

Is geopolitics still relevant?

Natalie Koch
February 23, 2009

Outline

1. Continued relevance of geopolitics
2. Geopolitical culture
3. Feminist geopolitics
4. Post 9/11 imperial geopolitics
5. Case study: Uzbek-American relations



The continued relevance of geopolitics

1. Empire and imperial discourses
2. Religion and moral geographies
3. Gender and militarization

Contemporary American geopolitical culture

Discourse	Key Intellectuals	Lexicon
Empire	Neo-conservatives Rumsfeld G.W. Bush Barnett Ignatieff	globalization counterinsurgency liberation Homeland security Core/Gap

Feminist geopolitics

1. Redefining the political
2. The “God-trick”
3. Normative commitments?
 - Human security ?
 - Nonviolence?
4. Masculinities – inflect militarism in a given state & are thus important for understanding international politics

Post 9/11 imperial geopolitics

A. 9/11 Rescue Efforts

1. Gendered images of rescue
2. Re-militarization of society
3. Manhood as tied to fighting war / protecting “womenandchildren”



Gendered images of the rescue



Post 9/11 imperial geopolitics

B. Terrorism

1. Terrorist as the "faceless coward"
2. US frontier myth – "savage war" against a "savage enemy" that is seen as a threat to civilization itself
3. Captain America



Post 9/11 imperial geopolitics

C. Religion

1. Imagining Muslims as politically misguided and prone to extremism
2. 2 media portrayals of Muslim women
 - a. passive victims
 - b. active political agents

Victim or extremist?



Moral geographies:

Justifying US military action in the Middle East

1. Liberating Muslim women from male oppressors
2. Neoliberal aid programs: success = female liberation (creating honorary men)

<http://video.nytimes.com/video/2008/10/07/world/asia/1194819782105/empowering-women-in-afghanistan.html?scp=1&sq=afghan%20women&st=cse>



3. But what about racial profiling / targeting of (Muslim) immigrants domestically?

Case study: Uzbek-American relations

2005 Andijon Massacre

<http://video.nytimes.com/video/2006/06/21/world/1194817111815/uprising-in-uzbekistan.html?scp=2&sq=uzbekistan&st=cse>

US-Uzbekistan Similarities

1. Power of the anti-terrorism discourse
 - Masculinity scripts
2. Glorification of the military
(note the gendering of the protector role)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zv3VVKmx-3M>

US-Uzbekistan Differences: The Collapse of Cooperation

1. United States legitimating scripts:
 - a. human rights
 - b. democracy
 - c. free press
 - d. liberator ideal
2. Uzbekistan (Soviet legacies)
 - a. stability
 - b. anti-“color revolution” sentiment
 - c. “great power” ideals – expectations of equal partnership

“Geopolitical culture”

1. How are threats to national security constructed?
2. How are these threats mapped?
3. How do these mappings structure strategic thinking?
4. How do these mappings specify important vs. marginal places?
5. How are these mappings used to justify (military) strategies for dealing with dangers in other places?