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A subaltern critical geopolitics of the war on terror: postcolonial security in Tanzania

Joanne Sharp

The War on Terror has come to dictate current dominant geopolitical imaginations and attendant security concerns, generating what Pain (2009) has called a state of “globalized fear”. While being only too critical of the Western-centric nature of this terminology – e.g. of the fetishisation of the sign “911” (Pain and Smith 2008) – critical approaches to geopolitics will nevertheless be strengthened by studies of non-Western perceptions of current geopolitics and the nature of fear. Africa, for example, is a continent that is often captured in Western geopolitics – as a site of failed states, “the coming anarchy”, passive recipient of Western or, increasingly, Chinese, aid (Le Billon 2007; Kaplan 1994; Dalby 2003; Mawdsley 2008), amongst others – but geopolitical representations originating in Africa rarely make much of an impact on political theory. Although, of course, there is much political geography based outside the west (see, for example, Sidaway and Simon 1993; Slater 2004), as Darby (2004:6) has noted of core concepts in international relations theory, the “decolonisation of the international has barely begun” (see also Tickner 2003).

This paper aims to bring a postcolonial sensibility, attentive to finding a space for “other voices” in the international, to critical geopolitics. It considers the geopolitical imagination of the War on Terror from a non-Western source, newspapers in Tanzania.

Subaltern Geopolitics

As a result of its foundations within realist understandings of international relations, geopolitics is state-centric. More than this, it has been based around the exploits of dominant states. Realist champion Kenneth Waltz famously argued that Denmark does not matter (see Bilgin 2008:10). He was of course arguing that the interpretations and actions of great states – the hegemonic or dominant powers at any time – mattered most.

Among the challenges to classical realism, Mohammed Ayoob’s project of proposing a “subaltern realism [...] draws upon the experience of subalterns in the international system” (Ayoob 2002: 40). His realism challenges conventional realist accounts, which insist that only the great powers need be understood, by highlighting the dominance of subalterity: “it is the common experience of all human societies that these are the elements that constitute the large majority of any members of any social system” (Ayoob 2002: 40-1). Ayoob’s critique of the narrow focus of conventional international relations theory parallels the challenges to political geography wrought by feminist geopolitics (Dowler and Sharp 2001; Hyndman 2001). Taking inspiration from Cynthia Enloe, feminist geopolitical approaches challenge that “if we employ only the conventional, ungendered compass to chart international politics, we are likely to end up mapping a landscape peopled only by men, mostly elite men” (Enloe 1989:1). For Ayoob, if theories of international relations are focused solely on the great powers, we will end up with political theories which reproduce the vision of those great powers.

Ayoob’s realism is one which acknowledges the interdependency of international and domestic politics (and so has faced challenges to whether it is truly “realism” (Barnett 2002)), insisting that despite the importance of other scales of political activity and identity, the state is still the

preeminent actor, and thus the goal for Third World societies. While this, in many ways, again echoes feminist geopolitics' ambition to challenge the separation of a domestic sphere from one defined as "the political", it sets a different path from anti-geopolitics which "represents an assertion of permanent independence from the state *whoever is in power*" (Routledge 1998: 245, emphasis in original). Bilgin (2008:13) critiques those who, in their rather romanticised search for difference, for politics untainted by Westernisation, "have turned to 'Third World radicals' and found exactly what they were looking for: treatises on the various ways in which the strong have exploited the weak. Others have turned to non-IR sources such as literature, drama and philosophy [... because they] expect those who are in a position of 'weakness' to have radically 'different' ideas compared with those who are in a position of 'strength'".

It is the tension inherent in Ayoob's concept of "subaltern realism" – an apparently oxymoronic pairing of terms linking a weak position with a powerful vision – that I wish to bring to "subaltern geopolitics". Like Ayoob, I would like to combine terms referring to weakness and powerful political optic to produce creative tensions in theorising. This postcolonial argument offers a challenge to those accounts which simply reject the state and formal politics, recognising the on-going lived importance of such "scales" while simultaneously highlighting their social and spatial construction. This then represents a postcolonial sensibility structured around Bhabha's (1990) ideas of hybridity: especially the concept of 'mimicry' which allows for strategy, subversion and survival; it "may be a way of 'doing' world politics in a seemingly 'similar' yet unexpectedly 'different' way" (Bilgin 2008:6). Mimicry does not suggest the Other wishing to become the same, or that it is radically different, but instead destabilizes these binarised categories.

This paper will move away from Ayoob's exclusive focus on the state and statemaking to consider the role of popular geographical imaginations. It has been argued elsewhere that the media are key to understanding the ways in which people understand the world around them, and their place within it (Sharp 1996, 2000; see also Debrix 2006) because of the unrivalled power such institutions have in narrating global events. While I acknowledge that there has been significant critique of the discursive dominance of much critical geopolitical methodology (Paasi 2000; Thrift 2000; Muller 2008), I contend that as a framework of understanding such discursive analysis is important. Geographical imaginaries are transmitted through institutions of the state, education and media and, while recognising the importance of other aspects of meaning-making (such as misreading, performative excess and so on), these representational schemas provide the language through which understandings of the world are communicated, understood and contested. They provide a framing of global events, and relate these to the reader's own life, hence giving distant events their relevance. Elsewhere I have explained this process as it related to the practices of reading the US magazine *Reader's Digest* each month:

In its mix of articles, it juxtaposes the global with national concerns, and with issues of importance to the individual citizen through a normative moral discourse of how things should be. [...] Analysing the *Digest* presents the possibility of understanding how it is that individuals are drawn into various political processes as subjects: why they should feel responsibility to their country and why they should care about what is happening in distant parts of the world. (Sharp 2003: 198)

Such powerful texts help to shape people's political identities through the content of their argument then, but also through forms of address, by an affectual exchange. Much has been written since the

attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001 about the creation of “globalized fear’ ... the powerful metanarrative that is currently popular in analyses of the relation of fear, terror and security” (Pain 2009: 468). The media are often credited with transmitting this fear across borders and scales (Debrix 2008; Pain 2009) whether in the global north or south, however it is clear that northern geopolitical imaginaries dominate in the “global” definition of what is to be feared.

Cold War geopolitical language scripted the Third World as a site for intervention, containment and control. The end of the Cold War initially seemed to lead to a fragmentation of the western-dominated imagination which carved the world into the territories of First World (US and allies), Second World (USSR and allies) and Third World (essentially, what was left over), but since the attacks on the US in September 2001, geopolitical discourse, and the attention of critics, has once again focused on the binary geopolitics of the powerful. The very language characteristic of dominant geopolitical imaginaries highlights western-centrism while encouraging simplistic readings of power:

9/11 is the somatic pivot of geopolitics in contemporary America, a memory that necessitates and justifies a radical ‘down-scaling’ of the world into infantile categories and identities: ‘good’ versus ‘evil’, ‘civilisation’ and ‘freedom’ versus a cartoon world of ‘evildoers,’ ‘terrorists,’ and storybook characters described in presidential speeches as ‘the dictator’ and the ‘tyrant’. (Ó Tuathail 2003: 859)

This reinvigoration of US dualistic thinking forced “smaller states to take positions even if they are not affected by related threats” (Bellamy and Bleiker 2008: 3). It has projected “globalized terror” onto other spaces, but other states and communities may have entirely different emotional geopolitics; geographies of fear, hostility and hospitality (see Butler 2004).

Tanzania is just one of these “smaller states”, a state with little power in the realist view of the world order, but one that helps to make up the majority of what Ayoob would identify as the dominant experience of the world order. In taking Tanzania as an example, I am not suggesting, as some critics of Ayoob have suggested he has for the cases he has used (Barnett 2002), that it speaks for the Global South (although, at times, this is a view that seeks to articulate an African, or even a Third World, perspective). However, it is not simply a representation somehow contained by “Tanzania” in any realist way. In its reflection back on dominant geopolitics this subaltern geopolitics offers a challenge to the “cartoon world” that Ó Tuathail claims is now dominant.

Tanzanian Geopolitics of the War on Terror

Tanzania occupies an ambivalent location with respect to dominant geopolitical representation and practice. Its post-independence leader, Julius Nyerere, had an overt political agenda of seeking a ‘third way’ which avoided the politics of either/or America/USSR. Nyerere was one of the founders and drivers of the non-aligned movement and of a distinctive African socialism which sought to avoid the power politics of the Cold War, and the neo-colonial influences of either USA or USSR. Nyerere had a vision of nationalism as a uniting force – as an inclusionary not exclusionary identity, something to overcome the fractures and differences created or exacerbated by European colonialism – to create unity (*umoja*) for Tanzania, then East Africa and – eventually – for a united Africa (Nyerere 1966). As

Tanzania achieved independence in the context of the Cold War geopolitical map and the ongoing threat of neo-colonial domination and exploitation, Nyerere argued that it was only by uniting and following their own path that Africans could survive and flourish in independence.

Nyerere's model of postcolonial Tanzania was based on what he considered to be a specifically African interpretation of socialism that regarded society as classless due to pre-colonial social structures being based around the sharing of common interests (*ujamaa*) (Legum and Mmari 1995). Although Nyerere considered nationalism to be both an anti-colonial and a unifying force, his national politics also reflected geopolitical concerns. The union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964 was officially aimed at advancing the interests of an East African federation but, in light of the recent Cuban Missile Crisis, Oscar Kambona, secretary general of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) explained another motivation: "Our first concern was the growing communist presence, and second, the danger of the Cold War coming in. The problem was how to isolate Zanzibar from the Eastern countries, yet not be used by the West for its own purposes" (quoted in Smyth and Seftel 1993: 109). There has been considerable debate since the 1960s about the true nature of the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar – whether it was indeed driven by Cold War geopolitics, Nyerere's determination to put in motion a process of unification that would spread to East Africa before the whole continent, or whether it was more simply linked to domestic politics of personal wealth on the part of the TANU leaders (Othman 1995; Hunter 2010; Mwakikagile 2008). In his nuanced account of the narration of events, Myers explains how a particular version subsequently came to prominence:

The 1977 party unification gave impetus to a significant trend toward Tanzanianizing Zanzibar's revolt (making it understood *to* or *through* a mainlander lens) via novels and historical studies. This involved an intensification of the African-ness of the revolutionary script, conceiving the revolution as African liberation and blocking out non-black understandings of identity and culture on the islands. [...] The 1992 reauthorization of multi-party politics has further intensified the prominence of this African racial solidarity element. (Myers 2000: 438)

What this official historiography silences is the violence and repression experienced by Zanzibaris and other Tanzanians as a result of this nation-building process. However, what is important to the ways in which Tanzania and its place in the world is narrated in the dominant national imaginary is that for both internal reason (African socialist developmental and national unificatory) and external reasons (negating binary Cold War geopolitical power relations) then, Nyerere wanted to develop a way forward that did not simply follow existing models.

Post-colonial Tanzania did not follow Nyerere's vision. Nyerere stepped down from office in 1985 facilitating the country's move towards the free market and private ownership under his successor Al Hassan Mwinyi. Despite this, and Nyerere's openness about some of his mistakes, he is still spoken of (in the media and government but also in daily conversation by Tanzanian citizens) with great reverence. His name is always preceded by *Mwalimu*, meaning "teacher". Young (2004: 47) argues that although "the Nyerere vision of the popular socialist polity failed by any measure in the policy realm, the moral rectitude of the *Mwalimu* preserved his image as a charismatic leader dedicated to the common weal". Despite the country's deviation from it, Nyerere's vision of Tanzania's role in

leading post-independence Africa is still significant, as one oft-quoted statement – taken here from *The Daily News* in 2001 – makes clear:

President Mkapa said Tanzania's foreign policy has always been guided by what Mwalimu Nyerere said before independence that "...we, the people of Tanganyika, would like to light a candle and put it on the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, which would shine beyond our borders, giving hope where there is despair, love where there is hate and dignity where before there was only humiliation". (10/12/01)

Although Tanzania moved to multiparty democracy in 1992, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (*Revolutionary Party*), which was created in 1977 as a result of the merger between the mainland-based TANU and the Zanzibar-based Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP), still dominates, gaining 63% of the votes in 2010 (down from 80% of the vote in 2005). Ever since 1992, charges have been levied at CCM for continuing to act as a one-party system. Until recently, the only significant opposition it currently faces came from the Civic United Front (*Chama Cha Wananchi*) which was formed by a merger of parties concerned with human rights and Zanzibari democracy in 1992, and which attracted around 11% of votes in 2005 and 8% in 2010ⁱ. Tensions between Zanzibar and the mainland are ongoing. Zanzibaris continue to complain that the island is treated as a province of the mainland, rather than as an equal partner in the union, and it has not been given a fair share of national resources.

Tanzania's ambivalent location in current geopolitics also has more recent origins. The country has direct links to the current War on Terror. In August 1998 the US Embassies in Dar es Salaam and in neighbouring Nairobi, Kenya, were destroyed by simultaneous bomb blasts. Osama bin Laden was accused of "masterminding" these attacks and, as a consequence, President Clinton ordered military strikes on the Sudan and Afghanistan, perhaps the first overt geopolitical recognition of the networked nature of post-Cold War geopolitics. Tanzania claimed victimhood in someone else's battle but the events of 1998 nevertheless exposed the existence of "terror" networks in East Africa. It has reignited debate in Tanzania about religious differences that had been previously downplayed or hidden behind Nyerere's model of Tanzanian citizenship within which national affiliation was pre-eminent over religious, tribal or ethnic differences. The visibility of Islam in Tanzania has been increasing in recent years with mosque building programmes, often funded from the Gulf States (Davis 2007: 3), and the greater prominence of covered Muslim women in public space. Although Tanzania has not seen the inter-ethnic violence of neighbouring Kenya, its significant Muslim minority and the ongoing pressures for greater autonomy for Muslim-dominated Zanzibar continues to keep Islam on the domestic as well as the international agenda.

All of these dimensionsⁱⁱ then place Tanzania in an ambivalent political space with regards to the geopolitical battlelines drawn by the Bush administration and Osama bin Laden alike at the outset of the west's War on Terror. This paper seeks to uncover the geographical imagination resulting from this postcolonial site to examine the subaltern geopolitics that emerge from it.

Newspapers in Tanzania

The significance of newspapers would appear to be of particular relevance in Tanzania. After independence from Britain, Nyerere "wanted to promote use of media to foster unity and

development in the county” (Enock 2005: 37). He promoted newspapers and radio as the main means for this. While the technology was becoming available, Nyerere considered TV to be an elite media and therefore divisive of the populationⁱⁱⁱ. Although radio has historically been an important source of information in Tanzania, especially for non-literate sections of the community, it has not been possible to access historical radio broadcasts, leaving newspapers as the most consistent archival source of popular political culture.

The practices of newspaper consumption again indicate the importance of this medium in Tanzanian society. Newspaper readership is a significant social occasion in Tanzania. Newspaper stands are communal places where people gather^{iv}, and it would appear that purchasing newspapers is not a purely individual act but papers may be shared and circulated. It could be argued that television and internet sources are beginning to take over the geopolitical imaginations of citizens in the West. In Tanzania, however, newspaper readership still remains important in the formation of political ideas, in no small part because frequent electricity shortages – in those areas which can expect regular supply – make TV and internet unreliable regular sources.^v

Newspapers are published in Kiswahili and English. Each publisher has two versions which, it has been suggested, are broadly equivalent, although it may be that the English versions have more international coverage (Schaefer 2003). Research undertaken as part of a master’s project at the University of Dar es Salaam suggests that for those who can read both Kiswahili and English, around two thirds prefer the Kiswahili version, although preference for the English version increases with education: all of those surveyed who had a postgraduate qualification preferred to read an English language newspaper (Enock 2005: 70).

This paper is based on an analysis of one English-language newspaper, *The African*. Since market deregulation in the early 1990s, there has been a proliferation of media with a number of national and regional newspapers emerging (and, in some cases, disappearing) in competition with the previous government mouthpiece *The Daily News*. *The African* is a commercial paper published by the New Habari Media Group which publishes a range of papers and magazines in Tanzania.^{vi} I selected *The African* because it contained a combination of extensive international coverage and a high number of local and African editorial and discussion pieces. It is also one of the four English-language newspapers monitored by Tanzania’s media regulators. I read the paper in its original paper form in the East African Archives at the University of Dar es Salaam library.^{vii}

I read all issues in the two weeks after the attacks on the USA on 11th September 2001 and then each issue published on the 1st, 10th and 20th of each month (or closest day thereafter) until April 2003 (to cover the invasion of Iraq). I read all articles relating to: the War on Terror; US foreign policy; the impact of western dominated institutions on Tanzania, Africa and the Third World; any Third World opposition to US/Western domination; and any articles that discussed any other “threats” or “dangers” facing Tanzania, Africa and the Third World. I read closely all editorial and opinion pieces which explained the meaning of particular events to the reader rather than just reporting what had happened but where articles were syndicated from international sources, I simply noted the title and general theme of the article, to allow for content analysis. I also analysed images supporting articles as the proximity of images to articles can help to shape readers’ interpretations of them. I noted the topic of the photo, composition and content. A summary of the themes from my reading of the articles can be found in table 1. I have also analysed articles from the *Daily News* and another

relatively new paper, *The Guardian*, to ensure that *The African's* coverage is broadly consistent with their views of events. I found the balance of coverage in the three papers consistent with the only significant differences being the *Daily News's* less critical view of Tanzania's ruling party.

Table 1: Key Themes in *The African's* Coverage of the War on Terror, September 2001 – April 2003

Theme	Main Subthemes	Number of instances
1. US dominance	US policy relating to the War on Terror	211
	US taking unilateral action/ignoring other views	35
	US military response outdated/inappropriate to situation	26
	Note US military might	19
	US only interested in oil/profit	16
2. Nature of the US world-view	US foreign policy creates enemies/perpetuates cycle of violence	29
	Commentary on US binary geopolitical imagination	28
	US unquestioning support for Israel	20
	US approach to Middle East makes situation worse	19
	US created enemies/supported them in the past	14
	US perpetuates myth of Clash of Civilisations	6
3. Global perspectives on US attitude/action	Note lack of international support for US policy / coalition	25
	<i>Note international support for US policy / coalition</i>	4
	Note anti-war protests and polls	15
	US policy as anti-Muslim/anti-Arab	9
	Discussion of why US is hated around the world	9
	Bush lacking intelligence	8
	US as arrogant	7
	US racist	7
4. Impacts on Africa / Third World	Tanzanian/African perspectives ignored	17
	Impact of WoT on Global Economy	16
	<i>Impact of WoT on Tanzanian economy</i>	10
	Reference to 1998	15
	Terrorism in Africa	15
	Africa affected by someone else's war	10
	Globalisation/Western-dominated institutions create poverty in Africa	10
	Support for US leads to instability of other states	9
5. Victimhood	Innocents killed	33
	Victims of war	
	<i>Palestinian</i>	26
	<i>Afghan</i>	18
	<i>Israeli</i>	9
	<i>Women and children</i>	7
	<i>Iraqi</i>	4
	<i>African</i>	4
	Importance of human security	15
	Other terrors	
	<i>Famine/poverty</i>	8
<i>Disease</i>	7	

<i>Civil war</i>	4
<i>Savimbi</i>	3
<i>Natural disasters / climate change</i>	2

Lack of resources means that much of the reporting of international events in *The African* comes from syndication. This would appear to marginalise further Tanzania as a producer of geopolitical knowledge. However, there is considerable agency in the selection of sources. While *The Daily News* tends to present quite a factual style, *The African* is more polemical, including more reflective pieces – and the commentators it selects do represent the more radical mainstream journalists and public intellectuals Mahmood Mamdani, Noam Chomsky, George Monbiot, Robert Fisk and Polly Toynbee. Moreover, the editing of articles is itself a creative process: *The African* takes a significant number of articles from *The Economist* and yet still manages to present a radical interpretation of world affairs which, for example, challenges the economic vision of international agencies such as the World Bank and IMF and is profoundly pro-Palestine.^{viii}

I am not a Tanzanian and so I am not part of the imagined readership of *The African*. This will inevitably constrain my ability to pick up on all of the nuances of historical connection and cultural context that would be available to a native reader. However, just as with readings of historical materials, where the context has similarly changed, my attention to patterns of representations and narrative connections will help to ensure that the main themes will emerge. Despite attempts to contact editors at *The African*, I have not managed to gain an editorial view on the newspaper.

While it is reckless to suggest that there is somehow “a Tanzanian view”, an analysis of mainstream Tanzanian newscoverage allows for exploration of geopolitical imaginations in the Tanzanian media through which geopolitical representations and practices of identity formation are played out.

The African’s coverage of the War on Terror

All of the editorial coverage of the attacks of 11th September made mention of the US embassy bombings in East Africa in August 1998. This initially worked to extend a sense of connection rather than a geography of difference, emphasising that Tanzania had a shared experience with the US so could empathise with Americans. However, even at this early stage, there was some suggestion that while East Africa might empathise with Americans, this did not work both ways. Articles soon appeared suggesting that America regarded its own victims of terror as more important than others, that somehow terrorism against America should be considered as more important than elsewhere.

In distinction from western coverage, from the very beginning the immediate reaction to the attacks on the US on the 11th September 2001 was not of surprise. Coverage in the paper suggested although they were horrified by the spectacle of violence enacted by Osama bin Laden, Tanzanians could understand *why* someone had wanted to lash out at the US because of the country’s refusal to acknowledge or care about the impact of their policies around the globe:

Is America humble enough to admit that it has been wrong in its dealings with the rest of the world and that it must change in the interests of lasting peace? The fact is that the war did not start with Tuesday's murderous strike on American soil. It simply changed the rules, the battlefield, the ugly scorecard and the balance of evil power in a contest that has been raging for a long time. To many observers, it is America's smug, arrogant isolationism that has begotten this disaster. (17/9/01)

Nevertheless, given the on-going religious tensions noted above, it is perhaps unsurprising that in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, there was coverage of various Tanzanian religious leaders calling for co-operation, reminding readers of the tolerant nature of Tanzanian culture and condemning any celebration of the US deaths, what the paper named "Osama bin Ladenism" (20/9/01).

US dominance and World-View

Much is made of the United States' disregard for the views of others; articles reminded readers of US withdrawal from international treaties before the September 2001 attacks and their "wilful defiance of international etiquette" (12/9/01). There was discussion of the US undermining arms treaties, its lack of concern for the impacts of global environmental change in its refusal to ratify the Kyoto Treaty, and US representatives walking out of the UN anti-racism conference in Durban shortly before the attacks, provoking claims of racism and the belief that US foreign policy privileged the "white nations" (14/9/01).

Such actions were seen to be reinforced by what was perceived to be a disdainful attitude towards the UN, with the US acting like "a bully and a rogue" (19/9/01) except when it wanted a decision taken, and its apparent refusal to recognise the human costs of international economic institutions which were driven by US-led policy. One article stated that no price "is too high for America's economic interests abroad" (10/10/01). *The African* considered that the United States' self-proclaimed role as global policeman was made possible not because of any moral high ground or international recognition, but merely because it was the remaining superpower at the end of the Cold War, the only country with the military might to take on this role. As table 1 shows, there was considerable scepticism displayed towards US language of freedom and democracy, with articles insisting the real motivation behind US foreign policy was economic (especially for "staggeringly lucrative postwar oil contracts" (10/2/03)), or that it used the "pretext of terrorism to settle old scores" (10/10/01). Six articles accused the US of intervening in other country's domestic politics for its own interests, with one going so far as to insist that "[e]very war in the continent of Africa can be directly or indirectly linked to the American intentions mostly in safeguard their own investments" (14/9/01). Although in the US the events of 11th September 2001 are often presented as having changed everything, for *The African*, the post-2001 world order was little more than a continuation of the Cold War geopolitical order by another name. Once again, Tanzania and Africa were rendered bystanders in a binary geopolitics centred around the US and its enemy.

Global perspectives on US attitude and action

Nine articles directly discussed why it is that the US is so hated, one suggesting that “for a variety of reasons Americans are the most hated creatures on earth” (19/1/02), another that what is “[e]specially detested is the Americans’ attitude to the local population” (2/12/02). What was most striking, however, was that the real sense of “fear” was not of terrorism but the fear for what would happen next in terms of what violence would be meted out by Americans by way of retaliation. It is a powerfully affectual argument, evoking the powers of religion alongside descriptions of geopolitics: “We are no longer safe: BY ALL MEANS PRAY AND I MEAN PRAY” (18/9/01).

In five cases, *The African* accused the US directly of imperialism, and of using its military power to advance economic interests: “the policeman of the world that only protects imperialism” (15/9/01). *The African* presented its views as coming from what might be called a “postcolonial optic”, where the perspective from below allowed it to see the effects of US policy better than the Americans could or were willing to. Articles suggested that Americans’ “Affluence and comfort dull the optic nerve” (21/9/01) and that it is now:

...time the Americans learnt how it feels to be insecure whether in or out of your country. When there are wars in the whole world, and they are sitting on [their] rocking chair watching TV, they have no inkling of how it feels to live on the other side of the fence (14/9/01).

Thus, there is little sympathy for the US when it claims victimhood. Whereas the paper considers that victims of the war on terror in the Global South are justified in their claims, in the case of the US, this is considered to be naïve. As one article explained, it “is politically easier for the US government to put on the robes of victimhood than look at its own complicity in creating their ritual monsters like bin Laden” (17/9/01).

The paper’s geographical imaginations of connection challenged the geopolitical binaries projected by US (and, to a lesser extent, al-Qaeda). Articles highlighted the interdependence of the global economy illustrating the impacts on Africa of US economic decisions; they traced the geographies of US foreign policy supporting various political groups around the world highlighting the fact that the spectre of al-Qaeda as a global threat without equal was a product of US policy. Underlying these individual articles was a sensibility which rejected the possibility of binaries in future visions of world politics, seeing “the myth of the clash between the western and Islamic civilisations” (22/9/01) as being produced by the US. It also insisted on the importance of bringing in ‘rogue states’ and those in ‘the axis of evil’ if Bush’s global coalition was ever to be successful.

One of the most common themes was that that America had created its enemies through the policies and actions it enacted around the world. This was most often discussed in terms of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, but the paper even placed the origins of modern jihad at the feet of the Americans. Echoing Tanzanians’ historically critical view on the impact of Cold War geopolitics around the globe, one article explained that President Reagan had supported the Afghani Mujahadeen giving “a new and ominous lease of life to the medieval concept of jihad” (10/10/01), while another suggested that the “Islamic world had not seen an armed Jihad for centuries but now the CIA was determined to create one” (10/1/02).

Articles further challenged the idea of ‘you’re either with us or with the terrorists’ by coming back to difficulties of defining terrorism, often making reference to the violence enacted by the US in recent history, and by highlighting the inequalities perpetuated by the US domestically (especially around race) and around the world. Finally, this sense of the US creating fear around named enemies was reinforced by articles discussing those perceived by Tanzanians as perpetuating terrorism (e.g. “War against terror should include Savimbi”^{ix} 19/9/01) but were not in the American’s sights.

Impacts on the Third World and the victims of the War on Terror

As already noted, the real sense of fear to emerge was of the path of events occurring *after* 11th September. This fear was of being marginalised by global decision-making and of being affected by decisions made by those entirely unaccountable to them. “How long shall our people be sacrificed for a cause that does not concern us?” asked one article (10/12/02), while another warned that ignoring African views “increases terror risk” (20/11/01). Targeting Afghanistan for the reason that Osama bin Laden was reportedly there was presented as “tantamount to genocide” (21/9/01). As another article put it, “why attack Afghanistan in retaliation when bin Laden is not an Afghan neither was the country involved in the attack” (18/9/01). The global ramifications were articulated in articles which explained the likely economic effects on the globe, but especially on the Global South and Africa. Less than two weeks after the attacks on the US, the paper insisted that they were likely to “affect aid flow” (22/9/01). Highlighting a tangible material basis to Tanzanian geopolitics, and their projection from a society within which poverty is a prominent feature of daily life for many readers, there was a fear of global recession linked to the escalating price of oil and lack of confidence leading to market declines, the cost of what was regarded as an inevitable war eating into development budgets, and the implications of reduced air travel and a downturn in international tourism. To many articles, it was this, the after-effects of the attacks on 11 September that threatened those in the Third World, rather than terrorism itself: “It then became clear that there is an integral connection between politics and the economy and that poverty, lack of capital and technology were the real danger to post developing countries” (10/3/03).

Greatest emphasis, however, was on the potential for violence meted out in American revenge. More than in one in ten editorials, opinion pieces and letters expressed fear of the US binary vision of global geopolitics, and of the cycle of violence that a US military response would inevitably stimulate. One editorial begged Bush “to restrain his anger and act in a reasonable manner to save the world from this impending bloodbath” (25/9/01), while another insisted that “pulverising” one of the poorest countries in the world (Afghanistan) could only be counterproductive “breeding the sort of anti-American fundamentalist criticism the campaign is supposed to destroy” (19/9/01). Bringing it closer to home, one article asked ominously, “Shall we be terrorists when we disagree with Americans in the future?” (1/10/01).

This geopolitics of an interconnected globe – especially of Africa’s fate being shaped not by Africans themselves but by decisions being made elsewhere – represents a different geopolitics of Africa than that projected from the West. Articulating a fear of what Anderson (2010:221) has called a “catastrophic” form of biopower which would “involve the bringing or threatening of disaster to an annulled, and effaced, other”, *The African* produced an affectivity that the impact of the war on

terror for Africa would mean that the continent would “face some degree of marginalisation as during the Cold War” (20/10/01):

What about the African publics? So far our voice has been left on the margins of discussions yet the repercussions of the events are no less dangerous to us. We could become the 'soft' targets for future attacks and even recruitment of human bombs. (1/10/01).

The African did not only present Africans as reduced to bare life (Agamben 1995) by US policy but regarded this as a state of victimhood shared across the Third World. The paper articulated its view of the War on Terror as a view from the margins, claiming a truthfulness for its vision by highlighting those things that were hidden from the dominant view of the US, or were things that Americans chose not to see. As one article put it, it is “not in the nature of Bush to think much about the rest of the world” (17/9/01), and, more specifically:

America does not see the people being killed every day in Palestine, they do not see the suffering of people in Iraq, they are not concerned with the killing of people in Algeria at the hands of the government forces because they have no concern for the Muslims (22/9/01).

This view draws out lines of connection with other innocent bystanders who have been caught up in the lines of conflict between the great powers. During the period studied, more than 30 articles explored Israeli military might, and nearly as many offered critique of Israeli policy, or noted their refusal to comply with international law. Most critical were those articles which accused Israel of taking “advantage of the prevailing situation in America to crush the Palestinians” (18/9/01). There was, in comparison, little critique of Palestinian policy and, as table 1 illustrates, significant coverage of the impacts of global and regional politics in creating Palestinian victims.

The blame for violence was not only placed at the United States’ feet however. Osama bin Laden was seen as having as little concern over the impacts upon Africans and other marginal and powerless people, accused in one case of being “like an evil genie, [who] has breathed the foul evil of terrorism in our country” (2/12/02). Again, though, it was America’s subsequent actions which were regarded as most implicated in creating a geopolitics of fear, perpetuating violence, and, again, rendering Africans as *homo sacer*:

Whether Field-Marshal Osama bin Laden and his associates are arrested or not, the mass killings which are still continuing to plague the wretched of the earth have indurated the victims thus moulding them into hardliners and sworn enemies of the West (1/1/02).

Just as is the case for dominant geopolitics, affective communities are established based around anger, fear and a sense of injustice and impotence in the face of events. The source of fear is externalised for the reader but is in an ambivalent location, in a *system* that perpetuates danger and fear, rather than being situated in a single state, axis of evil or other geographical location as is the case with dominant, western geopolitical imaginations. *The African* presented a much more entangled and ambivalent geographical imagination, appearing to reject binary geopolitical representations of inside-outside. For instance, in response to the attacks on the US on 11 September 2001, readers were urged not “just to assume that this is the work of fanatics and

uncivilised people” (15/9/01), insisting that the “‘Good vs evil’ image of conflict [is] misleading” (22/9/01), and highlighting the reasons for the attackers’ actions. The solution suggested by the vast majority of articles was for the US to explore the *why* and not the *who* behind the attacks, as one article put it “One form of deterrence, as yet undiscussed in the media, would be for the United States to try to seriously address the economic and sociological causes that give rise to terrorist hatred” (17/9/01).

Thus, prescriptions for action do not call for more violence or more state protection from threats from “out there”, but a desire for greater understanding:

Modernity in politics is about moving from exclusion to inclusion, from repression to incorporation. By including those previously excluded, we give those previously alienated a stake in this (10/1/02).

This presents the possibility of a postcolonial account of the War on Terror based not on revenge but of the values of forgiveness. This would require changing “the ontological disorder of Western philosophy by putting the other first” (Ahluwalia 2007: 269), and would see “Peace as awareness to the precariousness of the other” (Levinas in Butler 2004: 134).

This postcolonial optic was also articulated by images used alongside articles which included images of refugee camps and families preparing for harsh winters or bombing raids or of Palestinian, Iraqi and Afghan victims to a much greater extent than Israelis or US servicemen. Most images were included alongside an article with a linking description but other pictures, unaccompanied by an article, were printed just with a brief statement underneath so letting the reader fill in the rest (i.e. that this is the life that the poor of the world have to suffer).

Thus, underlying the subaltern geopolitical vision of *The African* is an inherent critique of the state-security-warlike focus of Western, and especially US policy. Articles challenged views of security that are defined in narrow state terms suggesting that such policies could *only* end up perpetuating the War on Terror, reinforcing US domination and ensuring the perpetuation of poverty elsewhere. The links between the War on Terror and other notions of human security were highlighted. As table 1 shows, the main threats were seen to be from poverty and famine, and from disease, each a “calamity” (1/12/01) which the War on Terror threatened to obscure:

For Africa the war in Iraq will push it to the backburner because the continent's determination to succeed, among other things, necessitated concern about the global security situation ... For Tanzania, the war will aggravate the misery and poverty of our people ... With the costs of this [war] expected to run into hundreds of billions of dollars, poor counties should not expect much aid from the United States. (21/3/03)

Just as had been the case during the Cold War, then, the concerns of the dominant powers have come to eclipse those fears faced by the rest of the world. The US fears “terrorists, flying, night clubs, parcels, white powder, shoes, metal cutlery. They fear Muslims [...] The rest of the world [...] fears starvation, military invasion, They [fear] being rocketed, being captured and detained” (4/4/03). Moreover,

...if AIDS, malaria, maternal/child diseases and deaths, drought and floods are not weapons of mass destruction, then these words have truly lost their meaning ... What I

mean is this: you don't have to go and unilaterally invade Iraq if you want to see WMDs the way 80 per cent of the world population see and know them. After all, it is this majority that lives with those weapons in their own destitute, afflicted way day in, day out – and dies from them, too! (25/4/03)

The paper's perception of East Africa's position in the post-2001 order was not placed within a geopolitical binary of inside:outside, indeed it is this inbetweenness of not being fully accepted into the developed world nor fully outside of it which is what the papers perceive as shaping Tanzania's fate. For instance, the implications of East Africa's ambivalent location can be seen most clearly in *The African's* response to the bombing of an Israeli-owned hotel in Mombassa in 2002:

But why Kenya? Experts say basically the country is a 'soft target', a chink in the West's armour. It is affluent enough, by African standards, to have Western investments and interests but without enough money to buy world class security, sufficiently democratic – and corrupt – to allow the terrorists and their equipment to move around and with good communication to put the terrorists' handiwork on to the big media networks ... The terrorists' strategy is to attack Israeli and American targets wherever they exist in the world. But they end up hurting societies which have nothing to do with their dispute. (2/12/02)

Conclusions

There has been a proliferation of variants of critical geopolitics since its inception over 20 years ago. I do not want to add to this list unnecessarily. As Ciută and Klinke (2010) have argued, these additional terms have not always led to further clarity when contested concepts – such as “the popular media” – are drawn upon. And, there is a danger that “subaltern geopolitics” could face similar challenges.

Like Ayoob (2002: 45), I believe that the “international power hierarchy and its capacity to displace great power conflicts onto Third World states and regions” implies that the meaning of security for these societies is different from states in the north. It is a notion of security that recognises the precariousness of otherness, because this is a condition of existence that is part of everyday life. But, unlike anti-geopolitics, subaltern geopolitics does not position its subjects outside of the state and associated institutions. Instead it recognises the possibility that political identities can be established through geographical representations that are neither fully “inside” nor “outside” (in the vein of bell hooks (1990)), and thus seeks a model of political subjectivity to challenge that perpetuated by dominant western geopolitics that does not rely on otherness. Hence, in my use of the term “subaltern” I want to return to the original military meaning of this as “a lower rank” (Childs & Williams 1997: 333) – neither the commander, nor outside of the ranks. This recognises the entangled nature of global political relations but in such a way that does not deny “the asymmetry of power relations and the reproduction of subordinating modes of representation” (Slater 2004: 194; Sharp *et al* 2000). Subaltern is term that highlights this complexity and, following Sparke (2005: 312), the need in critical versions of geopolitics for “persistent critique”. To follow some definitions of the subaltern, my focus on elite English-language press would be supplanted by Swahili-language newspapers. For others, it would necessarily have to be based around less formalised, non-textual sources. In Gayatri Spivak's (1988) terms, subaltern geopolitics could perhaps never be spoken. It is

this tension inherent in a position placed on the global margins but not somehow conceived of as outside or other – a tension also foregrounded in Ayoob’s work – that challenges geopolitical conceptions of inside and outside in imagination and practice and, therefore, offers postcolonial possibilities for critical geopolitics.

As a critical Western reader of *The African*, there is much that I have agreed with in its coverage of the War on Terror. It has drawn on what it variously presents as a distinctly Tanzanian, African and even Third World vision of what is happening in addition to providing space for some of the more critical commentators from the Western press and academia. The perspective has the moral authority of the view from below, the powerfully-passionate cry of injustice from those whom the geopolitical logic of the War on Terror renders *homo sacer* while those of us in the west, protected by strong institutions of security, look on. In its insistence of its speaking the fear and experiences of a transnational network of those rendered victims of US geopolitics, it is tempting to present this as a genuine other voice, resisting and challenging the power-politics of the dominant.

However, as noted at the outset, there is a danger in Western academics, such as me, searching out another voice to stand as opposition to the dominant, to act as other to the War on Terror. Bilgin’s (2008) insistence is that to get beyond the essentialising of other voices in international political analysis, we need to be attentive to the ways in which in each instance global politics are done in both similar and different ways. In *The African*, we see reproduced an unproblematic notion of Tanzanian, and other East African leaders, standing up for the oppressed. That such visions represent the main reasons for poverty and marginality in Third World countries as being located within Western-led institutions and US policy, of course, is politically expedient for those seeking re-election and is a theme repeated, almost without exception, in coverage of East African leaders’ speeches: “Rich nations despise us – Moi” (1/12/01); “Karume warns against hatred in Zanzibar [...] on the pretence of defending Islam” (1/2/02); “Mkapa said the independence and national sovereignty of poor nations would be meaningless under international relations if rich nations continued to neglect their (poor nations) interests” (1/2/02). At the same time as there is a projection of a subaltern geopolitics which resists the boundaries of state and civilisational difference then, there is also a recolonisation of this postcolonial optic for a dominant narrative of the Tanzanian nation – unified beyond differences of religion and class, leading, as Nyerere had sought, Africa, if not the Third World, towards what is presented as a more enlightened path.

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ⁱ The second placed party in the 2010 elections was [Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo](#) (Party for Democracy and Progress) with 27% of the vote.

ⁱⁱ The increasing prominence of Chinese investment in Tanzania has brought the influence of this rising geopolitical (and geoeconomic) power into domestic affairs. This reference point, neither in the west nor the Islamic sphere brings a further dimension into the Tanzanian geopolitical imagination. Referring back to the optimism of the post-colonial period, even now comment is often made about the historically good relationship between China and Tanzania, going back to the time of Nyerere and Mao. Although this was something I looked for in my analysis of the papers, I did not find significant coverage, so I will not discuss this connection here.

ⁱⁱⁱ Another explanation for Nyerere's opposition towards widespread access to television broadcasts is, of course, that if Tanzanians could see evidence of wealth elsewhere, their enthusiasm for African socialism might waiver.

^{iv} It should be noted that this appears to be a gendered activity. In the situations I observed, the majority of people around newspaper stands were men. The notion of newspaper reading as male dominated is reinforced by literacy rates which are higher for men than women.

^v Less than 10% of Tanzania's population has access to on-grid electrical supply and for those who are connected, the country's dependence on hydro-electric supply means their source of power is subject to seasonal fluctuations in reliability.

^{vi} Throughout the period I studied, *The African* was published daily. In February 2010, the New Habari Media Group made the decision to move to a weekly publication schedule. The nature of coverage appears to have changed with this move, and the quality of writing is much poorer. Unfortunately for this project, there has also been some change in editorial staff and so my attempts in August 2010 to interview the editors responsible for the paper's international political coverage in the past has been unsuccessful.

^{vii} There are no Tanzanian newspapers listed on the Lexis-Nexis electronic newspaper archive another reason, perhaps, for the marginalisation of African perspectives from critical media analysis (but see Schaefer 2003).

^{viii} Just as has been argued for the case of *Reader's Digest* (Sharp 2000), through the process of selection and editing, the papers create the role of author – and a distinct authorial voice – for themselves. Thus, I have chosen not to cite the names of individual authors but have treated each of the newspapers as the author.

^{ix} Jonas Savimbi was the Angolan rebel leader who, from the mid 1960s until his death in 2002, led UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), a rebel group that fought against the initially pro-Soviet Popular MPLA (Movement for the Liberation of Angola) in the Angolan Civil War. As part of its Cold War geopolitical ambitions, the Reagan administration provided support for Savimbi for his resistance to the pro-Soviet MPLA at the same time providing support for the Mujahedeen in their fight with the Soviets in Afghanistan.