

Title: Lines with Consequences: The Real-life Implications of Maps and Borders

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Within an academic culture that understands the necessity of understanding bias in our written sources, we have neglected to hold maps, which form our very understanding of the world around us, to the same standard. Through various academic journals and historical accounts, I've examined how maps are a visual representation of our geographic and spiritual understanding of the world, evidenced by cartographic traditions across the globe that consistently placed religious figures at the map's center (Raat 284). This tradition of maps interacting with worldview has transferred into an era where technology shows us exactly what the earth looks like, but projects it onto flat surfaces, creating imperfect images of the world that we carry with us as fact. In the case of the Mercator Projection, ingrained in education and media as The World Map, the size of northernmost and southernmost landmasses are immensely inflated. It appears as though Africa were smaller—and as a result, less significant—than North America. The relationship between cartography and imperialist worldviews also contributes to geopolitical conflict and borders. Continuing with the Africa example, hastily drawn colonial borders that ignored existing ethnic groups still affect African nations today, contributing to the border conflicts and underdevelopment (Gashaw) that along with Africa's portrayal on maps, contribute to our dismissal of the region. World maps, the projections we use, and the borders we draw are filled with bias, simplifications, and distortions; unless analyzed as such, they will continue to distort our perceptions of the world around us.

Works Cited

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