration to describe the map as a having a *police function* (in the sense suggested in Neocleous, 2000), delineating the contours of power and property through which civil society is administered and violence exercised.

This is abundantly clear from the wealth of research on the role of maps in the construction of colonial space and exercise of imperial violence. The imperial powers used maps as a means of shaping colonial spaces in advance. J.B. Harley (1992a: 531) has outlined how

> The division of the world by a Pope – on a map – *preceded* the arrival of most European peoples, yet it endangered political demarcations that were and were meant to be enduring. The names New England, New France, or New Spain were placed on maps long *before* the settlement frontiers of New England, New France, or New Spain became active zones of European settlement. John Smith's well-known map of New England of 1614, with its carefully fabricated English names, *preceded* the arrival of Puritan settlers.

And once in power, imperial adventurers were always quick to utilize the map in fabricating a particular order among the indigenous population, as a number of writers have shown (Edney, 1997; Harley, 1990; Huggan, 1989; King, 1996; Winichakul, 1998). The ability to impose names that would then take root in the territory was a key feature of the colonial process. When Columbus arrived in the 'Indies', he imposed his own names for the islands over the already existing names of the natives. When the French mapped Martinique and Guadeloupe after the Seven Years War (1756–63), the mapping was carried out with a view as to the plantation system being put in place – the names of owners but not those of workers were noted – and with the need to provide information on the

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territory with future hostilities with England in mind. More generally, the nomadic nature of many of the native peoples of Africa, Asia and Australasia was deemed problematic to a process which needed to locate people in space, and was thus gradually eradicated. Mapping was functional to the reorganization and redistribution of space to suit such an exercise of power, and cartography, with its strategies of inscription, enclosure and hierarchization proved a crucial technique for the acquisition, management and reinforcement of colonial power, providing a portrait of how successfully the search for territory by expansionist European states had helped them shape the New World.

Cartography's predisposition towards colonialism and imperialism was derived in part from the strength of the historic tie between the discipline of geography (which became a formal discipline taught in universities in the heyday of imperial power) and the state. Far from being something already possessed by the earth, geography has been an active writing of the earth by an expanding, centralizing imperial state. State sovereignty has developed out of an almost mythical power of geographic authority, inscribing lines of antagonism and identity across the face of the earth (Luke, 1993; Ó Tuathail, 1996: 2, 109). This active writing on the part of the imperial state correlates with the fact that, as Edward Said notes (1993: 271; also 1991: 12), imperialism is an act of *geographical* violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control. And once in place, the map helped to illuminate the late colonial state's style of thinking about its domain, part of the totalizing classificatory grid which the state uses to order and comprehend civil society. In helping the European powers create a world in their own image, cartography helped stabilize the earth's surface around the territorial imaginary of the modern state.

In being used to assert and settle territorial claims, the political importance of the map is obvious: it is one of the most explicit assertions of sovereignty. But as the colonial experience suggests, the labour of power involved in mapping is a labour of identifying, bounding, naming and inventorying the territory or homeland of the state. Map-makers were historically charged with the same task as information-gatherers had concerning citizens: to make space an object of political knowledge (Anderson, 1991: 173, 184). Spatial politics in general and map-making in particular are thus inextricably bound up with the intelligence-gathering tendencies of modern statecraft. It is impossible to undertake an accurate census or other forms of statistical administration unless there is some territorial framework on which to base the work. In cataloguing space, the map adds documentary intelligence concerning territory to the wealth of other intelligence the state holds about itself. It increases the legibility of the territory by identifying key features of the geographical order fabricated by the state. Etymologically the map is a conception of the arrangement of something as much as it is a representation of the earth's surface. The state's cartographic violence thus helps it define who or what exists and in what order. Maps are thus a means of both physical colonization and conceptual control, involving both a cognitive paradigm as well as a practical means of political administration.

As a form of knowledge, maps have therefore been brought under the veil of

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secrecy which shrouds the modern state. Maps were historically regarded as privileged knowledge, with access given only to those close to the core of state power; map secrecy, like other forms of secrecy, came to be regarded as a prudent policy of good government. This practice of cartographic secrecy can be traced back to the 16th-century Spanish and Portuguese policy of *siglio*. The Spanish kept their official charts in a locked box secured with two locks and keys held by different persons, while Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal banned the dissemination of geographical documents and shrouded them in a veil of secrecy. Columbus's voyages from 1492 to 1515 yielded massive amounts of geographical information and generated a range of maps which the Spanish tried to keep secret, and his journal was also treated as a secret document (and subsequently lost). In the first decade of the 16th century the Castillan court established the *Casa de Contración*, a department to oversee exploration and to house in secrecy the documents produced including the master world map, the *Padron Real* (Boorstin, 1983: 267–71; Mukerji, 1983: 91–7).

Such secrecy is said to be anathema to the modern democratic polity. One of the tropes of liberal democratic discourse is that 'our' maps are neutral, accurate, objective and above all open, while non-liberal democratic regimes maintain non-neutral, inaccurate, biased and above all secret maps – it is well known that Soviet street maps of Moscow used to 'overlook' the KGB building on Dzerzhinski Square, despite the fact that one could hardly miss it. But there is abundant evidence that certain forms of cartographic secrecy continue to this day in all regimes. Official map-making agencies have traditionally been reticent about publishing the details of military installations, for example, and even about publishing the details of the rules which govern the publication of such information. There are places which do not officially exist and which therefore cannot appear on maps. In Britain the organization responsible for maps, the Ordnance Survey, operates a system for grading certain types of building or location. A nuclear weapons establishment is graded 'S' and the Ordnance Survey ensures that such places remain 'secret' by 'vanishing' from the maps. Other vanishing sites are coded 'U' and 'F', and cover such things as GCHQ radio stations and government-owned oil terminals. Maps of Catoctin Mountain National Park in western Maryland generally camouflage Camp David, the Presidential retreat. Some states, such as Greece, publish maps with large blank areas (Harley, 1988b; 1992b; *New Statesman*, May 1983). Under the guise of 'national security', then, maps are universally censored, kept secret and falsified. The liberal response to this has been to demand 'accuracy': states should live up to the supposedly scientific nature of the cartographic endeavour by aiming to achieve the most accurate maps possible; any political interference with this is by definition wrong. But 'accuracy' here is misleading, for it assumes that maps are intended to achieve a literally accurate representation of the thing that they map. A far better notion might be one of efficiency (King, 1996: 31, 36; Blakemore and Harley, 1980: 99). Maps are intended to convey the concepts or information intended by the dominant political forces, and a better question would ask how efficiently they do this. That some maps may be 'inaccurate' could well be part of their efficiency.

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A key component of the claim to accuracy is the map's apparently authorless condition, which provides it with a certain neutrality. As Denis Wood (1992: 22, 70, 105) argues, part of the map's power lies in the *disappearance* of the author. Author and interest become marginalized or done away with altogether, and the represented world comes to fill our vision. The apparent absence of author and interest encourages us to forget that this is a picture someone has arranged for us, chopped and manipulated, selected and coded. Soon enough the map becomes the world and the reality of the thing most commonly represented – the borders of states – becomes entrenched in the political imagination.

Two things follow from this mystification. First, the map performs a crucial role in the cultural integration of the people (again: the 'one class interest' or 'national identity') by helping form an image of the state with which inhabitants can identify. Through the myth of unity and naturalness, maps homogenize the land's inhabitants and focus their political imagination around the ('nation')state. The apparently non-political weather map, to take a mundane example, takes as its point of reference the political unit.

> Thus, in Britain, the inhabitant of Kent is provided with more information about the situation in distant Westmorland than in nearby Pas-de-Calais, which is in a different nation-state. The former is assumed to be more relevant . . . [The map] is a statement of the centrality of the national sphere even in fields in which the state . . . plays no role. (Black, 1997: 12, 17, 88)

And the constant reiteration of cartographic images of the state in, for example, rail and road maps also ensures that the shape and territorial outline of the state becomes clearly established. A polity imagines itself, and is imagined by others, in part through its cartographic image. The centrality of the form of the state to the process of mapping facilitates the identification of individual citizens with a particular territorial imagination of the space with which they are expected to identify and be most concerned. Moreover, the territorial imaginary figures one's emotional roots in *this* homeland as real physical roots in *this* soil. The cartographical convention testifies to a key component of the ideology of statism: that however mixed the human experience within its borders, a unitary and 'natural' state power predominates overall. If, as I have argued elsewhere (Neocleous, 2003), the administrative and statistical tabulation of the census populates the national body with fractured subjects, then the map helps enact immanent political units, relocating these subjects in a (re)unified body politic and thereby functioning as a crucial building block in the construction of national identity.

Second, in obliterating significant political questions, the map serves to *naturalize* the historically contingent. Pierre Bourdieu comments that 'every established order tends to produce . . . the naturalization of its own arbitrariness' (1977: 164). By encouraging a belief in the naturalness of the state the cartographic enterprise encourages the state to see and think of its territory in terms of 'natural' boundaries, and thus its very existence naturalized. The intensely *political* and *violent* processes through which borders are established and social order is fabricated are obliterated: the social order established by the state appears

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as a natural order established by geography. The map thus plays an important role in the ruling class tendency to erase from historical memory the violence and bloodshed out of which the state was born. Map, territory and power become mutually implicated in one another, as the map encourages a primordialist thesis about the autochthonous state, depoliticizing and ideologically mystifying the original violence through which the state and its territory were shaped. Actions conducted under *raison d'État* appear to contain the interests not of an arbitrarily configured political power, but of natural (biological, organic) needs. The great achievement of this naturalization is to have depoliticized inter-state rivalry into a set of natural geographical 'facts of life' (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995: 57; Krishna, 1994: 514). Territory and terror are ideologically torn asunder.

As a consequence, the map helps mask the violence that brings the state into being and the interests that sustain the ideological preponderance of the state system. Borders may be drawn in blood, but the blood never appears on the page. It is the repetitive impact of the image of the territory mapped that lends credence to the claims of control; that is the way of myth. From the perspective of myth, the delineation of the state's borders is of the essence. Outside the world of maps, states carry on a precarious existence for, as I have been arguing, to map a state is to assert its territorial expression; to leave a state off a map is to deny its existence. Thus the map is crucial to the recognition of the state as an international subject, for an unmapped state is an unrecognized one, and vice versa. A 'state' without an internationally recognized territory is no state at all; like the pirate, the mercenary and the terrorist, it is 'off the map'. As a crucial political technology of space, then, the map simultaneously illustrates the politics of territoriality which gave birth to and sustains the state, and yet also masks the ideological and violent nature of this project. In dominating the political imagination in this way the map legitimizes the great movement of territorialization through which the whole earth has been turned into an object of state ownership. Any other form of politics is regarded as obsolete, of no account at all.

Notes

1 The importance of this practice was reinforced in the 'war on terrorism' of 2001, in which the British Home Office seized passports from British Muslims aiming to travel to fight for the Taliban.

2 Conversely, it is also the case that few nations bother to imprison people for crimes committed elsewhere, and when they do, as the case of Panama's Manuel Noriega shows, it is highly controversial. When the Ayatollah Khomeini called for Salman Rushdie's head, it stunned everyone because he was trying to push one nation's death penalty over the line of the nation (Richards, 1993: 2).

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