

primary strength of this book is the dedicated insight it offers into the lives and personalities of the eighteenth-century land surveyors.

Sarah Gearty
Irish Historic Towns Atlas, Royal Irish Academy
S.Gearty@ria.ie
© 2013, Sarah Gearty
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00750778.2013.781310>

The Ashgate research companion to critical geopolitics, edited by Klaus Dodds, Merje Kuus and Joanne Sharp, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013, 570 pp., £90.00 (hbk), ISBN 978-1-4094-2380-5

This collection of works relating to, and reviewing, current thinking and practices within the school of academic geopolitics, with specific reference to the relatively new field of critical geopolitics, is a must-read book for all interested in the areas of political geography and international relations. This volume deserves a place on the library shelves of all universities containing Geography (and indeed Politics) departments, as there is much to offer here for students who might be interested in the different ways that politics impacts on, and is influenced by, developments at the local, national, regional and global levels, as well as in how the understanding of politics can be widened to draw in different issues and groups that would not be directly linked in to formal political networks. The book also draws on contributions from most of the leading scholars, though not all of these, in the rapidly developing field of critical geopolitics. To those who may be unaware of developments within this field, what may be particularly surprising here is the degree to which different contributions focus on topics, agents and issues that would not appear to fall within the concerns of traditional approaches to political studies. As well as the formal political activities of governments and other politician actors, this collection also looks at the role played by other actors such as the media and non-governmental organisations, while highlighting the importance of gender, religion and evangelism, ethnicity and art/visual culture within the political sphere. As such, the content of different chapters within this volume will be relevant, and of interest, to those with specific interests in the other branches of human geography, including cultural, development and social geographies.

Opening with a concise, yet insightful, foreword from Gearóid Ó Tuathail, the book is arranged across 28 different chapters, involving the work of 31 different contributors, with these chapters being organised between three different sections. The first of these sections uncovers the basic ideas and foundations underpinning the study of critical geopolitics, with some of the chapters in this section making reference back to the works of classical, or traditional, geopolitics as a means of illustrating the extent to which critical geopolitics differs from, but also builds upon, the work of earlier geopolitical schools such as Halford Mackinder. An especially strong piece of work in this section is the opening chapter by John Agnew on 'The Origins of Critical Geopolitics', which traces the development of critical geopolitics, with reference to how this emerging field of studies relates back to, and reacts against, the earlier work in geopolitics by Mackinder and his contemporaries. The remainder of this section looks at some of the other key ideas, concerns and concepts within the field of critical geopolitics, including chapters on questions to do with text and discourse, radical geopolitics, sovereignty and

neoliberalism. The second of the three sections looks at the 'sites' of critical geopolitics. Again this section combines a focus on those sites that would be normally associated with traditional political geography, including chapters focusing on militarisation, borders and the state, but it also extends beyond this to focus on other aspects such as environmental resources, the media and everyday spaces. The final section is concerned with the different agents that are the focus in studies within the field of critical geopolitics. In a somewhat different vein to the previous section, none of these chapters focuses primarily on the actions of world leaders and other politicians (with the sole exception being Bachmann's chapter on 'International Organisations'), which would have been the primary focus of classical geopolitics, but instead these focus on other agents, which tend to operate outside the sphere of formal politics. Reflecting a key strand within critical geopolitics to widen the focus of geopolitical enquiry on these other political agents, the chapters in this section focus on different groups including women, non-government organisations, artists, journalists and activists.

This is a very interesting and challenging publication, which will be of interest to all interested in the history of geography and the development of political geography, and indeed other branches of the discipline. If any critiques could be levelled at this, sections of this volume may at times over-stress the discontinuities, as opposed to the various strands where continuities are evident, between the new approaches associated with critical geography and the more traditional strands running within political geography and international relations studies. From a purely parochial point of view, Irish readers may be disappointed by the limited involvement of leading Irish scholars within the field of critical geopolitics – Ó Tuathail's involvement is limited to the two-and-a-half page long foreword to this volume, while there are no contributions from other Irish scholars working in this field including John O'Loughlin and Gerry Kearns. Leaving those concerns aside, this book amounts to a very significant contribution to geographical scholarship and should prove to be an invaluable resource to all geographers who are interested in how politics relates to different dimensions of their areas of study.

Adrian Kavanagh
Department of Geography, NUI-Maynooth, Maynooth, Ireland
Adrian.P.Kavanagh@nuim.ie

© 2013, Adrian Kavanagh

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00750778.2013.846492>

Ireland's 1916 rising: explorations of history-making, commemorations & heritage in modern times, by Mark McCarthy, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2012, 532 pp., £65 (hbk), ISBN 978-1-4094-3623-2

In 1991, as the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Easter Rising approached, John McGahern wrote a piece for *The Irish Times* entitled 'From a Glorious Dream to a Wink and a Nod', indicating Ireland's decreasing interest in April 1916. State-sponsored commemorations of the Rising have vacillated from elaborate pageantry (in 1966) to hurried observations in the GPO (in 1991) depending on the prevailing politics of the time. Mark McCarthy has set out to document these official and all other commemorative acts over almost 100 years, providing an impressive range of evidence from archival sources to newspapers and literature.