Abstract: Gibraltar has long been understood as a strategic location. In this paper I examine the historical emergence of this seemingly common-sense fact, turning to the rise of relational geography and assemblage thinking to re-theorise the idea of 'strategic locations.' I argue that the 'unchanging truth' of geography as asserted by (neo)classical geopolitical authors is always in fact becoming-otherwise, as shifts in the compositional assemblages (e.g., military-technological systems, logistical networks, domestic politics) can ripple through the place in question, very quickly making strategic places un-strategic again, or vice-versa. People and ideas are central to this emergence, as are place-based materialities such as terrain, technologies, and even micro-climates. Empirically I examine first the emergence of Gibraltar within an English/British cartographic and visual apparatus in the 17th century. I then turn to the materiality of the Strait of Gibraltar and the specific agency of the eponymous Rock, as they both interact with various shifts in military technology and the organisation of empire. I conclude with a call for an assemblage approach to place in geopolitics, highlighting the advantages of such an approach.
Key words: Place, assemblage, geo-strategy, geopolitics, chokepoints, Gibraltar

## Placing Gibraltar

What can one see from O'Hara's Battery, atop the Rock of Gibraltar, looking out across the Strait of Gibraltar? On a clear day, the view to Africa is so good that I can make out individual buildings, despite their being roughly eight miles distant (**FIGURE 1**). The massive cannon jutting into the view is a reminder of how that proximity is linked to imperial violence. But what amazes me the most is the sheer number of vessels — oil tankers, container ships, naval vessels — that are either bunkering in the Bay of Gibraltar or are passing through the Strait. Easily dozens of ships are within the panoramic view, evidencing the oft-made reference to Gibraltar as a chokepoint for North-South flows (for passage from Africa to Europe or vice-versa) and for East-West maritime travel (into and out of the Mediterranean). What does it mean for a critical scholar of geopolitics to stand on the Jurassic limestone of the Rock and be confronted by such a place? Indeed, what is the place of 'place' in contemporary geopolitics, conventionally marked as it is by (among other things) spatial flows of data, refugees, and fossil fuels?

In this paper, I argue that recent developments in geography and the social sciences, most especially the rise of relational geography and assemblage thinking, offer purchase on this question by enabling critical scholars to appreciate the agency of people, materials, and

technologies as they affect and re-make the wider geopolitical assemblages in which they are enmeshed. More specifically, following from re-theorisations of place in recent years I argue that 'strategic locations' are the emergent effects of the intersection of a wider array of socio-techno-political assemblages. This means that the 'unchanging truth' of geography as asserted by some (neo)classical geopolitical authors is always in fact becoming-otherwise, as shifts in the compositional assemblages (e.g., military-technological systems, logistical networks, domestic politics) can ripple through the place in question, very quickly making strategic places un-strategic again, or vice-versa. People and ideas are central to this emergence, as are place-based materialities such as terrain, technologies, and even micro-climates, as we shall see.

I pursue this argument through an investigation of Gibraltar, and the way in which it emerged within a specific imperial assemblage as a 'strategic' place. First, I review the literature on critical geopolitics and assemblage, arguing that recent shifts in the social sciences require scholars of geopolitics to re-think the role of materiality in our analyses. This is important in justifying the choice of Gibraltar as a case study; the materiality of the Rock and its location astride the Strait are crucial to its production as a place within a wider imperial frame. I then review the literature on place, strategic studies, and military geography, arguing that the fields of strategic studies and military geography have generally missed out on the re-theorisation of place as relational, and therefore Gibraltar must be reconsidered not only as a material site, but as a place distributed through the assemblages that compose space. This move is crucial to understanding the geopolitics of Gibraltar without reducing it to the Rock and the Strait. Together, these two moves both highlight the materialities of Gibraltar while also de-centring those materialities from the analysis, which is crucial to step outside the both the deterministic analyses of the past and the more radically vitalist approaches of the present.

To demonstrate the implications of these claims, I first trace the emergence of Gibraltar within an English/British cartographic and visual apparatus. The visibility of/from Gibraltar within that apparatus produced it as an object of desire to the state, predicting a range of benefits from its seizure (or maintenance under British sovereignty). I then turn to the materiality of the Strait of Gibraltar, and the specific agency of the eponymous Rock. Here I examine the ways in which the material properties of the Rock that provided it with its famed defensive capacities also undermined its capacity to fulfil its 'strategic' function. An anxious empire poured political and economic capital into Gibraltar, seeking to buttress a 'strategic location' that changing military technologies conspired against at every turn. I conclude by arguing specifically for this assemblage approach to place in geopolitics, but more broadly for a dialogue across the various 'camps' of geopolitics around key spatial concepts and debates. I also point to potential connections between this study and other dimensions of relational place that can be understood via an assemblage approach.

**Geopolitics and the Re-materialisation of the Earth**

What linked works in the 'classical' geopolitical tradition was a materialist conception of geography, which saw the imprint of the environment on human political, economic, and cultural development around the world. Rightly critiqued as environmental determinism, with a dangerous connection to social Darwinism, such ideas became occulted for decades. Or so the popular narrative would have us believe; geopolitics persisted in multiple forms, both in nuclear policy (Klinke 2018) and in academic circles (Cohen 1963), although it began to evolve according to shifts in intellectual fashions (e.g., O'Sullivan 1982).

The emergence of Anglo-American critical geopolitics in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the result of one of those intellectual fashions, specifically the cultural turn. It proved a powerful rival for classical geopolitical thought, not least because it took classical

thought – rather than the material world – as its object of study (Ó Tuathail 1996). The turn to discourse analysis has of course been incredibly fruitful and politically salient; indeed, the works of classical geopolitics were ripe for critique and I do not wish to defend them. Nevertheless, it reflected a dematerialisation of geopolitics, as texts – and texts about texts – proliferated in and through analyses (Sharp 2000; Sparke 2000). Other critical traditions of geopolitics blended materialism and political critique in potent ways (e.g., Lacoste 1977).

Today's popular (as opposed to academic) debates about geopolitics are framed by proponents of (neo)classical geopolitical thought (Megoran 2010) as between 'ideas' and 'realities.' In this formulation, 'ideas' is used to refer to the world of liberal political theory, or in more recent iterations to refer to discourse and representation, both of which purport to offer the possibility of building a world less violent, less oppressive, less unequal. This – what Tanca (2017) refers to as 'the thinking dimension of geography' – is fluid, mutable, and potentially progressive (Kearns 2008). 'Realities' is used to refer to the supposedly unchanging elements of geography — the location and shape of land masses, the uneven distribution of material resources such as energy, the proximity or distance of one place from another (Kaplan 2009; Black 2009; Marshall 2016). This framing — loaded as it is — is rooted in the well-established nature/culture binary (Latour 2012), a binary that was itself replicated in the emergence of the critical geopolitical project, with its political and ontological prioritisation of discourse over materiality (Dalby 1991). For this reason, critical scholars of geopolitics have tended to fall into the trap of the (neo)classical framing, arguing for mutable 'ideas' versus unchanging 'realities', when the binary itself is misleading. Not only is critical geopolitics about performance and other material dimensions of geopolitical action (Müller 2008), but it has been very effective at showing how 'realities' are often the product of discourse and other 'ideas'.

Recent years have been marked by a return to materialism across the social sciences, but not the materialism of the past (e.g., Coole and Frost 2010; Fox and Alldred 2017). While Bennett (2004) has highlighted the agency of things in her theory of vital materialism, Lemke (2018) highlights the hazards of overstating this thing-power. This more-than-human but less-than-vitalism version of the new materialism has taken several forms in political geography. Feminist geopolitics has elevated the role of the human body in its analyses, in terms of its vulnerability (Smith 2009; Mountz 2018**)**, performance (Koopman 2011**)**, and fleshiness (Dixon 2016). This has been supplemented by a concern with the political geographies of emotion and affect, which both work at the scale of the body but can also resonate at much 'larger' scales (Pain 2009; Dittmer 2013; Laketa 2016**)**. Another form of materialism that has become prominent within the field is a concern with socio-political assemblages and their relations (Allen and Cochrane 2010; Anderson and McFarlane 2011; Dittmer 2014; 2017) — an approach I will return to in the next section. Sharp (Online early, 5) brings these together to argue for a geopolitics that attends to concerns of [human] social justice through attention to the ways in which bodies and things are aligned via assemblages: 'it is through the *differential* positioning of bodies in different assemblages of things – *and* the very different representations of different sorts of bodies in these assemblages – that different capabilities and prospects emerge.' In this, I agree; this paper's analysis of Gibraltar should be understood as an attempt to conceptualise the production of imperial hierarchies of violence and inequality, through a more-than-human lens.

The new materialist approaches have allowed geopolitics to double back to earlier concerns about the role of the environment that had been elided during the early stages of critical geopolitical inquiry (Squire 2016). Indeed, there has been a recent re-excavation of early geopolitical thinkers, especially Ratzel (e.g., Klinke and Bassin 2018; Barua 2018;

Usher 2020). For this paper, it is clearly relevant that Ratzel (1897, 20), probably following Mahan's (1890) discussion of the Second Punic War, noted that

> No point in the ancient world felt the successes of Rome in Iberia as strongly as Carthage, for part of the size of Carthage depended on the command of the Strait of Gibraltar. The revitalization of this street at the end of the 13th century resulted in the wonderful bloom of Bruges in the distance, and Flanders only became the great barter market for southern and northern European products because of it.

This quote highlights the geographical role of the Strait both in north-south crossing but also in east-west sailing. However, Mahan (1890, 329) goes on to articulate a modern relationship between the place of Gibraltar in the British Empire and the technological assemblage of the Royal Navy: 'it must be observed that these bases [e.g., Malta, Suez, Aden] themselves would have lost their value if their communications remained obstructed. […] The service between the bases and the mobile force between the ports and fleets is mutual.'

I bring up these points not to rehabilitate these thinkers' specific claims, but to point out that their form of geography — which draws from a Humboldtian tradition of geography that has itself been under some reconsideration lately because of its more-than-human ecological relations (Jackson 2019) — might speak to some of the current crises confronting geopolitics, especially if we take that term to include the wider politics of the *geo*: climate change, the migration crisis, and the Capitalocene. Further, following Usher (2020, 1035) and others, I hope to build on such approaches to pay 'greater attention to the manifold agencies, materialities and forces of nature that undergird territorial space and augment sovereign power'. To that end, in the next section I sketch out the intersection of geo-strategic thought and place, offering assemblage as a way of thinking materially about relational place.

**Place, Geo-strategy and 'Strategic Locations'**

*Geo-strategy and place*

'Geo-strategy' is defined by Grygiel (2006, 22) specifically as the *place* of foreign policy; geo-strategy is 'where a state concentrates its efforts by projecting military power and directing diplomatic activity.' In short, place informs both the subject and the object of geo-strategic thought in that the geographical designation of the latter flows from the self-understanding of the former. The focus on policy making necessarily grounds geo-strategy in particular (state) spaces and places rather than producing a universal knowledge (Agnew 2003). Gray (1991, 313) demonstrates how such thinking must come from some*where* when he argues that 'It is close to self-evident both [sic] that geographical factors (location, size and character of national territory, character of neighbours, and so forth) must permeate defense thinking.' That is, such thinking is rooted in a particular state's positioning in the world.

To be fair to these recent authors in geo-strategy, they are at pains to distance themselves from environmental determinism, and instead adopt a position more akin to possibilism. More recently, Grygiel (2006, 24) argues that while 'geography [does not determine] the fate of states, it certainly limits their strategic choices and their ability to adapt to a new distribution of power in the world.' Possibilism was initially a continental European reaction to environmental determinism, most closely identified in Germany with the work of Hettner and in France with Vidal de la Blache (Agnew 2018). The development of determinism into possibilism began in 1907, when Hettner argued that there can be no certainties when it comes to the environment's influence on humanity; different possibilities are actualised in different locations. Vidal de la Blache (1913) argued that the limits of specific places were culturally mediated: 'Environmental factors set limits on the productivity of the herding or farming systems that social groups had shaped. With the introduction of different species, new ploughing technologies, terracing and irrigation, it was possible to

push back these limits,' (Claval 2001, 127). This allowed for a mix of general principles and geographic specificity; as East and Moodie (1956, 1) put it, 'despite the repetition of broadly similar characteristics in many parts of the world, each region remains unique'. For this reason, the study of regions – each a unique complex assemblage of humans and environmental forces situated in place – became central to geographical knowledge. Possibilism thus put humans and the environment into a non-hierarchical relationship – what might today be called a flat ontology. That is, and this is key to the discussion of vitalism above, there is no *a priori* relation of dominance of one over the other. Possibilism was critiqued in multiple ways. While it introduced nuance into determinism, it failed to escape determinism's orbit and introduced new problems. While possibilists rightly refused to give the environment priority in causation, they did not specify its role. What precisely was the effect of the environment, if it wasn't determinative? What outcomes precisely were *im*possible because of the environment? Further, the role of region and place in possibilism (as opposed to determinism, which aspired to a universalism) introduced boundary problems. Where did the region/place/assemblage end? How could this be determined in an objective way? As East and Moodie (1956, 2) note, 'all regional divisions carry elements of arbitrariness.' Indeed, these concerns would consume regional geography in the coming decades.

Geo-strategy, however, has been less concerned with the boundary problem (though see Scott 2012; Medcalf 2014) but remains fixed from the early 20th century to the present on the open question of the environment's agency. Whittlesey (1944, 585-586, emphasis added) articulated a vision in which polities could choose to be well- or maladjusted to their specific environment, but that over time well-adjusted polities would emerge *in place*:

> [Political areas] may expand or shrink with the passage of time. […] They may even lose their identity, although regions which have once stood out as leaders in political

> affairs are likely to reappear after longer or shorter eclipse. *In the long view it must be conceded that the political significance of any area bears a well-defined relation to its climate, landforms, and natural resources*.

That is, in the short-term states may be dynamic and technologies may tame the environment; in the long term, however *geography wins*, and certain places bring with them the potential for political power. Indeed, Grygiel (2006, 24) re-articulates this argument as the main thesis of his book: 'When there is a disconnect between the geostrategy of a state and the underlying geopolitics, that state begins its decline.' World power, according to geo-strategic thought, can be found in the wise use of geographical knowledge, which can produce a good fit between the 'reality' of place and the policies adopted by the geographically situated state. What can be seen then is that even as scholars of geo-strategy have sought to distance themselves from environmental determinism, they have both maintained the nature/culture distinction and adopted the view of place as static and bounded, as did the possibilists of the mid-20th century.

*Relational place*

In this section, I reflect on the evolution of the concept of place in recent decades. I do this not to improve the success of geo-strategic thought, and indeed the theoretical framework of assemblage generally works *against* prediction. Rather, I am interested in understanding the complex role of place in the emergence of imperial assemblages. While recent developments in the concept of place are relatively well-known, as this review shows they have scarcely been taken up in the field of geopolitics (c.f. Nicley 2009).

The rise of relational thought in geography over the past quarter century has been stark and has radically re-worked thought around place and space. Most clearly associated with Massey (1994; 1995; 2001; 2005), but also associated with Harvey (1993; 1996), Amin (2002; 2004) and many others, the relational turn abandoned the bounded geography of place,

region, and nation (as per the possibilists) and pointed towards the interrelation of place/space. That is, space is a field of relations and flows, with places emergent as

> articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings. And this in turn allows a sense of place which is extra-verted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local. (Massey 1993, 66)

The politics of this approach to place are linked to debates around globalisation and the then-assumed decline of nationalism in favour of cosmopolitan identities (Popke 2007; Jazeel 2011). However, in it can also be seen some of the de-materialisation of geography discussed earlier as routes and identities are emphasised over the material dimensions of the place where these relations are articulated, outside of perhaps a sense of embodied propinquity (Darling 2009).

Jones (2009, 489) took up the politics of relations with his concept of 'phase space', which

> acknowledges the relational making of space but insists on the confined, connected, inertial, and always context-specific nature of existence and emergence. When applied to geography, phase space, among other things, expresses sociospatial relations from a topological stance *but* insists on the compatibilities between, rather the mutual exclusivities of, flow-like (networks, etc) and more fixed (scales, territories, regions, etc) takes on space.

By insisting on the compatibility and mutual co-existence of networks and territories, Jones highlights the mutual entanglements of places and spaces, subjects and objects, the human and the non-human. Rather than adopting the 'reality' versus 'ideas' framing set out earlier, Jones (2009, 496) argues for 'a conceptual middle road between space as territorial anchorage and fixity *and* conceptions of space as topological, fluid and relationally mobile.'

In political geography and neighbouring fields, efforts to think through the politics of place/space have been a consistent feature of the past two decades (e.g., Paasi 2012). However, as Pierce *et al.* (2011) note, most scholarship has tended to emphasise either the 'politics of place' (local negotiations of identity), 'networked politics' (relational connectivities), with only a few (especially Massey) managing to hold them together. They sketch out useful methodological 'hooks' into examining relational place-making; however, these hooks are aimed at interrogating a discrete conflict in place-making. Such an approach perpetuates what Jones (2009, 497) refers to as the lack of 'temporal depth' in much work on relational space. By making place/space seemingly infinitely flexible, relational thinkers give little time/space to the weight with which various pasts are felt in the present. Historical depth is crucial to a place like Gibraltar; indeed, the Mediterranean has served as an iconic region for historians who have attempted to think through 'geographical time', or the temporality of socio-environmental change (Braudel 1949).

To advance this cause, I deploy assemblage thinking to incorporate a clearer sense of time, and its materiality, in accounts of relational place. Assemblages are open systems of heterogeneous elements that come together for a time, enabling collective agencies to assert themselves. Each element is affected by its participation in that assemblage and is changed — however subtly — by that experience. Because elements of the assemblage are dynamic in this way, the entire assemblage is constantly becoming otherwise; as, then, are any other assemblages that might be affected by this assemblage (Deleuze 2001; DeLanda 2006). For our purposes, assemblage approaches have the advantage of refusing the material/discourse binary, utilising a more-than-human understanding of agency that incorporates the discursive coding of assemblages as a factor in their political effects alongside the force fields generated by the material processes and capabilities that they embody and enact (Connolly 2013). In this way, assemblage thought is a way to conduct analyses of the politics of relational place

because of the potential for immanent transformation but also 'external' affects. Within assemblage theory, memory is a more-than-human feature, with affective forces leaving their mark on the structure of the assemblage over time. This can be seen (by way of example) in human memory, where traumatic experiences can rewire the brain, in the body, with evolutionary forces having produced our bodies in certain ways, and in cities, where architectural design and urban planning shape the material forms of cities for centuries. That is, the past is materialised in all these scales, and affects the present in a range of ways. Therefore, the flows of affect unleashed by the formation of networked relations can re-make place, but also encounter and are modulated by the ossified holdovers of previous relations. Thinking place as a material assemblage is not new; intriguing work in this regard has been generated in the so-called Oceanic Turn (Anderson 2012; Bear 2017; Steinberg and Peters 2015). While this article draws on these works, it is an effort to think through the intermingling of sea and land (Peters and Steinberg 2019) – or of sea power and land power (Mackinder 1904) – in the place of Gibraltar.

In this article, I aim to hold together both the territorial/material dimensions and the networked/relational aspects of Gibraltar in order to re-theorise place within geopolitics. By delving deep into history, I hope to trace the ways in which Gibraltar was produced as a 'strategic location' while also recognising how Gibraltarians are forced to reckon with the past to remake the present of Gibraltar.

**Seeing Gibraltar**

In this section I will argue that – as per the blending of discourse and materiality that assemblage enables – Gibraltar emerged as a strategic location in English/British strategic culture through both the emergence of specific cartographic technologies (with the consequent development of what Farinelli refers to as cartographic reason) and through

specific narrative strategies that emphasised the view from Gibraltar (just as the opening of this article did). As such, it considers two different visualities and how – despite their differences – they resonated with one another to produce the belief that holding Gibraltar would benefit the commercial and strategic interests of the realm.

Known in ancient times as Calpe, and with Abyla (Ceuta) one of the twin Pillars of Hercules, Gibraltar had in early history been known not as a maritime pathway to the world beyond, but as the hinge that connected the north and south of the Mediterranean: 'Behind the Pillars, reaching from the desert to the Pyrenees, rise masses of mountain and plateau which, by their geology and climate, and their consequent landforms, vegetation and utilization are two parts of a physical unity' (Whittlesey 1944, 251). That is, the Strait of Gibraltar was a convenient point of north-south contact for a holistic Mediterranean world (see Ferrer-Gallardo and Kramsch 2016). It was in this capacity that the peninsula now known as Gibraltar (as compared to the wider *Campo de Gibraltar* which includes the whole area around the bay, including the modern city of Algeciras) came to be named as such; in 711 AD, an Arab military commander named Tariq ibn Ziyad was sent north to test the Visigoth defences, and he landed in the Bay of Gibraltar, founding a castle on the Rock as a bridgehead (Howes 1946). The mountain took the name *Gebel Tarik* or the 'Hill of Tarik'. This, over time, became corrupted as Gibraltar. Tarik's crossing launched the Arab invasion of Iberia, and Gibraltar came to be known as the 'Key to Spain', signifying the significance of the north-south route at this time. During this period, there was no settlement on the peninsula of Gibraltar, as it was a pretty unattractive site. Indeed, it was not until 1160 AD that the city of Gibraltar was founded as a permanent watchtower (Hills 1974; Palao 1975). The Rock blocked the line of sight along the coast that linked Tarifa to Algeciras and on to Estepona, and so it was necessary to have a permanent population there in order to connect the views on either side of the Rock and prevent enemy forces from being landed without

detection (as Tarik had done three hundred years earlier). Thus, a concern with visuality underpinned the very founding of Gibraltar.

By 1704, Gibraltar had been part of the Spanish crown for roughly 200 years, and the fundamental orientation of the Strait of Gibraltar had changed.

> With the discoveries of continents beyond the Mediterranean fringe and ocean ways tributary thereto, the entrance to the Mediterranean was faced about to the west, and the Sea itself became a mere spur of the great ocean trade routes. For the first time the water route became paramount in political importance over the water gate. (Whittlesey 1944, 251)

Because there was no threat to/from the south at this point (Ceuta had also become a Spanish possession), and the areas to east and west of Gibraltar were all in Spanish hands, Gibraltar was simply not understood as strategic anymore by the Spanish. This was a return to the way Gibraltar had been viewed by the Romans and the Carthaginians, who had similarly unified both sides of the Strait (Bradford 1971). Consequently, the Spanish had not improved the fortifications in some time, and a tiny garrison of 200 was left to defend it. For this reason, during the War of the Spanish Succession (1704) Gibraltar fell in a mere two days to an Anglo-Dutch fleet.

Gibraltar's first known appearance in English strategic thought came in 1625, when Sir Henry Bruce argued at a Council of War that the English fleet ought to attack Gibraltar, as it 'was of great importance as being such by the advantage the trade from all partes of the Levannt might be brought under our commande' (quoted in Hills 1974, 130). While this strategy was not adopted, in 1656, Oliver Cromwell similarly encouraged his admirals to – if they could not capture the major port of Cadiz – think about capturing Gibraltar, as holding it would 'be an advantage to our trade and an annoyance to the Spaniard; and enable us, without keeping so large a fleet on that coast, with six nimble frigates lodged there, to do the

Spaniards more harm than by a fleet…' (quoted in Benady 1992, 7). Nothing came of this then either, but it is worth considering how Sir Henry and Oliver Cromwell arrived at this view.

In the middle ages, regional or world maps had fallen into disuse, with textual description displacing (but being supplemented by) cartographic representation except in certain fields of expertise such as shipboard navigation. Indeed, 'the word *mappa* or *mappamundi* in the Middle Ages could be used to describe either a text or a map' (Woodward 2007, 7). However, between 1400 and 1600 a cartographic revival of territory unfolded: standardised scales, printed maps, triangulation, legends (Pickles 2004). These technical innovations resonated with new property regimes for the state which required cartographic underpinning. This cadastral mapping soon gained imperial purpose, and indeed mapping re-emerged in the 1500s as a tool of state power. Of course, the map could not just be a passive tool, but was an active collaborator in the making of new political subjectivities. Published in 1705, shortly after the taking of Gibraltar (and including an inset prospect of the city and the Rock), the main part of **Figure 2** uses the Cartesian perspective to enframe the UK's two main rivals: Spain and France. This twin framing of the map foregrounds the fact that Spain and France both have an Atlantic and a Mediterranean coast; France has Spain separating its two coasts, while Spain has the Strait of Gibraltar splitting its two coasts. By taking and holding tiny Gibraltar, it was possible to split both the French Atlantic and Mediterranean fleets, *and* the Spanish Atlantic and Mediterranean fleets. 'Gibraltar divided Cartagena from Cadiz, and Toulon from Brest,' (Sargent 1912, 12). At least, this is the cartographic reason presented by the map. The French in this era were suitably distressed by the possibility of their fleets being separated that in November 1681 a canal was completed through Languedoc to connect the Atlantic and Mediterranean fleets without going past Gibraltar (Hughes 1981).

Similarly **Figure 3** comes from one of many of the many pamphlets published in the UK when Gibraltar was rumoured to be the subject of a territorial swap. This prompted a debate about the potential usefulness of Gibraltar, and the inclusion of the map in the pamphlet (a fold-out version six times the size of the pamphlet, no less) indicates that the map was imagined as persuasive by the author. The map shows England clinging to the edge of the map, while the Mediterranean is lined by ports and settlements that might be open to the UK's goods. At the left, written in darker letters, is the 'Straight of Gibraltar'. The dotted, curving lines through the map show the route of the sailing route of English vessels to Asia Minor and the Levant. Together, these two maps demonstrate the seemingly common-sense Cartesian geopolitical logic of Gibraltar, at the time it was ceded in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). 'On maps and charts, [Gibraltar] looks as though it stands sentinel over some of the world's most vital trade-routes; or as an obstacle or impediment' (McGuffie 1965, 15).

However, we need not stop there. The Cartesian perspective is not limited to cartography. Rather, the Jurassic limestone of Gibraltar itself enabled the Apollonian delusion of total visual mastery. That is, the Pillar of Hercules itself thrust the observer up into the heavens, 426m above the Mediterranean, promising God-like power to control the Straits. The visual component of this power was clear in the arguments of Gibraltar's advocates. Beaver (1720, 5) argued that 'From the Watch Tower, in clear Weather, Ships may be discover'd at Ten Leagues distance, that come either Eastward or Westward; whereby sufficient Notice may be given for our Cruizers to intercept an enemy'. This power, however, was not just about being able to intercept ships in the Strait, but rather a panoptic surveillance: 'It gives us an Opportunity to pry into all their Measures, observe all their Motions, and, without the most stupid Remissness on our Parts, renders it impracticable for them to form any Projects, or carry on any Expeditions against us or our Allies, without our having due notice' (Gordon 1720, 18-19). That is, the political geology of Gibraltar itself

promises not only a practical platform for surveillance, but an affective nudge towards Apollonian/imperial overconfidence.

While much has changed about Gibraltar in the past three hundred years, this sense of its panopticism remains, as the opening to this paper indicated. This is true not only for the tourists who ride up the Rock in taxis or the cable car to take in the view from the SkyWalk or from O'Hara's Battery, but also for British Forces Gibraltar. Indeed, the top of the Rock bristles with eavesdropping equipment connected to the UKUSA 'Five Eyes' signals intelligence network (Dittmer 2015). Spyglass Battery, named for its role in keeping the watch from the Rock in the age of sail, is today a listening post, snatching electronic signals out of the North African air. This geographical continuity illustrates the way in which surveillance has shifted from one form of radiation to another but continues to centre on the same material affordances offered by the Rock.

**Chokepoint**

The Mahanian concept of sea power emphasises the importance to the maritime nation of the maintenance of both lines of communication and supply lines. Indeed, while the oceans compose roughly two-thirds of the earth's surface, a range of material factors limit the routes actually sailed to a small portion of the ocean's totality: currents, channels, the distribution of ports and markets around the world, and so on (Peters 2020). One such materiality – with a long genealogy in geopolitical thought – is the chokepoint (Dunn, Online early). Chokepoints have long been seen as one site in which sea power could be applied, given the way ships are routed through them *en masse* (Peele 1997). In this section, I will argue that chokepoints are not 'natural' but are emergent from techno-politico-economic assemblages.

As described above, the rise of Cartesian perspectivalism and its materialisation in maps, in conjunction with the changing geopolitical orientation of European sea power from

the Mediterranean to the Atlantic (and beyond), highlighted the possibility of using the Strait of Gibraltar to throttle an enemy's trade and naval power. 'In the infancy of shipping, and before a necessity of strongholds occurred, *Calpe* was of little or no value,' (Dodd 1781, 5). Recall how Spain had left Gibraltar relatively unprotected during wartime, reflecting its perceived unimportance to Spanish power; as they possessed the entire north coast of the Strait, and even some of the south coast, it was not any more or less important than any other port in range of the Strait (e.g., Cadiz). However, once the UK had taken it, Gibraltar suddenly emerged as strategic. The location of Gibraltar remained entirely the same, but the *place* changed through its new relation to the Royal Navy. 'Gibraltar is naturally situated for the Command of the Mediterranean-Sea, if it is in the Hands of a Nation powerful enough in Naval Strength to make a proper Use of it,' (D'Anvers 1732, 85). Indeed, this was highlighted in the pamphlet debate over Gibraltar's utility: 'We ought not be surprized if the Nations of *Europe* and *Asia* should wish it in Hands less potent at Sea, and who would consequently enjoy it more harmlessly to its Neighbours…' (Gordon 1720, 25, emphasis in original).

Indeed, the production of difference – in that Gibraltar became British rather than Spanish – is crucial to understanding the emergence of the Strait as a strategic chokepoint. Maintaining that difference was crucial to the exercise of British power, which is why the British invested so much money in upgrading the fortress's defences (indeed, Britain spent so much money on fortifying Gibraltar that Adam Smith cited it as a waste of money in *The Wealth of Nations*). In this the UK was aided by the materiality of the Rock itself (Squire 2016), suitably modified by the Royal Engineers. The Northern Defences of Gibraltar were engineered with multiple tiers of cannons mounted on the north face of the Rock to rain cannonballs down on any approaching soldiers, while the rest of the peninsula was protected by a range of natural cliffs and manmade walls and bastions to prevent naval forces from

approaching (Fa and Finlayson 2013). With the massive investments made by the Treasury, Gibraltar became – when viewed through the lens of military technology of the late 18th century – more or less impregnable, as long as it could be resupplied by sea power during sieges. This fortress assemblage – of walls, cannons, sea power, and limestone – maintained the topological relation of Gibraltar vis-à-vis the UK and enabled new capabilities for the British armed forces: the ability to maintain a fleet in the Strait, survey the area, and sortie out to thwart both Barbary pirates and enemy fleets as they tried to use the Strait for their own ends.

Much of the published debate around the utility of Gibraltar in the 18th century revolves around contested representations of the place's materiality. Those promoting Gibraltar emphasised the quality of the fortress and the ability of the location to enhance trade and thwart Britain's enemies in the manner described above. However, the materiality of Gibraltar is not limited to the Rock and its fortress. Sceptics emphasised the material conditions of Gibraltar that were known to limit its usefulness for controlling the chokepoint or promoting trade. These include the weather conditions, the small harbour, and the lack of territory.

The most famous weather condition in Gibraltar is the *Levanter*, an easterly wind that sweeps across the Mediterranean, hits the east face of the Rock, and then forms huge plumes of cloud that roll over the top of the Rock and obscure the view. Thus, when the wind required for an enemy fleet to exit the Mediterranean arises, the view from Gibraltar is frequently masked. 'Mists and fogs also occur, which obscure visibility so much that […] Without friendly ships patrolling at sea, in war-time an alert or lucky enemy may always manage to slip through unseen' (McGuffie 1965, 15). Further, the harbour was small and unduly impacted by the weather. 'The situation of the Bay of Gibraltar in relation to the prevailing winds through the Straits often made it inexpedient or impossible for merchant

vessels to stop there. The roadstead was open and dangerous in bad weather,' (Conn 1944, 257). One critic noted the hazard of even keeping British ships in the port:

> when the Levanters, or East Winds blow brisk, and by the Accumulation of Air gather'd in the Caverns of the Hill, is form'd into large Columns, which break upon the Ships with such Violence, as starts their Anchors, and drives them over to the opposite [Spanish] Shore. (Anonymous 1749, 12)

Further, Conn (1944, 262) notes that the proximity of the harbour to Spanish territory made it almost useless during war time: 'The cannon range of the Spanish fortifications erected in 1730-1732 covered nearly four-fifths of the safe anchorage area, making the harbour virtually useless in time of war.' Indeed, the sheer lack of space in Gibraltar was noted by many, both with regard to the harbour but also the fortress itself. The Treaty of Utrecht had ceded the fortress and harbour, but the Spanish interpreted that literally while the British interpreted it as including all the area under the fortress's guns, generating a neutral zone that neither could occupy to the north of the fortress. The small peninsula was dominated by the Rock, leaving only the western slope to build on, and given the lack of agricultural land all supplies had to be brought into the fortress. Collectively, these materialities shaped the ability of the British to use Gibraltar in the way that its cartographic promise had foretold.

**Anxieties of empire**

Thinking seriously about 'relational Gibraltar' requires us to think beyond the specific rock formations and micro-climates of Gibraltar. In this section, I will show how the materials of Gibraltar – the fortress, harbour, and people – became otherwise with their co-evolution alongside changes in military technology and imperial organisation. Gibraltar became more important to the logistics of the British Empire even as changes in military technology reduced its capacity to enhance British sea power. The tension between these two

evolutionary processes eventually pushed the assemblage of place into a new formation, in which the strategic effect is much diminished, although other opportunities have become possible.

The first dynamic was the shift of the British Empire from being primarily trans-Atlantic to being oriented towards the Indian Ocean. The late 1700s saw both the Seven Years' War, which established British supremacy over the French in India, and the American War of Independence, which significantly curtailed the British Empire in the Western Hemisphere (Bradford 1971). The loss of Minorca in the Treaty of Amiens only made Gibraltar more crucial as the only British base in the Western Mediterranean. Gibraltar consequently played a significant role in the Napoleonic Wars (Musteen 2011). In the century of (Western European) peace that followed, Gibraltar initially featured as a stopping point for supplies on the way to the Cape of Good Hope and on to India, but the 1869 opening of the Suez Canal once again made the Mediterranean the highway of empire. Now the primary route for imperial logistics ran from Britain to Gibraltar, on to Malta and Suez, and then past Aden to India and on to Australia and New Zealand. 'The Great Sea of the ancients had won back much of its pristine importance as the chief artery of communication with Asia, and both its outlets were dominated by Great Britain,' (Plà 1955, 120). Maintaining this lifeline was the *raison d'etre* of the Royal Navy as at this time 1/3 of British trade went through the Strait of Gibraltar (Benady 1992).

Alongside this change in imperial organisation came the revolution of steam power, whose energies intensified the sea power assemblage: 'The expansion of Mediterranean trade throughout the nineteenth century, though owing much to the stable conditions in the basin, was immensely furthered by the application of steam,' (Bradford 1971, 151). While steam power enabled ships to chart a course independent of the fickle wind, it also required a network of coaling stations throughout the areas patrolled by the Royal Navy (Gray 2018).

Between 1895-1915 Gibraltar was re-worked to serve as a modern coaling station and dockyard, with the Admiralty Tunnel dug through the Rock to connect the dockyard to the imported coal supply on the east side of the Rock (Benady 1992). To build the new dockyard, the first land was reclaimed in Gibraltar outside the walls of the fortress, using stone quarried from the Rock (an indicator of the shift in perception of Gibraltar from a fortress to a naval base). Even as Gibraltar was being re-made to fit the steam era, however, advances in steam technology meant ships were capable of carrying more of their own fuel. This made Malta – in the middle of the Mediterranean – a better stopping point, as Gibraltar was simply too close to the UK to be very useful (Plà 1955).

More threatening to Gibraltar's strategic location, however, were changes in artillery technology. Recall that Gibraltar's impregnability was based on the ability of its cannons to rain fire down on attackers who were forced by the terrain to approach from a supremely vulnerable position, and while the port was somewhat exposed to Spanish cannon fire, enough was available to maintain the topological link to the UK provided by the Royal Navy. The emergence of rifled artillery increased both the range and the accuracy of naval guns by several orders of magnitude. 'Ships capable of firing broadsides with over fifty guns were replaced, in the 1880s, by ships mounted [with] as few as one or two really heavy large calibre weapons,' (Hughes 1981, 14). These ships were also, because of steam power, able to be armoured in a way that made naval bombardment more threatening than in the past, when wooden ships had been vulnerable to the relatively stable cannon fire of land-based batteries.

Of course, these innovations in rifled artillery also revolutionised Gibraltar's defences, with large guns being mounted atop the Rock in various positions to repel the ironclads that might attempt to enter the Bay, and in the 1870s two 100-ton guns were sent to Gibraltar (one remains as a tourist attraction in Rosia Bay). These batteries fired artillery shells that weighed 2000 pounds each (Benady 1999), illustrating how much the arms (and

armour) race had escalated in the late 19th century. Overall, the new defences in Gibraltar also made it theoretically possible to close the Strait to hostile shipping without even sortieing naval forces; the range of the guns stretched a mile into the African hinterland. Nevertheless, this was never seriously attempted, and the guns remained oriented towards harbour defence (Cornish 1923), reflecting the increasing anxiety around Gibraltar's utility and defence.

But what is good for the goose is good for the gander; anxiety over the defensibility of Gibraltar only grew in the early 20th century, when it became clear that Spain was mounting long-range artillery in the Andalusian hills that could hit Gibraltar with near impunity, given that it could be hidden out of Gibraltar's line of sight. As Major-General Rowan-Robinson wrote (1938, 289):

> Gibraltar lies under the menace of continuous shell-fire both from Ceuta and from Spain. It would be possible to defend it, so long as supplies lasted, almost indefinitely; but it would not be possible to protect either the docks or the warships from projectiles.

Anxiety around this shaped debate around Gibraltar at the time; various plans were considered, including the possibility of swapping Gibraltar for Ceuta or moving the (new, just improved) port to the east side of the Rock (which was less exposed to Spanish fire). In the end, all of these were dismissed, and a plan was produced to invade and occupy the entire Campo de Gibraltar in the event of hostilities with Spain or the invasion of Spain by some other power, such as Nazi Germany (Plà 1955). This illustrates how far Gibraltar had travelled from its fortress origins; the only way to secure it was to not to withdraw behind its walls, but rather to push out the security envelope by several miles.

One final shift in the technologies of warfare remade the strategic effects of Gibraltar's location. The rise of aerial warfare offered a profound challenge to the base there, as there was no room to build an airstrip on the cramped peninsula. The importance of

airpower to the emergent spatialities of early 20th century military strategy was evident in the fantasies concocted to resolve this conundrum. The *Daily Mail* reported in 1922 that the Rock would be hollowed out to produce

> a vast subterranean flying station. In the centre of the Rock will be built a great square whence tunnels will lead in all directions. There are to be several floors, connected by monster lifts. To enable aeroplanes to start and return a large tipping-up platform will be placed at the entrance to each tunnel. The scheme will make it possible to shelter inside the Rock the most important aerial fleet in the world. *Thus Gibraltar would recover its former strategic importance.* (quoted in Archer and Mays 2009, 27, emphasis added)

As this was reported in the *Daily Mail*, it will not surprise readers to discover this was never seriously considered. But it does speak to how the newly vertical dimension of military space changed the relations on which Gibraltar depended, producing anxiety around its continued strategic relevance. Indeed, World War 2 inspired a radical remaking of Gibraltar's defences. Hitler had a plan to invade Gibraltar using paratroopers, who would float in above all the 100-ton guns and other armament aimed at the earth's surface. Still, the materiality of the Rock offered some refuge. The tunnels begun by the Royal Engineers in the Great Siege of 1779-1783 (Squire 2016) became the site of massive expansion, as many miles of tunnels were built to allow for the entire fortress garrison to retreat into the Rock itself to wage guerrilla warfare against invading paratroopers. While this eventuality was never required, the process did produce over 30 miles of tunnels and an excess of rubble which might be of use; in 1942 'over a million tons of rock was hurled into the sea by military engineers, thus creating a long runway for the fighter aircraft needed to cover the allied invasion of North Africa' (Bradford 1971, 191). This runway was built on the neutral ground disputed since the Treaty of Utrecht, and after the war remained in the hands of British. The circulation of

materials from inside the Rock to the land reclamation of the runway effectively tied the neutral ground politically to the territory of Gibraltar.

If Gibraltar played a 'strategic' role in the Mediterranean theatre for the Allies as a result of its re-assembly for an age of airpower, its significance in the Cold War and beyond has been less clear. The creation of NATO sealed the alliance between Spain, the UK, and the USA, even if tensions over Gibraltar complicate military cooperation in the region (Gold 1994). In combination with this politics, the territorial limitations of Gibraltar – lamented by Gibraltar's critics at least since the pamphlet debate of 1720 – have limited its role. The Americans built their major naval base in the Straits region in nearby Cadiz, and as such the Royal Navy is no longer the guarantor of the Strait. 'With this, the precarious geopolitical balance in the Western Mediterranean was obliterated – and with it the old logic driving European competition there' (Pack 2019, 265). Further, the advent of nuclear submarines made the prevention of enemy passage through the Strait more difficult, even if it did provide continued purpose for the British base as a listening post (see Camprubí 2020 on the Gibraltar Experiment). Since the 1980s the British military presence has been much diminished in Gibraltar. In the event of crisis Gibraltar can serve as a logistics and repair hub for allied military action in the region. It would appear that the techno-political assemblage of Gibraltar's place has finally tipped into a new formation, in which it may be occasionally useful – but is no longer strategic. As we have seen, the changes in Gibraltar have primarily been minor – attempts to 'keep up with the times' such as reclaiming land for the expanded dockyard or building the airfield. The big shifts in the relational place of Gibraltar have been distributed throughout the wider spatiality of the assemblage. The 'strategic' nature of that place has been wholly dependent on the relations that compose and maintain Gibraltar:

> Even so, [Gibraltar's] strength lies almost wholly in things outside itself. […] Like many of its kind, it is a part of a whole which is more than the sum of its parts. It is

> one of the most important links of a great chain of such strongholds whose strength rests on that mastery of the sea, to which, in turn, possession of such posts is an essential part, especially in these days of coal and oil. On that depends the importance of Gibraltar, commercially, diplomatically, and, above all, in naval, imperial and international affairs. (Abbott 1934, 17)

**Conclusion: Assembling Strategic Effects**

This article has argued for an understanding of 'strategic location' as the emergent effect of a techno-political assemblage that brings together both the materialities of terrain (such as the Rock and the Strait) and extant political technologies (cartography, artillery and naval technologies, imperial logistics). There is nothing pre-ordained about locations that make them inherently strategic; rather they can only be understood as strategic when a range of other distributed assemblages intersect in, and resonate with, the relatively fixed ossifications of place. The temporalities of such effects may be short-lived, or long-lived, but they have *some* duration. Hence the anxieties detailed here around the utility, value, and future of Gibraltar:

> Standing as it does at one of the great crossroads of the world, [Gibraltar's] very nicknames – the Gate, the Key, the Lock, the Keeper, the Watchdog, the Guardian, the Sentinel of the Mediterranean – reveal the reasons for that long concern. It may be that the Rock is really none of these. (Abbot 1934, 4)

Indeed, this article has tracked Gibraltar's rise from being un-strategic, to strategic, and to un-strategic again. Beyond this arc and the conceptual argument about place and geopolitics that it underpins, I would like to conclude with a few broader points.

First, I have argued for a more-than-human geopolitics that is not over-reliant on vitalism but nonetheless denies the nature/culture binary. This nudges critical scholars to both

attend to the materialities through which the past is sustained in the present and through which 'local' places are embedded in wider assemblages of circulation that enable a wider, distributed notion of place as relational to emerge. This is a corrective to possibilist approaches in geo-strategy that rely on bounded and static notions of place and the region that have been replaced by relational approaches within geography. That is, Gibraltar is not merely found in the Rock or the Strait, but also in the Royal Navy, the changing spatial discourses of empire, and even far-flung technological systems like the Suez Canal.

Second, I have made an (ahem) strategic choice in this paper to focus on the military dimension of Gibraltar's place. The story I have narrated is not about Gibraltar as a place in general, although it necessarily does affect that broader assemblage as well. The materials of 'strategic' place – the walls, port, communications infrastructure, and so on – provide material resources that today's (civilian) Gibraltar uses as it navigates the global political economy. An assemblage approach to place enables us to think of these materials as both holdovers of the past in the present, and also resources from which to assemble a new emergent polity in the wake of the Ministry of Defence drawdown of the 1980s. As an example, Gibraltar has repurposed much of its military infrastructure either for purposes of tourism or for 'local' purposes. The King's Bastion, for example, was at one point the centre of the naval defences but is today a pre-teen entertainment centre. Another example is the internet trunk line that comes ashore in Gibraltar, following the route of the original imperial telegraph cable. This high bandwidth – unusual for a small polity of just over 34,000 people – enables Gibraltar to serve as a thriving centre of online gaming and financial services. Therefore, just as the rock from tunnelling got re-used to make the runway, the military heritage of Gibraltar is being re-constituted in new assemblages that have new political effects. Reconceptualising place in geopolitics through assemblage enables us to understand the power of the past in the present, and the potentials it might enable.

**Figure captions**

Figure 1: The view from O'Hara's Battery (photo credit: author)

Figure 2: 'To His Grace John, Duke of Marleborough...this Map of ye English Battles, Sieges, &c. Abroad is Humbly Dedicated' (1705), by Herman Moll

Figure 3: Map of British trade routes in the Mediterranean, from Beaver (1720)

**Bibliography**


Agnew, J. (2003) *Geopolitics: Re-visioning world politics, 2nd ed.* (London: Routledge).

Agnew, J. (2018) 'Evolution of the Regional Concept,' pp. 22-33 in Paasi, A., J. Harrison, and M. Jones (Eds.) *Handbook on the Geographies of Regions and Territories* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar).

Allen, J. and Cochrane, A. (2010) 'Assemblages of State Power: Topological shifts in the organisation of government and politics,' *Antipode* 42(5): 1071-1089.

Amin, A. (2002). Spatialities of globalisation. *Environment and Planning A* 34: 385–399.

Amin, A. (2004). Regions unbound: towards a new politics of place. *Geografiska Annaler* 86B(1): 33–44.

Anderson J. (2012) 'Relational Places: the surfed wave as assemblage and convergence,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30(4): 570-587.

Anonymous (1749) *Reasons for Giving up Gibraltar* (London: W. Webb)

Archer, E. and Mays, J. (2009) *Wings Around Gibraltar: the story of Gibraltar's airfield and the airport* (Gibraltar: Archer and Mays).

Barua, M. (2018) 'Ratzel's biogeography: a more-than-human encounter,' *Journal of Historical Geography* 61: 102-108.

Bear, C. (2013) 'Assembling the Sea: Materiality, movement and regulatory practices in the Cardigan Bay scallop fishery,' *cultural geographies* 20(1): 21-41.

Beaver, J. (1720) *A Letter to the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, concerning the advantage of Gibraltar to the trade of Great-Britain. With some proposals to render that place more useful. By a Turkey merchant. To which is prefix'd, a chart of the Mediterranean Sea* (London: J. Roberts).

Benady, T. (1992) *The Royal Navy at Gibraltar* (Liskeard: Maritime Books).

Bennett, J. (2004) *Vibrant Matter: A political ecology of things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).

Black, J. (2009) *Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance* (London: Social Affairs Unit).

Bradford, E. (1971) *Gibraltar: The history of a fortress* (London: Hart-Davis).

Braudel, F. (1949) *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Armand Colin).

Campbell, T. (1987) 'Portolan Charts from the Late Thirteenth Century to 1500,' pp.371-463 in Harley, J.B. and Woodward, D. (Eds.) *The History of Cartography, Volume 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Camprubí, L. (2020) 'No Longer an American Lake': Depth and Geopolitics in the Mediterranean' *Diplomatic History* 44(3): 428-446.

Claval, P. (2001) 'The cultural approach and geography – the perspective of communication,' *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift* 55(3): 126-137.

Cohen, S. (1963) *Geography and Politics in a World Divided* (New York: Random House).

Conn, S. (1944) *Gibraltar in British Diplomacy in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

Connolly, W. (2013) *The Fragility of Things: Self-organizing processes, neoliberal fantasies, and democratic activism* (Durham: Duke University Press).

Coole, D. and Frost, S. (Eds.) (2010) *New Materialisms: Ontology, agency, and politics* (Durham: Duke University Press).

Cornish, V. (1923) *A Geography of Imperial Defence* (London: Sifton, Praed & Co.).

Dalby, S. (1991) 'Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, difference, and dissent,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9(3): 261-283.

D'Anvers, C. (1732) *The Danverian History of the Affairs of Europe, For the memorable Year 1731* (London: J. Roberts).

Darling, J. (2009) 'Thinking Beyond Place: the responsibilities of a relational spatial politics' *Geography Compass* 3(5): 1938-1954.

DeLanda, M. (2006) *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage theory and social complexity* (London: Continuum).

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (2001) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (London: Continuum).

Dittmer, J. (2013) 'Humour at the Model United Nations: the role of laughter in constituting geopolitical assemblages,' *Geopolitics* 18(3): 493-513.

Dittmer, J. (2014) 'Geopolitical assemblages and complexity,' *Progress in Human Geography* 38(3): 385-401.

Dittmer, J. (2015) 'Everyday Diplomacy: UKUSA intelligence cooperation and geopolitical assemblages,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 105(3): 604-619.

Dittmer, J. (2017) *Diplomatic Material: Affect, assemblage, and foreign policy* (Durham: Duke University Press).

Dixon, D. (2016) *Feminist Geopolitics: Material states* (London: Routledge).

Dodd, J.S. (1781) *The Ancient and Modern History of Gibraltar, and the Sieges and Attacks It Hath Sustained* (London: John Murray).

Dunn, E.C. (Online early) 'Warfare and Warfarin: Chokepoints, clotting and vascular geopolitics,' *Ethnos* DOI: 10.1080/00141844.2020.1764602

East, W.G. and Moodie, A.E. (1956) 'The World Background,' in East, W.G. and Moodie, A.E. (Eds.) *The Changing World: Studies in political geography* (London: George G. Harrap & Co.)

Fa, D. and Finlayson, C. (2013) *The Fortifications of Gibraltar, 1068-1945* (London: Bloomsbury).

Farinelli, F. (2009) *La crisi della ragione cartografica* (Torino: Einaudi).

Ferrer-Gallardo, X. and Kramsch, O.T. (2016) 'Revisiting al-Idrissi: The EU and the (Euro)Mediterranean Archipelago Frontier,' *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 107(2): 162-176.

Fox, N. and Alldred, P. (2017) *Sociology and the New Materialism: Theory, research, action* (London: Sage).

Gold, P. (1994) *A Stone in Spain's Shoe: The search for a solution to the problem of Gibraltar* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).

Gordon, T. (1720) *Considerations offered upon the approaching peace, and upon the importance of Gibraltar to the British Empire, being the second part of The independent Whig* (London: J. Roberts).

Gray, C. (1991) 'Geography and grand strategy', *Comparative Strategy*, 10(4): 311-329.

Gray, S. (2018) *Steam Power and Sea Power: Coal, the Royal Navy, and the British Empire c.1870-1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).

Grygiel, J. (2006) *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press).

Harvey, D. (1993). From space to place and back again: reflections on the conditions of postmodernity. In: J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Robertson and L. Tickner (eds) *Mapping the futures: local cultures, global change*. London: Routledge, pp. 3– 29.

Harvey, D. (1996). *Justice, nature and the geography of difference*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Heffernan, M. (2000) ‘Fin de Siecle, Fin du Monde? On the origins of European geopolitics, 1890-1920,’ pp.27-51 in Dodds, K. and Atkinson, D. (Eds.) *Geopolitical Traditions: a century of geopolitical thought* (London: Routledge).

Hettner, A. (1907) *Grundzüge der Länderkunde*. Germany: O. Spamer.

Hills, G. (1974) *Rock of Contention: A history of Gibraltar* (London: Robert Hale & Co.)

Howes, H.W. (1946) *The Story of Gibraltar* (London: Philip & Tacey)

Hughes, Q. (1981) *Britain in the Mediterranean & the Defence of her Naval Stations* (Penpaled Books).

Jackson, S. (2019) ‘Humboldt for the Anthropocene,’ *Science* 365(6458): 1074-1076.

Jazeel, T. (2011) ‘Spatialising Difference beyond Cosmopolitanism: Rethinking Planetary Futures,’ *Theory, Culture & Society* 28(5): 75-97.

Jones, M. (2009) ‘Phase space: geography, relational thinking, and beyond,’ *Progress in Human Geography* 33(4): 487-506.

Kaplan, R.D. (2009) ‘The Revenge of Geography,’ *Foreign Policy* 172: 96-105.

Kearns, G. (2008) ‘Progressive Geopolitics,’ *Geography Compass* 2(5): 1599-1620.

Klinke, I. (2018) *Cryptic Concrete: a subterranean journey into Cold War Germany* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell)

Klinke, I. and Bassin, M. (2018) ‘Introduction: *Lebensraum* and its discontents,’ *Journal of Historical Geography* 61: 53-58.

Koopman, S. (2011) ‘Alter-geopolitics: Other securities are happening,’ *Geoforum* 42(3): 274-284.

Lacoste, Y. (1977) ‘An illustration of geographical warfare: bombing of the dikes on the Red River, North Vietnam,’ pp. 244-261 in Peet, R. (Ed.), *Radical Geography* (London: Methuen).

Laketa, S. (2016) 'Geopolitics of Affect and Emotions in a Post-Conflict City,' *Geopolitics* 21(3): 661-685.

Latour, B. (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

Lemke, T. (2018) 'An Alternative Model of Politics? Prospects and problems of Jane Bennett's *Vital Materialism*,' *Theory, Culture & Society* 35(6): 31-54.

Mackinder, H. (1904) 'The Geographical Pivot of History,' *Geographical Journal* 23(4): 421-444.

Mahan, A.T. (1890) *The Influence of Sea Power on History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co.).

Marshall, T. (2016) *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything About the World* (New York: Simon & Schuster).

Massey, D. (1993). Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place. In: J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Robertson and L. Tickner (eds) *Mapping the futures: local cultures, global change*. London: Routledge, pp. 59–69.

Massey, D. (1994). *Space, place and gender*. Cambridge: Polity.

Massey, D. (1995). Thinking radical democracy spatially. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13: 283–288.

Massey, D. (2001). Geography on the agenda. *Progress in Human Geography* 25(1): 5–17.

Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. London: Sage.

McGuffie, T.H. (1965) *The Siege of Gibraltar, 1779-1783* (London: B.T. Batsford).

Medcalf, R. (2014) 'In defence of the Indo-Pacific: Australia's new strategic map,' *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68(4): 470-483.

Megoran, N. (2010) 'Neoclassical geopolitics,' *Political Geography* 29(4): 187-189.

Mountz, A. (2018) 'Political Geography III: Bodies,' *Progress in Human Geography* 42(5): 759-769.

Musteen, J. (2011) *Nelson's Refuge: Gibraltar in the Age of Napoleon* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press).

Nicley, E. (2009) 'Placing blame or blaming place? Embodiment, place and materiality in critical geopolitics,' *Political Geography* 28(1): 19-22.

O'Sullivan, P. (1982) 'Antidomino,' *Political Geography Quarterly* 1(1): 57-64.

Ó Tuathail, G. (1996) *Critical Geopolitics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Pain, R. (2009) 'Globalised Fear? Towards an emotional geopolitics,' *Progress in Human Geography* 33(4): 466-486.

Paasi, A. (2012) 'Border Studies Reanimated: Going beyond the Territorial/Relational Divide', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 44: 2303-2309.

Pack, S. (2019) *The Deepest Border: The Strait of Gibraltar and the Making of the Modern Hispano-African Borderland* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press).

Palao, G. (1975) *The Guns and Towers of Gibraltar* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Bookshop).

Peele, R. (1997) 'The Importance of Maritime Chokepoints,' *Parameters* 27(2): 61-74.

Peters, K. (2020) 'Deep Routeing and the Making of 'Maritime Motorways': Beyond surficial geographies of connection for governing global shipping,' *Geopolitics* 25(1): 43-64.

Peters, K. and Steinberg, P. (2019) 'The ocean in excess: Towards a more-than-wet ontology,' *Dialogues in Human Geography* 9(3): 293-307.

Pickles, J. (2004) *A History of Spaces: Cartographic reason, mapping and the geo-coded world* (London: Routledge).

Pierce, J., D. Martin and J. Murphy (2011) 'Relational place-making: the networked politics of place,' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36: 54-70.

Plà, J. (1955) *Gibraltar*, translated by D. Round (London: Hollis and Carter).

Popke, J. (2007) ‘Geography and Ethics: Spaces of cosmopolitan responsibility,’ *Progress in Human Geography* 31(4): 509-518.

Rowan-Robinson, H. (1938) *Imperial Defence: A problem in four dimensions* (London: Frederick Muller).

Scott, D. (2012) ‘The “Indo-Pacific” – New Regional Formulations and New Maritime Frameworks for US-India Strategic Convergence,’ *Asia-Pacific Review* 19(2): 85-109.

Sharp, J. (2000) ‘Remasculinising geo-politics? Comments on Gearoid O’Tuathail’s critical geopolitics,’ *Political Geography* 19: 361-364.

Sharp, J. (Online early) ‘Materials, forensics and feminist geopolitics,’ *Progress in Human Geography* DOI: 10.1177/0309132520905653

Smith, S. (2009) ‘The domestication of geopolitics: Buddhist-Muslim conflict and the policing of marriage and the body in Ladakh, India,’ *Geopolitics* 14(2): 197-218.

Sparke, M. (2000) ‘Graphing the geo in geo-political: critical geopolitics and the re-visioning of responsibility,’ *Political Geography* 19: 373-380.

Squire, R. (2016) ‘Rock, water, air and fire: Foregrounding the elements in the Gibraltar-Spain dispute,’ *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34(3): 545-563.

Steinberg, P. and Peters, K. (2015) ‘Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces: Giving depth to volume through oceanic thinking,’ *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33(2): 247-264.

Tanca, M. (2017) ‘Incongruent Counterparts: Four possible ways of interaction between geography and philosophy,’ *Journal of Interdisciplinary History of Ideas* 6(12): section 3.

Usher, M. (2020) ‘Territory *incognita*,’ *Progress in Human Geography* 44(6): 1019-1046.

Vidal de la Blache, P. (1913) ‘Des caracteres distinctifs de la geographie.’ *Annales de Geographie* 22: 289-299.

Woodward, D. (2007) ‘Cartography and the Renaissance: Continuity and Change,’ pp. 3-24 in Woodward, D. (Ed.) *The History of Cartography: Cartography in the European Renaissance, vol. 3, pt. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).