

ARTICLE

Historicising popular geopolitics

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Abstract

Critical geopolitics has long recognised the role of history in geopolitics, yet popular geopolitics research is often ahistorical, focusing on ongoing conflicts without recognising the context of past wars and ideologies. In this paper, I review the literature on historical popular geopolitics. I use the literary technique of new historicism to evaluate the ways in which geographers have historicised popular geopolitics, in terms of their ideological contexts and influences on the present. Much of this work deals with various forms of media such as films and comic books, often read as products of their time or of their authors' ideologies. Some geographers, however, have been able to combine historicism with non-representational methodologies to study embodiment, practices of consumption, and affect. I reflect that historicism is vital for understanding the continuity of geopolitics.

KEYWORDS

critical geopolitics, cultural, cultural geography, culture, geopolitics, political, political geography, representation, research methods

1 | INTRODUCTION: A “RELENTLESS CONTINUITY”

“Geography is about power,” begins Ó Tuathail (1996, p. 1) in *Critical Geopolitics*. “Imperial systems throughout history...exercised their power through their ability to impose order and meaning upon space.” Critical geopolitics is the interrogation of geopolitics, the ways in which power is exerted on territory; it describes the “intellectual practices of unraveling and deconstructing geographical and related disguises, dissimulations, and rationalizations of

Informative: A paper which reviews critical geopolitics literature which uses historical research methods to analyse popular geopolitics. Work from cultural geography, political geography, and historical geography is discussed. The first part of the paper particularly discusses representation and visual media in historical research; the second part focuses on audience research and feminist geopolitics.

power" (Dalby, 1994, p. 595; Hyndman, 2004, p. 308). Geopolitics has various sites of production, "both 'high' (like a national security memorandum) and 'low' (like the headline of a tabloid newspaper)" (Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998, p. 5)—disseminated through popular media as well as governance.

The field of popular geopolitics has emerged to study how popular culture places people within broader political narratives (Dittmer, 2005, p. 626), offering "a 'bridge' between the individual and the mass" (Fox, 2004, p. 95, cited in Pinkerton & Dodds, 2009, p. 22). Much of this work focuses on visual media and the geopolitics of art, film, comic books, and video games. More recently, audience relationships to popular geopolitics have been interrogated with work on new geopolitical frontiers such as message boards and social media.

Popular geopolitics is vital to critical geopolitics but so is history. Ó Tuathail (1996, p. 176) argues that critical geopolitics assumes a "relentless continuity to international politics." Various geographers have grounded their work in this continuity. This article's purpose is to review the ways in which geographers have historicised popular geopolitics, showing the ways in which modern media continues the politics of historical media.

In using historicism, though, we must avoid an empirical approach, which takes historical texts as written. Levinson calls this an "oracular model of history," the idea that the past can be constructed, voiced, and taken as "truthful" (Levinson, 2012, p. 357). As Hoover argues, the tendency in older historical studies to assume reliable sources is at odds with modern critical theory and its deconstruction of texts (Hoover, 1992, pp. 357–358). This essentialist approach risks ignoring spatial contexts and power relations, especially the power of the historians themselves.

The alternative is "new historicism," named by Greenblatt to summarise critical literary approaches to historicism (Greenblatt, 1982; Greenblatt, 1989, p. 1). In new historicism, "there is no *universal* meaning or truth in history[.] the meaning imputed to history reflects power relations at the time of writing as well as the time of the event's occurrence" (Hoover, 1992, p. 356, emphasis added). In other words, new historicism is about context. Historical events influence present events, yet individual moments in time are so contextually and culturally distinct that they are incomparable (Hoover, 1992, p. 360). Additionally, new historicism acknowledges the role of the historian in writing history. Readings of historical texts are influenced by the lives and ideologies of both the author of the text (Porter, 1988, cited in Hoover, 1992, p. 363) and its critic (Levinson, 2012, p. 360; Hoover, 1992, p. 360). New historicism breaks down the essentialism of "old" historicism and offers more nuanced ways of working with history.

The methodologies of new historicism, it seems to me, are similar to the ways in which geographers study popular geopolitics. Popular geopolitics is about the transformation of geopolitics and ideologies through media into texts for public consumption, suggesting textual methodologies to analyse their discourses. (Even when geographers employ non-representational methodologies, our knowledge of history may be drawn from textual sources, making some engagement with text unavoidable.) The ways in which new historicism may be mobilised to discuss a text, an artefact informed by its historical contexts and discourses (e.g., Levinson, 2012, 359), parallel the uses of context and discourse in textual analysis in geography (Rose, 2001); and although the "incomparable" nature of cultural moments in new historicism apparently contradicts the "relentless continuity" of geopolitics, the survival of certain forms of media—films and comic books—offers a point of comparison itself, as these media and their tropes and ideologies are adapted to match the present cultural moment. In other words, "geopolitical thought has found numerous different expressions in different places, yet...there are some continuities through time as these ideas are re-worked at different sites" (Atkinson, 2000, p. 94). Both new historicism and popular geopolitics explore context and lived experience rather than uncritical readings of sources, and I shall explore this parallel here.

I argue that a nuanced approach to historicism and context can inform historical geographical studies of popular geopolitics. This argument will hopefully strike the reader as obvious, but historicism is not attended to in the popular geopolitics literature as consistently as one might hope, perhaps due to the ephemerality of mass media or the compulsion to focus on "the current 'battle'" (Dittmer, 2007, p. 402). The historical is sometimes acknowledged in passing or studied separately to the contemporary, without the linkages and tensions between the two time periods being explored (at least in the Anglophonic literature; I cannot speak for the state of historical geography elsewhere). A sustained engagement with historicism could interrogate the "relentless continuity" of both modern and historical

popular geopolitics, and the nuanced textual and non-representational methodologies of geography would avoid the essentialist pitfalls of “old historicism.”

As historicism is a literary and textual technique, I first review the study of texts and media in popular geopolitics to explore their application of historical techniques. I then outline more modern audience-centric methodologies in popular geopolitics; historical methods are more difficult to integrate here, yet this work still demonstrates the potential value of historicism even to non-representational geographies. The literature collected here exhibits the many ways in which popular geopolitics have been, can be, and perhaps should be historicised.

2 | HISTORICISING THE TEXT: REPRESENTATIONAL APPROACHES

A good starting point for discussing historicism in popular geopolitics work is the discipline of geography itself. The history of geography links formal imperial geopolitics and modern popular geopolitics. For example, Ó Tuathail places the early 20th century political geographer Halford Mackinder in an imperial context to demonstrate that his ideology was “patriarchal rather than democratic” and “owe[d] much to Romanticism” (Ó Tuathail, 1992, p. 115). Mackinder's work was a product of imperial discourse rather than the supposedly ahistorical Cold War text that, Ó Tuathail notes, it is read as by modern governments and commentators. Kearns elaborates on this by comparing Mackinder's work with modern geographical debates and American imperialism (Kearns, 2010, pp. 198–201). Geographical education also influences popular geopolitics in Italy, as Atkinson argues. The Italian geopolitical journal *Limes* “draws upon and renegotiates geopolitical traditions for its contemporary context” (Atkinson, 2000, p. 110); moments in Italy's history, such as instabilities in the 1930s and 1990s, show similarities, which are interpreted by geopolitical scholarship (*ibid.*, p. 112).

These papers suggest a continuity in the popular and educational geopolitics of imperialism, showing a clear and nuanced use of historicism. Contemporary discourses echo the academic statecraft of the past, despite shifts in context and culture between then and now, but much geographical work studies popular media situated in the past. To historicise this, geographers engage closely with the texts' immediate contexts—the political and ideological landscapes in which they were published—to identify their ideologies. (Context is just one facet of historicism rather than the whole; I use context here to establish the overlaps between popular geopolitics work and historicism but not all this work historicises completely, as I argue later in this section.)

Reviewing this work shows that many historical geopolitical texts are contextualised by imperialism. For example, they may be expressions of “manifest destiny,” the colonial American doctrine of expansionism. Sage uses the genre of American astronomical art to trace the popular geopolitics of manifest destiny by comparing it to 19th century American landscape art (Sage, 2008). Sharp's analysis of the *Reader's Digest* from 1930 to 1945 indicates that the magazine was both product and producer of historical geopolitics—“caught up in the mythos of Manifest Destiny and National Exceptionalism [...the editor] wanted the Digest's success to be recorded by influence, by the number of people who read it and subscribed to its values” (Sharp, 1996, p. 567). (This work is itself a historicisation of earlier work on the Digest—see Sharp, 1993.) These analyses of manifest destiny are a subtle form of historicism: This older national mythos informs our reading of art and magazines published many years later.

In this respect, there is an overlap with the earlier work on academic geography, where historical ideologies perpetuate themselves in later textual forms. Much of academic statecraft, especially the logic of colonialism, found its way into historical popular geopolitics as well as modern geopolitics, as Driver shows in his examination of the age of exploration and its public perception (Driver, 2001). Similarly, Atkinson explores how Italian geographers used exploration reports and geographical surveys to fuel interest in Italian colonialism (Atkinson, 2005, pp. 17–18); this influenced later popular geopolitics when this mode of teaching was used to legitimise fascist expansionism (*ibid.*, pp. 22–24). (Massively influential work on colonial literature's historical context has been performed outside geography; see Barnett on postcolonial theory and representation [Barnett, 2006, pp. 153–156], or, of course, Achebe, 1977, on *Heart of Darkness*.)

Maps are especially insidious for justifying imperial perceptions of space. Cartography is often perceived as a scientific, objective method of depicting space, disguising the cartographer's ability to select and distort information to fit their ideology (Harley, 1992). Thus, special attention is paid to context by critical geographers and cartographers looking past the empirical readings that maps encourage. Many scholars have critically analysed the "geopolitical map," drawn by the state as propaganda and their use to support the Nazi regime's territorial goals (Boria, 2008; Herb, 1997). Heffernan (2009) demonstrates that the British and French press were not above manipulative mapping either, depicting African regions as adventurous or resource-rich lands to support colonial projects.

In addition to ideologies and discourses of imperialism, popular geopolitics may also be contextualised by war. Authors may use their texts to (try to) influence the public, justifying wars, or demonising enemy nation states. Such was the case with radio, integral to British popular geopolitics of the 20th century because of how it aimed to unify the nation towards common goals—Pinkerton and Dodds explore the "tensions of using a democratizing medium such as radio for the purpose of centralizing control over a populace" (Pinkerton & Dodds, 2009, pp. 22).

Cinematic geopolitical work is particularly strong at connecting war to popular geopolitics. Film was an important medium for the British state to present geopolitics to the public during the second World War (Dodds, 2006, p. 119). The United States used film similarly; Ó Tuathail examines the Third Reich in wartime American cinema, focusing on the sensationalised representation of the political geographers Karl and Albrecht Haushofer and their association with the Nazi regime, despite the gulf between their theories and Nazi war strategy in practice (Ó Tuathail, 1996, p. 115). Beyond the World Wars, the United States used cinema to "reinvent itself as a benevolent defender of 'freedom' and 'democracy' worldwide" (Hughes, 2007, p. 986, citing Power & Crampton, 2005, p. 195). Sharp argues that post-Cold War American film aims to identify a new post-Soviet antagonist to perpetuate American masculinity, nationalism, and geographies of danger beyond the Cold War (Sharp, 1998, pp. 159–160). In these examples, cinematic geopolitics is tied to the history of geopolitics itself; the context of wartime films reveals them to be elite-driven distortions of popular geopolitics.

Historical context can also reveal more subversive discourses embedded in texts, illustrated by two examples from the history of comics and cartooning. Dittmer discusses the superhero Captain America as American nationalism, bridging "the scales of the nation and the body" (Dittmer, 2007, p. 405; see also Dittmer, 2005, p. 627). Historical context shows the contradiction between Captain America's early popular geopolitics and the U.S. government's ideology; whereas politicians favoured isolationism during the early second World War, Captain America's debut depicted him pummelling Hitler (Dittmer, 2007, p. 407). Dodds analyses the output of British cartoonist Steve Bell during the Falklands War as a product of popular geopolitics, which satirises the context provided to state geopolitics by "historical and cultural fantasy" (Dodds, 1996, abstract; see also Dodds, 1998, regarding Steve Bell on Bosnia); such fantasies are discussed throughout, such as the invocation of the second World War as a justifying metaphor. Captain America and Steve Bell are placed in their historical contexts to understand them. They voice the popular geopolitics of dissent and are not empirical sources summarising the national political mood during wartime.

Dodds' work on Bell also points to a different form of context, which historicises popular geopolitics. Dodds notes that he initially analysed a recurring penguin character in Bell's cartoons as a mockery of "the ambivalence of our European colleagues" only to learn from Bell himself that he forgot what the penguin was for and had to improvise (Dodds, 1996, p. 577). This anecdote highlights that authorial contexts as well as ideological contexts influence understandings. Several geographers have used authorial context effectively in this way in addition to Dodds. Dunnett's overview of *Tintin* suggests that the character's creator Hergé's youth as a Boy Scout and career in the conservative press may have driven the comic's imperial representations (Dunnett, 2009). Driver's analysis of the map of the British Empire is informed by the contradictions between the map's imperial purpose and its socialist cartographer Walter Crane (Driver, 2010, p. 152, citing Biltcliffe, 2005). Such examples show how popular geopolitics in historical texts are informed or even challenged by their producers' personal histories.

Work on authors and ideologies in historical media echoes new historicism by attending to the specific historical contexts that produced these texts. This use of context does not necessarily historicise popular geopolitics, in the sense of exploring the continuity of geopolitics across time, but this continuity is visible: many forms of media existed

in the past before geopolitical developments—world wars and terrorist attacks—transformed them into products of today's popular geopolitics. Textual analyses of popular geopolitics could quite easily be historicised by looking at then and now and the transformations of discourses in between.

Indeed, many geographers have performed this historicisation but across bodies of work rather than within one article. To give just a few examples from this review, Sharp has examined the past and present of the *Reader's Digest* (1993, 1996); Dodds has analysed Bell's cartoons alongside the recent history of European wars (1996, 1998); Dittmer has discussed Captain America's origins and post-9/11 geopolitics (2005, 2007); Atkinson has explored the history of Italian geographical education from imperialism to fascism to the present (2000, 2005). Timelines of popular geopolitics and media emerge from the broader research projects visible across these articles, and of course, geographers may make this historicism explicit in longer articles and books drawing out the continuous history of these texts. Dittmer, for example, has done this with his Captain America work (Dittmer, 2012).

But this may take for granted that the reader knows the author's other work. Without this extra background, these articles often do not employ their historical positions well enough. At its least nuanced, popular geopolitics work can just be a snapshot of history, without any deep acknowledgement of a greater network of influences or echoes in the text, except perhaps for a token reference to 9/11 in the introduction. Even if the author is otherwise aware of the text's position in the history of geopolitics, the work itself misses opportunities to historicise popular geopolitics effectively.

This problem is apparent in studies of new media such as video games. The use of critical geopolitics here is often excellent, but it simply lacks the historical groundwork that would fully contextualise it. Here, I speak from personal experience, as I am working with the popular geopolitics of gaming. The work on play and popular geopolitics has developed interesting historical dimensions; for instance, there is Macdonald's analysis of the Corporal missile as both weapon and miniaturised children's toy (Macdonald, 2008) or Carter and Woodyer's work on the reimagining of history and military iconography in children's play (Carter & Woodyer, 2015).

However, this historical work is not reflected well in the geographies of video games. Some great historical research exists, of course, such as Stahl, who argues that the race for war games to be as contemporary as possible is a by-product of the televised war's emphasis on the present over the past (Stahl, 2010, p. 100). Perhaps because of this emphasis, though, much of the geographical work on games has been ahistorical (Stahl works in speech communication, not geography). This work usually studies modern first-person shooter war games as an assertion of American morality against the terrorist "other" (e.g., Power, 2007; Shaw, 2010) with little mention of this binary's playful history.

My thesis work addresses this by using World War era British board games to historicise such war games. Where do the tropes of modern war games come from? Has play and gaming historically been used to establish geopolitical morality? I historicise wargaming by comparing the purposes and contexts of such board games with the geopolitics that inspired them, as well as with modern geographical critiques of video games. Even 100 years ago, board game creators were designing games to support wars and ideologies of imperialism and militarism. In some respects, board games are better at this than video games; for example, whereas the video game presents a "clean war" where bodies die neatly and fade from view quickly (Power, 2007, p. 285), the captured board game piece is removed from the board, making violence abstract and invisible. I mention this to illustrate that even modern geographical critiques of popular geopolitics can be historicised. The "clean war" gains nuance when we understand that video games inherit design ideas from board games (see Deterding, 2010, p. 36), influenced by the geopolitics of past centuries as well as modern ideologies.

3 | HISTORICISING THE POPULACE: "POPULAR GEOPOLITICS 2.0"

This review has primarily discussed textual representations of geopolitics. By placing these representations in their historical contexts, they can be interpreted as part of a network of interactions with popular and state geopolitics, and their influence on modern popular geopolitics can be analysed, but some political geographers have critiqued this

representational focus in popular geopolitics. For Koopman, “there has been a gendering of these discussions” due to a lack of feminist political geography; such discussions often lead to an inherent elitism, analysing media power rather than consumers of media (Koopman, 2011, p. 275). Dittmer and Gray concur; for them, the failure to analyse practices of consumption as well as texts “has a discretely gendered dimension—rendering consumers as passive and apolitical,” building on feminist geopolitical critiques of the masculinist binary between “public/political” and “private/apolitical” (Dittmer & Gray, 2010, p. 1666).

In response, much recent popular geopolitics work focuses not on authors and the ideologies that influence them but on consumers, their perceptions of text, and their own negotiations of popular geopolitics. This focus is summarised in Dittmer and Gray’s call for a “popular geopolitics 2.0.” They suggest methodologies, which combine feminist theory, non-representational theory, and audience studies to prioritise practices of embodiment, affect, and consumption over the perceived intentions of elite media producers (2010, pp. 1671–1673). These three concepts—embodiment, affect, and consumption—offer rich possibilities for understanding the personal, small-scale impacts of popular geopolitics.

With these possibilities, however, come methodological challenges for historicising popular geopolitics. Historicism here is a textual approach, which relies on the availability of mass media as a research object. Indeed, the text is inescapable in much historical work, which relies on texts to access the distant past, where nobody who lived through this past is still alive to be asked directly about embodiment or affect or consumption, but in my experience of working with archives, one is far more likely to find mass-produced historical geopolitics (e.g., comic books) than to find evidence of how these geopolitics were interpreted by audiences (e.g., diaries and letters and personal works, which are less likely to have been mass-produced or survived to the modern day). The non-representational approaches that Dittmer and Gray call for are important but require access to emotions and audiences that may not always be possible with historical research.

Because of this, and perhaps because of the modernity of these approaches, there are fewer studies of historical popular geopolitics using the methodologies of “popular geopolitics 2.0” than studies that use purely textual methodologies, but such studies do exist. Many of these work around the text as historical source, using representations to access non-representational ideas. Feminist geopolitics work may consider the embodied and gendered popular geopolitics of authors writing geopolitical texts or of readers responding to or subverting them. Audience studies might explore diaries as personal reactions to geopolitics or historicise responses to texts then and now, and researchers of affect might reverse the usual approach to historicism; instead of using ideologies to contextualise texts, the text may be used to access the historical “emotional regimes” (Reddy, 2001) of ideologies. This second half of the article reviews the extant literature on these approaches, beginning with embodiment and feminist geopolitics.

Hyndman defines feminist geopolitics as “adding a potentially reconstructive political dimension to [critical geopolitics] crucial but at times unsatisfactory deconstructionist political impulses” (Hyndman, 2004, p. 309). Whereas much of critical geopolitics settles for exposing the ways in which (popular) geopolitics exert influence, feminist geopolitics “reworks what geopolitics means by re-envisioning who does it, how, and at what scales” (Koopman, 2011, p. 276); it focuses on how individuals may respond to such influence and create their own geopolitics, “forg [ing] more accountable and material conceptions and scales of security” (Hyndman, 2004, p. 308).

While there is not a huge amount of historical work in feminist geopolitics, the field is not ignorant of history’s role in perpetuating geopolitics. Hyndman notes the work of the Subaltern Studies Group, which challenges the “official” history of India through ethnographic and strategic approaches, emphasising and normalising the narratives of marginalised identities to alter prevailing historical discourses (Hyndman, 2004, p. 308). Gayarti Spivak is highlighted as an academic who reappropriates normalising strategies, including the textual strategies used in some popular geopolitics work, to address the violence performed by historical discourse (Spivak, 1996). Here, we see a major element of new historicism: its understanding that “the historian is part of the historical process too” (Hoover, 1992, p. 360). If geopolitics is rooted in history, then challenging official histories is crucial to challenging geopolitics; historicism is employed to subvert popular geopolitics as well as understand them. The historicism of the Subaltern Studies Group here is a perfect example of reconstructionism in feminist geopolitics. If appeals to history and power are a

geopolitical strategy to perpetuate war and imperialism, they may be reappropriated to resist imperialism and build a better geopolitics for the marginalised.

Elsewhere, work on embodiment in popular geopolitics has used context to gender studies of historical texts. Work on women in imperial travel writing demonstrates this. McEwan (1998) discusses the ways in which female travellers in the British Empire, despite being barred from formal academia, wrote texts, which influenced the public's geographical imaginations of Africa, in contrast to masculinist and Eurocentric histories of geography. Kearns (1997) compares the gendered imperial subjectivities of Mackinder and the traveller Mary Kingsley, particularly the ways in which Kingsley balanced authoritative writing with performances of femininity and masculinity. There is little historicisation of popular geopolitics in these studies themselves, but they deepen critical geopolitical work on imperialism's influences on today's popular geopolitics. Gender's role in the production of popular geopolitical discourses challenges the assumed gendered binaries of textual production and consumption (Dittmer & Gray, 2010, 1666).

The consumption of such discourses is equally important, as masculine ideologies in popular geopolitics become negotiated by individuals. Mills (2011) uses historical research to probe such ideologies in the Girl Scout movement, which established itself against traditional expectations of boyhood and militarism. She argues that Girl Scouts were not deliberately resisting male hegemony; rather, female scouting was a product of girls simply wishing to participate in the same popular and playful militarised spaces as boys. Again, historicism demonstrates possibilities for reconstructing popular geopolitics in more progressive ways, even when this process is not framed as active resistance.

This touches on audience studies, another methodological strand, which Dittmer and Gray suggest that popular geopolitics should draw on. Historical audience research in geopolitics is not always possible, as I have mentioned; it often relies on finding personal texts such as diaries or letters, as opposed to mass-produced texts, which are more likely to have been preserved. Yet some geographers have discussed historical audiences in this way. Mills' research on Girl Scouts is one example. Similarly, Macdonald (2006) examines the emotional appeal of geopolitics with his analysis of one schoolboy's experience watching the Corporal missile being launched. Using the boy's memoirs, he discusses the Corporal as geopolitical spectacle, complementing his later work on the missile as a toy (Macdonald, 2008), but mundanity and ambivalence are also to be found in historical audience research; Pinkerton's archival work on the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC's) broadcasts in India in 1970 argues that Indian audiences recognised and resisted the BBC's discourses of British imperialism yet accepted discourses of Indian nationalism as they did so (Pinkerton, 2008, pp. 540–541).

This research contextualises historical popular geopolitics by revealing the ideologies and practices of the public, but there is little historicism in the sense of uncovering connections to modern popular geopolitics. To use audience research to this end, we might compare a historical text to modern interpretations of it, to analyse how (or if) the ideological assumptions behind the text have changed. Dodds (2006) has examined how audiences discuss the James Bond films and their political discourses on online message boards; his research suggests that fans are more eager to discuss trivia than to engage with historical or modern geopolitics in the series, pointing to a gulf between critical geopolitics and audience engagements with film. Outside of geography, Fisher (2011) talks to players of video games set in the second World War and finds that far from passively accepting the games' representations, they are critical of the historical inaccuracies and American subjectivities embedded in the games. Both these examples use contemporary media yet still reveal interesting interactions between modern audiences and historical representations; historical texts could be even more effective for evaluating the continuity of popular geopolitics.

The remaining methodological strand to discuss is affect, the non-representational ways in which emotional reactions may be experienced or "intensities that are felt but not personal; visceral but not confined to an individuated body" (Whatmore, 2006, p. 604). Dittmer and Gray suggest that elements of this are already present in popular geopolitics through its attention to cinema (Dittmer & Gray, 2010, p. 1667) and the use of camera shots, sound design, and other elements to provoke laughter or sympathy or dread in the audience. More directly, Macdonald reflects on "Nigel Thrift's provocative claim that critical geopolitics has been 'taken in' by representation, with its 'mesmerized attention to texts and images,'" finding it difficult to distance his work from Thrift's contention (Macdonald, 2006, p. 54–55, citing Thrift, 2000, pp. 385, 381).

Moving past this “mesmerized attention to text” presents challenges for historicism, an inherently textual approach. Although emotions and affect are touched on throughout the above historical research (through ideas of the spectacular and the mundane, for example), affect is an inherently more-than-representational concept, better explored through ethnographical and phenomenological methodologies than textual ones. Many of the studies of affect in popular geopolitics are contemporary, accessing diverse modern audiences via social media (for example, see Purcell, Brown, & Gokmen, 2010, pp. 382–383; Pinkerton & Benwell, 2014). Assuming one cannot locate such widespread audience reactions in the archives, can the emotional capacities of popular geopolitics be accessed through historicism?

Recent developments in historical research beyond geography provides some direction here. As in popular geopolitics work, there has been an increased interest in emotions among historians (Eustace et al. 2012). Reddy's theory of “emotional regimes” is a notable development in this direction. As Reddy argues, emotions are key to the management of social lives and communities, and so communities may wish to normalise the emotions, which would best maintain their social order; “[e]motional regimes would be essential elements of all stable political regimes” (Reddy, 2001, p. 55).

This idea both politicises and historicises emotions and affect; historical geographers might use archive work to examine the normalised behaviours of particular spaces at particular times. Great historical archival work on emotional regimes has been performed outside of critical geopolitics, such as Garrido and Davidson's (2016) historicisation of the folk song Scarborough Fair and what its changing lyrics across centuries imply about ideologies of love and gender in Britain. Here, we have circled back to textual approaches and to new historicism, repurposed to study affects; the text of the lyrics reveals historical affects and contexts. Even if archival research does not offer us the same access to emotional states as interviews and audience research approaches, we can still use it to historicise the emotional regimes and affective aspects of popular geopolitics.

4 | CONCLUSION: HISTORICISM AND THE PRESENT

This review demonstrates the ways in which popular geopolitics have been historicised across studies of media, bodies, audiences, and affects. I have drawn comparisons to new historicism to illustrate how historical research can expose the “relentless continuity of geopolitics” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, p. 176). Geographers working with modern representations of geopolitics may draw on past geopolitical theories to discuss their resurgences in the present day. If these representations themselves are historical, they may be contextualised by the histories of war, imperialism, or their authors for geographers to discuss the meanings they hold. Although some of these works are entirely based in historical geopolitics and do not draw connections to the present, such connections may be revealed by comparing the works with more contemporary studies. Historicism may also be performed in non-representational methodologies, despite its basis in textual studies. History is primarily accessed through textual sources, yet instead of (or alongside) their representations, geographers may analyse the embodied geopolitics of their authors, the practices of consumption of their audience, or the affective and emotional properties of the texts, perhaps historicised in comparison to modern authors and audiences.

This historicism matters. Without indulging in essentialist readings of the inevitability of history, any work on modern popular geopolitics—the way geopolitics is taught in schools and news, the ways film is used to present national identities, my own work on the military history of games—demonstrates that the historical geopolitics of war and imperialism still reverberate today. Cultural contexts may shift into new and unrecognisable forms, yet the status quos of imperial and emotional regimes from a century ago still cling on in education and representations and affects. Without historicism, we may inaccurately describe popular geopolitics as symptoms of modern ideologies, overlooking the inertia of older ideologies and the ripples they still cause.

Despite this, and despite the brilliant range of historical work cited in this article, some popular geopolitics work is still ahistorical. Often, this work falls short because it does not do enough to trace the power of modern popular discourses, particularly those embedded in new media, to their historical origins. This could easily be accounted for. I am historicising video game geopolitics by showing that the tropes of militarism and violence often critiqued in video

games could also be seen in board games a hundred years ago. I suspect that similar work could be performed with social media by analysing older nondigital public forums, such as arguments in newspaper letters sections, or phone calls to national radio broadcasts. Such historicism might be significantly harder to perform than studies of modern popular geopolitics, given the accessible and wide-ranging nature of social media and modern texts; my study of board games has unavoidably been shaped by what has been preserved in the archives, with who-knows-how-many ephemeral games vanishing into obscurity, but great work to access emotion and embodiment through historical texts has already been performed in both geography and history. Even when we may be restricted to the text in historicising popular geopolitics and even when the archives yield far less information than the internet, care and attention can reveal geopolitics beyond the purely representational, and unexpected and valuable connections to the present may be explored.

Critical geopolitics, and popular geopolitics along with it, will most likely be busy for the next few years trying to keep up with the rapid geopolitical reconfigurations caused by Brexit, by Trumpian politics, and by other dramatic political shifts. Studying these events with more knowledge than ever before of the actual popularity of popular geopolitics (through the internet and social media) will understandably be an attractive prospect to geographers, but lessons from history are vital to a full and accurate picture of geopolitics, and geographers must take heed of the historical contexts of these events as they press forward with popular geopolitics.

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