Reading Brand Africa Geopolitically:

Nation-Branding, Subaltern Geopolitics and the Persistence of Politics

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Abstract

In 2010, the 'Brand Africa' initiative was launched with the mission to transform perceptions of Africa from a continent of calamities into one of promising economic prospects and entrepreneurial populations. This transformation, 'Brand Africa' claims, is one where Africans take their representation from the hands of foreigners and make, through a new image, their own (hi)story. In this respect Brand Africa can be interpreted as a form of subaltern geopolitics seeking to subvert dominant geopolitical knowledge and to fight established structures of domination. However, the article argues its subversive elements are limited, especially when compared to the historical discourses of decolonial pan-Africanism upon which it draws for legitimacy. Indeed, while appropriating this legacy Brand Africa offers up a very different geopolitical vision of possible/desirable African futures. It is argued that this may be accounted for by understanding the extent to which the Brand Africa initiative appears embedded within a South African national context and its own geopolitical ambitions evident within its own nation-branding project. What this highlights in turn is that the emancipatory potential and assumed synergies between national and supranational branding central to the Brand Africa initiative are not as unproblematic or uncontested as claimed.

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"Brand-Africa is a pan-African inter-generational movement to create a positive image of Africa, celebrate our identity and inspire our competitiveness.

It is a *brand-driven* approach which recognises that in the 21st century, brands are an asset and a key driver of value and reputation for individuals, institutions or sovereign nations and the collective African brand.

Brand Africa seeks to achieve its goals by promoting intergenerational partnerships and a catalytic environment for investment, tourism and active citizenship; celebrating and showcasing Africa's capabilities and achievements; improving its image, and celebrating Africa's collective and diverse cultures, values and identity. Brand Africa is an independent and non-profit global African initiative *for Africa by Africa*" (original emphases).[1]

Introduction

As the target year for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has come and gone, depictions of Africa as the hopeless 'dark continent' continue to cohabit with optimistic narratives of 'Africa rising'.[2] Savvy business consultants proclaim a transformation is occurring from 'hopeless to hopeful' and point to fast-growing GDP

growth rates to present African economies as 'lions on the move'[3] in 'the next investment frontier'.[4] Elsewhere, doubt is cast over these discourses and the 'great transformation' is represented as a neo-colonial and neoliberal moment of fostering inequality and dispossession, a 'new scramble for Africa'.[5] In this context, increasing appeals are made for an improved African leadership to rise up to the challenges and opportunities of what has been called 'the African Century'.[6]

One example of such an appeal has been the 'Brand Africa' initiative, a state-supported private non-profit organisation established in 2010 by South African consultant, Thebe Ikalafeng. 'Brand Africa' describes its mission as one of transforming negative perceptions of the continent and in doing so to also transform its development prospects. Using cutting-edge tools of (nation-)'branding' and image management, Brand Africa promises to restitute 'agenda-setting' powers to African leaders and help them prevail in the struggle over representing Africa's prospects. Successfully establishing a new supranational brand, and harnessing 'the power and discipline of branding', it is argued, will enhance Africa's reputation, and therefore also its attractiveness, and ultimately its ability to compete and share in the fruits of global trade on a more equitable basis.[7]

The discourse underlying this claim is certainly attractive. Instead of seeing Africa as structurally impotent to advance its position, trapped by established terms of trade into self-reproducing relations of exploitation and dependency, it is argued branding offers Africans the means to take control of their narrative and thereby shape a new future. This discourse, however attractive, needs critical examination on various accounts. This includes whether (re)branding actually does offer the magic bullet of poverty

alleviation,[8] a claim focused on elsewhere.[9] This paper, however, analyses Brand Africa through the scope of geopolitical prisms. In particular, it analyses how Brand Africa represents a distinctive new kind of geopolitical project – one which combines reference to the world-making powers of place branding with the supranational heritage of pan-Africanism. In crossing these lineages, a distinctive new form of 'subaltern geopolitics' seems to be in the making, though one we show is fraught with tensions and contradictions, both in terms of discursive logic and Brand Africa's differential appeal to African actors.

The paper proceeds in five sections. The first section outlines in more detail the fundamental problem of negative images facing Africa that the Brand Africa initiative identifies and responds to, in particular highlighting the 'supranational' dimensions of the problem. In the second section we introduce Joanne Sharp's conception of subaltern geopolitics, an approach that demonstrates how the subaltern is not simply a recipient of others' geopolitical discourses and framings, but also an actor capable of inverting and using established geopolitical frames to reassert a sense of agency and empowerment. In the third section we provide an outline of the pan-African supranationalism of the decolonial period and interpret this precisely as a subaltern geopolitical response to Eurocentric hegemonic geopolitical scripts depicting Africa as the 'dark continent'. Such a pan-African subaltern geopolitics, we argue, was important in reclaiming a sense of agency and subjectivity for Africa and Africans, (re-)establishing a sense of pride, status and ontological security that helped inspire confidence to cast off the shackles of colonialism and gain (geo)political ascendency through a supranational alignment. This focus on decolonial pan-Africanism is important as we move to the fourth section, which shifts the focus to contemporary

manifestations of pan-Africanism in the Brand Africa initiative. Brand Africa, it is noted, makes explicit claims to continue/renew this tradition, once again drawing on a rejuvenated (and now rebranded) pan-African supranationalism to enhance Africa's economic prospects and sense of self-esteem once more. Pan-Africanism, therefore, is shown to reside as a source of inspiration and ontological security in the face of others' continuing malign representations and 'knowledge' about Africa. However, the assumed synergies and compatibility between historical decolonial discourses of pan-Africanism and those of contemporary Brand Africa are far from seamless. If historical decolonialisation discourses framed pan-Africanism through largely socialist and decolonial lenses, then Brand Africa restages pan-Africanism through a capitalist framing that impacts notably on its (geo)political and (geo)economic effects/implications. The final section further explores some of these tensions, in particular noting that the pan-Africanism embedded within the Brand Africa initiative also occludes how the initiative works to the benefit of some African nations more than others. As such, this raises questions about the presumed synergies between nation branding and supranational branding that underpins the very idea of Brand Africa.

Africa's Negative 'Continent Brand Effect' and the Need for (Geopolitical) Rebranding

Underlying the Brand Africa project is the idea that presently Africa suffers from what the nation branding consultant, Simon Anholt, calls a negative 'continent brand effect', where the continent's more progressive parts are tarred by unfavourable images not directly of their making.[10] Typical to the western eye, undifferentiated images of a

collective (and dismal) African experience are circulated by news broadcasters and increasingly by many aid agencies competing with each other for attention and donations.[11] This has been the case even in instances seeking to promote 'ethical consumption', argued by some to simplify African experience and developmental issues to a lack to be filled by Western benevolent consumerism.[12] It is further evident in the emerging phenomenon of 'celebrity humanitarianism'[13] – a recent example being the Band Aid 30 re-release in winter 2014 of the song 'Do They Know it's Christmas', in response to the Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.[14] These representations of Africa, and many others, perpetuate images of Africa as a 'dark continent' full of emptiness, misery, wildness and readiness to receive Western salvation; an 'object of beauty, horror, pleasure and pity'.[15]

To this extent Africa is a supranational 'imagined community' distinctive to other continents, none of which carries quite so much apparently self-evident constitutive meaning. The history of this scopic regime of Africa as the 'dark continent'[16] is, of course, connected to histories and experiences of colonialism and racist and orientalist attitudes towards African peoples. Indeed, as the Congolese philosopher V. Y. Mudimbe argues, the very idea of Africa was itself a non-African – and mainly European – invention that functioned as a 'paradigm of difference' through which Europeans identified themselves via the exoticisation and often denigration of the 'African other'.[17] For instance, for Hegel sub-Saharan Africa remained in 'the condition of mere nature' and therefore had no place in world history.[18] In this 'invention', Africa, a continent of 54 states, a billion people, and an arguably unparalleled cultural and linguistic diversity, has been ascribed as possessing a oneness and unity also unparalleled by other continents. The negative 'continent brand effect' identified by

Anholt precisely describes this situation where negative events in one corner of the continent are often taken to reflect Africa as a whole.[19]

The imperative underpinning the Brand Africa initiative is therefore understood as the need to try and reclaim agency and ownership of the African brand, to respond to this supranational gaze via a supranational rebranding effort designed to change the narrative and offer up a different set of images regarding what might be deemed 'typical of Africa'.[20] As the influential economist, Dambisa Moyo, lamented at the inaugural Brand Africa Forum event in 2010, for too long 'We've allowed other people to set the agenda'.[21] Or as various Brand Africa publications frequently remark, if everyone else has an agenda in Africa, then Africa itself should get one.[22] In such discourses Africa is not simply referenced as a geographical marker, but also (potentially) *as a collective geopolitical actor.*

Indeed, insofar as a continent-focused branding campaign is seen as a necessary response to the damning echoes of a colonial orientalist gaze it highlights that place/nation branding is an inherently geopolitical activity.[23] It is so because it focuses on the power of narratives about a polity's identity and seeks to manage the imaginations of different audiences for the greatest strategic advantage. Utilising marketing theory and practice initially developed for the image management of corporations and products, 'nation-branding' purports to give polities a 'competitive identity' through carefully targeted media strategies. These are directed at both foreign and domestic audiences. With respect to foreign audiences the aim is typically to encourage investment, consumption and trade and improve international standing, whereas domestic audiences are encouraged to become more entrepreneurial, to 'live

the brand', with this also anticipated to enhance the community's self-esteem.[24] Nation branding therefore links together corporate marketing strategies with governmental techniques of public diplomacy and propaganda.[25] As such, nation branding hybridises political and economic logics with this making the practice an important topic for examination by critical geopolitics.

Brand Africa as (Subaltern) Geopolitics

Claiming to counter the hegemonic marginalisation and denigration of Africa, Brand Africa can be understood as a manifestation of what Sharp terms 'subaltern geopolitics'.[26] Sharp posited subaltern geopolitics as an addendum to the critical geopolitics literature. This, she argues, has done well at examining how those marginalised in global politics have been represented in hegemonic discourses, but has done less well at considering 'the politics of representation from the margins'.[27] Indeed, Sharp argues that when attention has been focused on the representations of the marginalised there has been an unfortunate tendency to look for romanticised political alternatives untainted by Westernisation and power.[28] Significantly, for the purposes of this paper, Sharp explicitly identifies pan-Africanist discourses as instances of such 'subaltern geopolitics'.[29]

For Sharp, what the (military) concept of the subaltern illuminates is the fact that the weak and marginalised are rarely completely excluded and 'outside of the ranks', but rather of a 'lower rank'. The concept therefore 'recognises the entangled nature of global political relations but in such a way that does not deny "the asymmetry of power

relations and the production of subordinating modes of representation"'.[30] Being in an asymmetrical power relationship, though, does not mean the margins possess no power.[31] Marginality, she notes, is an ambiguous position from where there is the potential to work creatively to better it. Situated *within* and *towards* dominant geopolitical scripts the subaltern can still establish 'creative alternatives'[32] that do not outright reject dominant scripts, but rather seeks to secure a position of greater power through a mixture of reproduction and subversion.[33] Aligning herself with Ayoob's concept of 'subaltern realism', a concept that links an apparently weak position with a powerful vision, she also draws on Bhabha's ideas about the potentials of hybridity and in particular the idea of 'mimicry' as an ambiguous strategy of subversion and survival that destabilises binary categories of inside/outside and that offers 'a way of "doing" world politics in a seemingly "similar" yet unexpectedly "different" way.[34]

Although broadly in agreement with her reading, we feel that Sharp over-emphasises the rational dimensions of subaltern geopolitics. In analysing the creativity and impetus of 'subaltern geopolitics' it is important not only to focus on the material structural weakness of the subaltern (as following the Realist thought of Ayoob might lead you to) but to recognise that the relational weakness of the subaltern is also produced – and resisted - socio-linguistically. This points to how a position of ambiguous marginality is intertwined with questions of identity and psychology that extend beyond a simple calculation of material power. In short, it is important not to efface the relevance of the historical *experience* of 'colonialism' in subaltern geopolitics (as we show below). The ambiguous marginality of colonial subaltern subjects, it must be remembered, was produced through the combination of a promise of empowerment and equality through cultural submission and the reality of a perpetual rejection of subaltern subjects as

capable of superseding the 'external' inferiority they were alleged to embody.[35] In this context, the subaltern's 'breaking ranks' has to be understood as not only a strategic act against circumstantial structural marginality, but also as a *subjective* reaction against a particular geopolitics and knowledge that fundamentally undermined the subaltern's sense of ontological security and self-esteem.[36] Indeed, appeals for a 'solidarity of the weak' and for morality in world politics – which Sharp presents as calculated 'subaltern realist' subversions – cannot be adequately understood without reference to these historical processes of identity-formation.

Subaltern geopolitics in Africa, we argue, has not been simply about strategic considerations of interest enhancement but fundamentally connected with projects of post-colonial identity formation and the psychological recovery of the dignified 'black man/African'. In doing so, subaltern geopolitics in Africa has been about overcoming the psychologically and culturally disabling forces of colonialism, *as well as* its material bases. Importantly, though, strategic concerns over interest and subjective concerns over identity do not oppose or exclude each other, but are as likely to co-constitute each other into an integrated vision.

Decolonial Subaltern Geopolitics and the Origins of Pan-Africanism

What these reflections indicate is that a reading of Brand Africa as a form of pan-African (subaltern) geopolitics requires its embedding within the longer history of (subaltern) pan-Africanism. In particular, we refer here to the pan-Africanism of the decolonial movement upon which the Brand Africa project explicitly draws to enhance

its legitimacy, with this later enabling us to highlight Brand Africa's distinctive and ultimately different geopolitical vision to that heritage. Moreover, highlighting the heritage of decolonial pan-Africanism can also help explain why there has been a perceived need to respond to a negative continental brand in continental terms through attempts to provide the brand with a more positive reading, and not in another way. Pan-Africanism, we highlight, has become an embedded element of ontological security seeking across the continent, such that thinking and responding in pan-African terms not only 'makes sense', but responds to important affective and psychological predispositions that are not easily given up.

As a form of subaltern geopolitics pan-Africanism emerged in the late nineteenth century, maintaining momentum through to the late twentieth century. During this period 'colonial subjects' sought to creatively re-appropriate the 'paradigms of difference' that had normalized mass violence and forge a political path out of colonialism. In this context, 'Africanity' was re-laboured from a racial or geographical depreciative marker to the basis for the creation of a broad subaltern 'imagined community'. More than the scopic regimes of coloniality, it was this subaltern political experiment that led to the stabilisation of imagining 'Africa' as a collective actor. In this sense, perhaps it was pan-Africanism that most significantly 'invented Africa'.

Some of the earliest manifestations of this discourse can be found in the lives and writings of African American intellectuals in the USA and the Caribbean in the late nineteenth century.[37] From Henry Sylvester-William, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, C.L.R James and George Padmore (amongst others), multiple visions for the emancipation of black colonial subjects and the creation of African polities were

articulated and co-constituted. These visions were products of local experiences and individual genius but also of an increasing experience and awareness of internationalism, something not unusual in the early twentieth century, but which was perhaps most politically significant in the case of pan-Africanism.[38] Through recurrent communication, collaboration and conferences, the leading intellectuals of this classical pan-Africanism would inspire the next generation of pan-Africanist activists to think always internationally in what can only be called a form of 'subaltern geopolitics'.[39]

Re-casting race from a category of alienation to one of redemption, and western knowledge from a source of subjection to a means of struggle, the early pan-Africanist movement set in motion some of the greatest events of the last century in world politics. Following the influence of the first Pan-African Conference in 1900 and the Pan-African Congresses of 1919, 1921, 1923 and 1927, a new generation of thinkers and activists arose.[40] Amongst these, and in most explicit connection with the aforementioned activists, was Kwame Nkrumah – the future architect of Ghanaian Independence. Nkrumah worked tirelessly for the cause of African decolonisation, national independence and African continental federalism; aided directly by intellectuals from the earlier generation, like George Padmore.[41] Other activists/thinkers, however, also marked this second generation of pan-Africanism. The Francophone movement of *Négritude*, for example, was particularly significant in deploying art, thought and activism towards decolonisation. This movement was embodied in people such as Aimé Césaire, Leopold Senghor and later influential pan-African giants like Frantz Fanon. *Négritude* was particularly impactful, emphasising a 'phenomenology of blackness' and the rich cultural heritage of African peoples. This movement, much like earlier forms of pan-Africanism focused on racial unity as 'a tool

of redemption' for Africa,[42] and was a form of 'strategic essentialism'[43] used to subvert colonial categories and experiences, *but also to exceed them.* This excess was, in the context of modern pan-Africanism, increasingly solidified through the imagination of a liberated Africa united in the creation of a post-colonial society focused on the prosperity, dignity and well-being of subaltern peoples.[44] This justified an increasing focus on liberation struggles in Africa after the Second World War.

From the 1950s onwards then, decolonization struggles were fought on African soil and within forty years pan-African movements would bring down all colonial provinces in the continent and experiment in projects of post-colonial state-building.[45] During this period, many influential thinkers articulated and co-constituted a range of (geo)political imaginaries for their countries and communities. Nkrumah, Sekou Touré, Mobido Keita, Patrice Lumumba, Agostinho Neto, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Amílcar Cabral all stand out as leaders outlining such visions. Characteristic of this generation of decolonial pan-Africanism was an emphasis on 'national liberation' as a framing device to African liberation. This sense of 'national' was ironically made possible by the collective experience of colonial administration and territorial divisions and facilitated by Woodrow Wilson's defence of national self-determination in the Paris Peace Conference.[46] In following this strategy, racialized conceptions of pan-Africanism gradually declined and were substituted by a conception of continental pan-Africanism emphasising state-building through inclusive conceptions of nationalism and modernism. Significantly, such a shift in emphasis was not only precipitated by a shift in dominant geopolitical scripts (i.e. from race to national self-determination), but also in the experience of early post-colonial independence, where mobilizing 'race' was seen as potentially stirring up colonial-

made divisions and vindictive violence. As Amílcar Cabral, an anti-colonial leader from Guinea Bissau, argued, superseding the cultural ravages of colonialism on African peoples relied not on a full return to tradition, the idealization of a common African culture or an embrace of foreign culture (i.e. high modernism), but on using the struggles of national liberation to organize cross-class and cross-ethnic contact under a common cause, thus enabling cultural 'convergence'. This cultural convergence would rely on rediscovering local cultures and, through deep dialogue, exploring how local culture could be connected positively with foreign cultures and reformed of negative aspects, thereby furthering the cause of anti-oppressive humanistic egalitarianism inherent in the liberation struggle.[47]

Most interesting in these two waves of pan-Africanism is how a subaltern (geo)politics was created from and against categories and structures of domination. Dominant scripts were not rejected outright, but reproduced and subverted in securing an improved position structurally, materially and ontologically. In the first wave of pan-Africanism, for example, race was used and subverted to create geopolitical scripts of transatlantic subaltern unity and foster the dream of post-colonial state-making in Africa. This was in direct response to, not only dominant geopolitical scripts of racial hierarchy, but also against actual projects of imperialism in the 'Scramble for Africa'. The first wave of pan-Africanists thereby subverted race – a tool of fragmentation and alienation – into a tool for unification and ontological security by resurrecting blackness as a positive category. In doing this, pan-Africanists not only created resistant forms of thought, but also alternative geopolitical scripts enabling projects of political decolonization.

In the second wave of pan-Africanism, a new form of subaltern geopolitics was articulated by using and subverting the concept of 'national self-determination' then sweeping world politics. Using and subverting, rather than rejecting, the western concept of 'nation', pan-Africanist activists created alternative geopolitical scripts to advance their position of marginal power. Deploying 'nation' as a framing device, pan-Africanist movements presented their struggles as confirmation of (rather than as opposition to) dominant geopolitical scripts after the First World War.[48] Exceeding this, however, pan-Africanists re-invented nationalism to embrace more inclusive conceptions emphasizing supranational post-colonial solidarity in a unique way.[49] This was key, not only because it enabled fine-tuning of scripts to the conditions of liberation wars, but also because it permitted a continuation and expansion of former bases to resist hegemonic powers. This expansion was, for instance, borne out in the creation of the non-aligned movement; a crucial alternative geopolitical script in the context of navigating decolonization during and after the Cold War.[50] Most crucial in the re-articulations of these subaltern geopolitics of the second wave of pan-Africanism is how discursive changes were adapted, not only to speak to shifts in dominant geopolitical scripts, but also to continue challenging these scripts by emphasizing continuity and expansion of the former emphasis on subaltern solidarity.

As highlighted in the next section, reading decolonial pan-Africanism as a form of subaltern geopolitics helps raise important questions regarding the geopolitics of the Brand Africa initiative. Before this, however, it is important to address a crucial caveat to the pan-African tradition of subaltern geopolitics discussed above. This concerns acknowledging the inevitable persistence of politics within and amongst subaltern geopolitical imaginaries and projects. The generic alignments of pan-Africanist

movements described above were plural and sometimes divergent and even conflictual. Recognizing this is important to avoid romanticizing the role and discourses of pan-African leaders and movements. Such plurality and dissension was, for example, highly significant during the first wave of African independence in the 1950s. For example, whereas Nkrumah advocated moving quickly towards continent-wide federalism in order to resist any neo-colonial ambitions world powers may still harbour, others argued this was unnecessary and even unhelpful as it threatened to limit the newly and hard won gains of national liberation and limited the range of geopolitical options available to each country. Thus, whereas Nkrumah argued for political and economic unification in a Union of African States as the only way of securing the new states from neo-colonial tactics of 'divide and rule',[51] others, such as Leopold Senghor and Philibert Tsiranana, saw the maintenance of local independence and the reconstruction of preferential ties to former colonial powers as preferable geopolitical choices.[52]

In the end, it is important to emphasise that Nkrumah, though hailed as the father of (continental) pan-Africanism, was ousted from his presidency and sidelined in the liberation movement. Consequently, the Organization of African Unity, created in 1963, ended up primarily emphasising national independence and loose cooperation, rather than comprehensive continental political and economic integration.[53] It was this outcome, more than anything else, which solidified the agreement that African colonial regional units would be preserved as the structure of independence.[54] However, despite Nkrumah's fall pan-Africanism did not lose its value as a tradition from which to draw a plurality of subaltern geopolitical imaginations. Pan-Africanism, for all its dissensus and failures, remained a common basis for a sense of post-colonial ontological security.[55] This, as we will now argue, is not least evident in the Brand Africa initiative.

The Pan-Africanism of Brand Africa: A new subaltern geopolitics?

At one level it is possible to see synergies and compatibilities between Brand Africa's pan-Africanist discourse of supranational branding, and more historically ingrained anti/post-colonial discourses of pan-Africanist supranational identity. Brand Africa, as with past supranational discourses, claims to be focused on re-appropriating the idea of Africa to unite and empower subaltern subjects marked by the continued denigrations of phenotype and continent. This compatibility between a pan-African supranational tradition and Brand Africa's supranational branding is openly proclaimed, with Brand Africa publications directly invoking and quoting key pan-African figures, like Nkrumah.[56] Such compatibility, though claimed rhetorically, is not explored in detail within Brand Africa's documents and statements. This is perhaps unsurprising, because the discourse of capitalist globalization underpinning the drive for Brand Africa stands in stark opposition to the often heavily socialist – and anti-capitalist/anti-imperialist – inspired leanings of key spokespersons of pan-Africanism, like Cabral, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Fanon and Touré.[57] Thus, while Brand Africa identifies the same problem as decolonial pan-Africanism – the need to overcome the denigration of Africa and Africans – and reaches for a similar solution – in terms of seeking to re-appropriate and invert established markers of denigration such that they now become sources of dignity and pride – the nature of the solutions offered are strongly dissonant.

Particularly notable is that the pan-Africanism of these 'fathers of liberation' generally emphasized the need for African societies to reclaim their history through the formation

of effective states and the re-appropriation of their destiny/history through cultural renovation (see above). Central to such calls was precisely the need to liberate the African self from preoccupations with others' claims about Africa, in favour of a more internally focused dialogue about how to create viable and progressive post-colonial African identities. Expressed in the language of decolonial critique, an emphasis on supranational pan-Africanism was therefore part of a project to escape processes of auto-orientalism (of internalizing others' negative images about the self's ineptitude, lack of development and civilization) and to establish a more inclusive and internally coherent basis for reclaiming self-esteem and subjectivity. Crucial in these projects, radical inclusivity and subversive mimicking were deployed as part of a distinctive subaltern geopolitics.

In contrast, Brand Africa begins many of its discursive iterations by actually foregrounding the (perceived) perennial failures of African nation-states and how they have left Africa geopolitically and governmentally wanting. This, in a sense, reifies Western depictions and presents African failures as a mostly self-contained event. In this context, Africa, we have seen, is urged to take a stand and get an agenda, with branding precisely seen as a mechanism for a more active and much less passive engagement with international political actors and global markets. Branding therefore becomes a mechanism enabling Africa finally to take full control of its destiny by producing a regime of representation which would galvanize African peoples and entice 'global' business. In contrast to decolonial discourses of pan-Africanism, therefore, the subaltern geopolitics of Brand Africa reproduces hegemonic western standards of neoliberal subjectivity and conduct. What it does seek to do, however, is assert Africa as an equal player and subject on the global scene, without explicitly challenging the

rules by which global economic and political interactions are played. Brand Africa mimics branding tropes and technologies but seems less successful in subverting these in order to exceed their hegemonic effects.

To this extent, while the Brand Africa initiative has sought to appropriate the pan-African decolonial heritage it takes its cue more directly from more contemporary discourses of 'Africa rising' and of an emergent 'African Renaissance'.[58] Given the influence of the South African context underlying the Brand Africa initiative (discussed below), South African president Thabo Mbeki's emphasis on an 'African Renaissance' has been particularly important.[59] This grand strategy, on top of renewing pan-Africanism in institutional form (i.e. by establishing the African Union and the New Economic Partnership for Development), also transformed it in content, by emphasising investment, entrepreneurship, economic regional integration and good governance over foreign aid.[60] It is within this strategy that Brand Africa, as an initiative that focuses on brand-management as an economic driver, locates itself. By bringing the language of nation-branding, however, Brand Africa provides a twist to the politics of what has been proclaimed will be 'the African century'; namely, by radically shifting the grounds on which Africa is to deal with its own identity. This makes Brand Africa's references to pan-Africanist leaders, both inside and outside the continent (e.g. Lumumba, Malcolm X, Garvey, Nkrumah), intriguing. Such names are clearly invoked for their ability to seduce and attract African audiences, insofar as they are shorthand markers for a narrative of pride in being African and an enhanced standing for Africa in the world. As such, these figures continue to play important roles in African identity politics as markers of mobilization and legitimation, even if the politics they stood for was starkly opposed to that embodied within Brand Africa's embrace of global capitalism.

However, while Brand Africa is therefore able to position itself as helping realise the decolonial leaders' dreams, ironically, despite apparent intentions otherwise, there is a danger of reinforcing (auto-)orientalist supranational imaginings of Africa. This is because, rather than calling for an emphasis on self-actualisation and 'internal' dialogue – as emphasized by decolonial leaders – the focus in a branding world is on anticipating and responding to the perceptions of powerful others, or put more abstractly, 'the market'. Thus, instead of decolonial pan-Africanism's emphasis on building African authenticity, the logic of branding is to shift the focus more towards packaging and commodifying the self in terms of what might sell in the international marketplace, with the Brand Africa initiative actively encouraging African stakeholders (nations/groups/individuals) to do just that.[61] Under the Brand Africa discourse, therefore, while African societies are encouraged to focus on dispelling the negative images that populate the minds of those that could invest in 'Africa' and thus make it prosper, it is evident that certain discourses and images are to be preferred – namely, those following market(ing) logics.

This is especially evident in Brand Africa's most conspicuous initiative – the Brand Africa 100 - which places emphasis on enhancing Brand Africa through enhancing the visibility and performance of African product brands on the (contested[62]) belief that people's perceptions of product brands influence their view of the country/continent in which they are produced, as well as the socio-economic prospects of that country.[63] In Brand Africa's own words, this focus is 'founded on the proven premise that developing and building successful brands in Africa will help Africa create jobs and a tax base to fund public goods, and to create a favourable reputation of Africa as an entrepreneurial,

independent and competitive continent'.[64] Furthermore, such re-branding moves are said to have some clear metrics of success – as evident in the publication of the *Brand Africa 100* series which measures the relative performance of Africa's top 100 product brands – and to be supported by a cohort of expert consulting enterprises.[65] These rankings, however, are calculated on the basis of corporate revenues and, to a lesser extent, consumer research. This, though defining 'value' by reference to financial standing and consumer perception, does nothing to integrate measurements of job creation, tax base increase or public good provision. This leaves the initiative's claims unverified and hints at the lop-sided role of rankings in their representative claims – enhancing the visibility of big business and doing little else.

Most significantly, however, the effect of such emphases is to reduce the 'success' and content of Brand Africa, and the supranational sense of African unity upon which it claims to be based and build, to questions of corporate performance – a vision far removed from the pan-Africanism advocated by the 'fathers of liberation'. By actively seeking to educate Africans in the value of developing and valuing consumer brands, Brand Africa ends up unquestioningly appropriating just the latest set of 'Western' norms and 'knowledge' about development, without particular attention or debate on whether those norms are the most appropriate to their context.[66] The re-branding of African identities towards something 'successful' is thus presented as a matter of smart, pro-active and entrepreneurial governance rather than a deep political and cultural debate with no predictable or pressing end.

The advent of the language of supranational branding therefore poses significant challenges to the language of identity of the decolonial movement and arguably has

potentially serious implications for how narratives of pan-Africanism and African modernity have been understood as contributing to the sense of collective self-esteem and ontological security in Africa. In other words, if the pan-Africanism of the decolonial movement arguably sought to cast the perceptions of the other aside, central to the very idea of Brand Africa is precisely a reprioritization of 'what they think of us', and a demand to mould the self in accordance with 'their' anticipated desires. Based on fulfilling the image of 'competitiveness', this pan-Africanism becomes one of ranks and hierarchies where the countries with the most developed transnational markets and corporations are heralded as a model of a 'good society' to which the entirety of Africa should strive towards. To this extent, the advent of supranational branding in the form of Brand Africa poses a notable challenge to previous discourses of supranational identity in Africa, since ultimately they support very different visions of possible/desirable African futures.

Most significantly, although Brand Africa's discourse remains premised on creatively combating the continent's geopolitical marginalization, its usage of branding techniques seems to lack almost any subversive tactics. In embracing new and momentous geostrategic tools, Brand Africa seems to reveal a subaltern ambition to 'rise up the ranks', but little subaltern ingenuity to challenge the scripts in which such ranks operate. This is all the more significant in that the dominant geopolitical scripts in which 'branding' works may well carry logics and tropes which reproduce Western hegemony. In its emphasis on entrepreneurialism as a new category to mobilize pan-Africanism, Brand Africa appears awkwardly unengaged with the role that languages of entrepreneurialism may have had in re-producing African denigration and marginality.

Brand Africa's Differential Geostrategic Openings

Beyond the issue of desirable futures, however, proclamations that Brand Africa should be understood as a 'global African initiative *for Africa by Africa*' (original emphasis)[67] also need to be questioned. Underpinning such claims is the assumption that the generation of a positive supranational branding campaign will be beneficial to all African nations (and to all African peoples). However, in spite of these claims to continent-wide bases of participation and interest-representation, Brand Africa is notably skewed in its discursive iterations and personal networks. For all the rhetoric of supranational solidarity, scrutiny of Brand Africa's documentation betrays the geopolitical embeddedness of this 'independent' non-profit initiative. Evident in the Brand Africa initiative is a specific South African geopolitical project – one that seeks to secure its predominance in representing the continent's prospects. Given this context, Brand Africa's geopolitical scripting is revealed, not only as ushered through the embrace of *branding* logics, but also as a geopolitical project with differential strategic openings for countries across the continent.

This is perhaps unsurprising since South Africa has been a principal sponsor of the Brand Africa initiative, and provides the geographical institutional home of the now independent and non-profit Brand Africa organisation. However, despite its now independent status the organisation lists Brand South Africa as one of only two of its nation-branding country patrons (the other being Kenya),[68] while Thebe Ikalafeng, the founder of the Brand Africa initiative, also sits on the Board of Trustees of Brand South

Africa and is vice chairman of the Brand Council of South Africa.[69] Such links not only indicate official South African support for the initiative, but also the close connections and assumed synergies between them.

Established in the same year as the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Brand Africa seems closely tied to South African geopolitical ambitions of regional leadership, as well as to the desire to overcome the legacies of Apartheid, internally and internationally. Shifting from its position as a latecomer to the processes of decolonisation,[70] South Africa has sought to recast itself as the foremost leader of the 'African century'. In seeking to redefine itself, South Africa has sought to redefine its geopolitical context. This is no less evident than in its own nation branding programme's emphasis on the need to embrace the '*opportunity to drive the rebranding of Africa*'[71] and on understanding 'Africa' as an economic opportunity that needs to be *'strategically leveraged'* (our emphasis).[72] For South Africa, discourses of Brand Africa and Brand South Africa therefore appear reinforcing, with supranational branding becoming part of rearticulating a national role.

However, the relationship between nation branding and supranational branding in the form of Brand Africa is not wholly without tension. For instance, whilst Brand Africa is premised on disabusing established stereotypes of Africa, the Brand South Africa campaign has tended to position the country as a 'gateway' into the continent, doing so by depicting South Africa as stable and modern and ultimately a place where privileged foreigners will feel at home – in contrast to other parts of Africa which remain implicitly tainted with negative stereotypes of African otherness and instability.[73] Hence, while Africa's brand image may be seen to be improving – and South Africa has an interest

in this – its own nation branding campaign strategically positions the country as a mediator between foreign investors and the African sub-continent (for more on Brand South Africa see Cornelissen in this volume).

In this regard, Brand Africa reinforces Brand South Africa, with South Africa becoming positioned as an investment hub sucking in and filtering international and regional capital and labour. Hence, Brand South Africa publications speak of South Africa, not only as the 'gateway to a billion African consumers', but as 'the powerhouse of a rising continent' and a 'springboard' and 'catalyst' for growth elsewhere in the continent.[74] Framed slightly differently, economically South Africa is likely to benefit disproportionately from the development of surrounding countries and the continent in general, but also from enhanced 'regional market integration',[75] not least because South African companies are likely to be particularly well placed to benefit from the expansion of regional consumer markets because of their already significant market penetration.[76] There is, in short, a particularly strong incentive for South African companies to support a branding platform that depicts them driving an African renaissance rather than just following market logics. To this extent, discourses of Brand Africa serve to occlude regional discrepancies of uneven exploitation in favour of an emphasis on market access, while also implicitly (yet problematically) presuming that a continental branding campaign will benefit all.

In this respect, while open opposition to the Brand Africa initiative appears to be lacking, the fact that only a few African countries have actively embraced the initiative is intriguing. The various investment promotion agencies of countries around the SADC, for instance, show no mention of a connection to Brand Africa.[77] Such apparent

relative disinterest may have several explanations. First, Brand Africa is likely to be most attractive to those African countries which, like South Africa, have more open-facing and globalised economies than their immediate neighbours, that have developed national infrastructures and national industries in consumer goods, as well as regional leadership ambitions. Kenya's support for the initiative might be explained in these terms, although this is not a determinative argument since, on these grounds, active support from countries like Nigeria might also be expected.

At the same time, oil-based economies like that of Nigeria or Angola appear able to draw in abundant foreign investment, often irrespective of negative images associated with them, as the global powers compete for access to oil reserves.[78] This perhaps suggests that claims about the transformative economic effects and attractions of place branding are overplayed. However, irrespective of the evidence for or against on this point, the issue is not that those African countries with a lack of evident enthusiasm for the Brand Africa initiative do not believe in place branding. Indeed, many have developed their own nation branding programmes (e.g. Angola, Ghana). Another possible explanation is therefore that, understanding place branding to be an inherently competitive discourse of zero-sum gains,[79] they see themselves as competing with other African nations over and above competing with those on other continents. Small nations, for instance, may worry that their distinctiveness will be subsumed and lost within a broader continental brand (or alternatively may wish to free-ride on the efforts of others).

A final point, though, also presents itself. At root the Brand Africa initiative is premised on the assumption that the best way of tackling Africa's negative 'continent brand

effect' is to respond by rejuvenating that brand, thereby reproducing a dominant geopolitical gaze that treats Africa as a collective actor and site of experience. As we have argued, insofar as subaltern readings of pan-Africanism have provided a source of self-esteem and ontological security, then the temptations of continuing to respond in this way are evident. However, it is always possible for states to engage in alternative geostrategic branding practices that for varying reasons may feel more appropriate for them. For instance, Angola, in spite of having established its own multifaceted nation-branding campaign,[80] makes no mention of Brand Africa and rarely frames its re-imaging in relation to the disabusing negative representations of the African continent. Instead, Angola's nation-branding efforts highlight the uniqueness of Angola's history and prospects and emphasise its increasing ascendancy in the context of the community of Portuguese-speaking countries. This, in contrast to South African efforts, seeks to overcome the colonial heritage, not by appealing to a re-attachment to Africa, but rather by pronouncing a re-drawing of relations within the post-colonial lusophone community. In this context, Angola seems to engage with the lusophone community (esp. Brazil and Portugal), rather than Africa itself, as 'an opportunity that must be leveraged' to accrue geopolitical advantages such as increased investment and recognition.[81] Advantageous to this path, it should be noted, is not only that a direct confrontation with other African states over regional influence is avoided but also that the challenge of shedding the continent's negative associations is bypassed (i.e. Angola does not aim to speak for Africa, while Africa is not seen to speak for Angola).[82] A further illustrative example is Rwanda, which has sought to refashion itself, and more specifically its capital city, Kigali, as a 'Singapore of Africa'.[83] Mobilising these efforts in political rhetoric as well as in urban planning visions, Rwanda has sought to engage in a politics of representation from the margins which bypasses the perceived need for

the continental rebranding of Africa in favour of focusing on Rwanda as a 'hub' of technology and cutting-edge smart industry in a world of global 'flows' (Castells 2011).[84] The 'Singapore of Africa' metaphor therefore locates Rwanda beyond the bounds of former colonial, linguistic or pan-African links and rather as a nodal point of globalisation.[85]

What these examples suggest, therefore, is that the very premise that African countries would *have to* necessarily counter negative images of Africa with more positive ones of pan-African supranational branding is not self-evident and, indeed, may be justified only in the context of certain geopolitical projects (i.e. South African regional leadership). Other geopolitical resources exist by which subaltern nations may seek to create alternative politics of representation to serve their strategic goals. While the progressive and subversive nature of these alternatives should be debated, it is nevertheless important to note their existence in order to indicate a plurality of subaltern geopolitical tactics, even amongst actors embracing 'branding' as a key tool in international politics. Key for the purposes of this paper, is the fact that a wide number of African states engaged in nation-branding bypass Brand Africa's emphasis on the need to tackle continental images, showing a plethora of alternative routes and shedding doubt over the regional appeal of Brand Africa's geopolitical/representational motives. Brand Africa, in short, for all its rhetoric of breadth and inclusiveness, seems singularly designed to the context of South African geopolitical ambitions.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the Brand Africa initiative as a form of subaltern geopolitics that draws its mobilising potential from two sources: the assumed power of branding practices to transform images and fortunes; and the seductive attraction of historical conceptions of decolonial pan-Africanism as a source of empowerment, self-esteem and ontological security. Steeped in the 'politics of representation at the margins',[86] Brand Africa, we have argued, embodies a new kind of subaltern geopolitics, albeit one wearing neoliberal stripes. Several conclusions can be drawn from the discussion.

Perhaps most fundamental is how, in an African context, supranational branding in the form of a pan-African project for Brand Africa, does not sit easily with pan-African supranational identity discourses of decolonisation, even though it draws some of its legitimating force from them by calling for an emphasis on a shared identity and sense of solidarity in remaking Africa's future. However, whereas the pan-Africanism of the 'leaders of liberation' called for a socialist-inspired internally focused dialogue and a refusal to place outsiders' concerns and perceptions at the heart of debates about reclaiming subjectivity, branding implies a more direct engagement with capitalist logics and in turn with the (historically) orientalist gaze of global economic elites. These essentially call for Africans to respond by reshaping themselves and their societies precisely in accordance with the norms and anticipated desires of these outsiders. At a conceptual level, therefore, the language of supranational branding, by reprioritising outsiders' perceptions, has the potential to fundamentally challenge, not only contending discourses of pan-African identity, but also the geostrategic futures they envisage. This is not least evident in the contrast between Brand Africa's advocacy for the pan-African benefits of increasing the visibility of big business and Nyerere's earlier advocacy that pan-African geopolitics should act as a 'trade union of the poor'

in a neo-colonial world order.[87] The subversive nature of Brand Africa as a form of subaltern geopolitics is therefore limited because, although it seeks to challenge the positional status of Africa in global geopolitical visions, it does not seek to challenge the rules of the game or subvert the overall framing.

In turn, however, the article has also suggested that the supranational discourse of Brand Africa is far from hegemonic. Couched in the context of South African geopolitical designs, Brand Africa does not elicit broad enthusiasm across the continent. Sensitive to the differential geostrategic openings provided by Brand Africa's politics of representation, other countries in Africa have engaged in alternative strategies combining the language of branding and geopolitical calculus. Thus, albeit a superficial appeal in Brand Africa's precepts of disabusing denigrations of Africa, its claim that concerted collective rebranding is *the* strategy to be pursued seems to hold little real traction. In short, there is no generalizable straightforward synergy between nation branding and supranational branding, just as there is no straightforward generalizable synergy between supranational branding and supranational identity discourses. Indeed, what the article has rather demonstrated is the extent to which supranational branding can constitute a mechanism for generating consent at both a national and regional level, that appeals to concerns related to issues of politics, economics and identity, but the benefits of which are likely to be distributed differentially. In this light, in Africa, as elsewhere, the 'power of (nation-)branding' can only be made sense of through a geopolitical sensibility, which spatially situates power dynamics.

As we have argued, it is quite easy to see Brand Africa as a private initiative at least in part inspired by the strategic vision articulated within the Brand South Africa

programme for South Africa to embrace the '*opportunity to drive the rebranding of Africa*' (emphasis added).[88] This, however, implies more than simply to suggest that the nation branding of South Africa is tied to advancing positive images about 'being African' and the prospects of the continent. Crucially, it implies encouraging other African nations to recognise this rebranding as meaningful and, in turn, embrace its language. This then has a necessary effect not only on questions of hegemonic representation (i.e. which state has the strongest voice in defining the image of its region) but also in terms of governance/governmentality. This is because encouraging other states to embrace nation branding programmes, and in particular tying this to the creation of national/African product brands, necessarily entails these states accepting the world-vision this implies (i.e. that nations need to manage their image in order to be able to participate effectively in globalisation, while citizens should be encouraged to actively embody branding efforts) and the strategic predominance of those that best embrace this vision. In other words, 'an opportunity to drive the rebranding of Africa', not only signifies an opportunity to *speak for Africa*, but also operates as a mechanism *to frame the very language via which Africans may imagine their future*.

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[1] Brand Africa (2015) *Brand Africa Brochure*, www.brandafrica.net/Documents/BrandAfricaBrochure2015.pdf (accessed 26 August 2015), p.2.

[2] A. Beresford, 'Africa rising?' *Review of African Political Economy*, 43/147 (2016) pp.1-7.

[3] Mckinsey Global Institute, *Lions on the move: The progress and potentials of African economies* (Washington DC: 2010).

[4] E. Aloko, 'Africa, the Next Investment Frontier – Trends and themes driving African Equity Markets', (ROBECO: January 2016). pp1-25 https://www.robeco.com/images/africa-the-next-investment-frontier-january-2016.pdf

[5] P. Carmody, *The New Scramble for Africa* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2011). See also global justice's interesting campaign to represent this 'new scramble' in the context of food - http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/infographics/new-scramble-africa-food-monsanto-syngenta-yara/

[6] This expression originated with Thabo Mbeki in 1999 – see http://www.au2002.gov.za/docs/speeches/mbeki991011.htm

[7] Brand Africa (2010) *Brand Africa Forum 2010 Report*, www.brandafrica.net (accessed 26 June, 2014), p.4.

[8] E.g., S. Anholt, *Brand New Justice: How Branding Places and Products Can Help the Developing World* (Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann 2005); S. Anholt, 'Brand Africa: What Is Competitive Identity?' *African Analyst* 2/2 (2007), pp.72–81; S. Anholt, 'Why It's Time to Abolish Brand Africa', *Brand Africa Forum 2010 Report*, (2010) pp.13–14, http://www.brandafrica.net/Documents/BrandAfricaFORUM2010-Report.pdf (accessed 26 June, 2014).

[9] E.g., C. S. Browning, 'Branding and Development: Poverty Panacea or Business as Usual?' *Journal of International Relations and Development* 19/1 (2016), pp.50-75.

[10] Anholt, 'Brand Africa' (note 8) p.75. Anholt is widely referenced in Brand Africa discussions and has been a participant in various Brand Africa meetings. His first influence can be traced to a panel on 'Strengthening Branding and Changing Perceptions' at the 2006 World Economic Forum on Africa. Notably, South African President Thabo Mbeki was also on the panel.

[11] L. Polman, *War Games: The Story of Aid and War in Modern Times* (London: Viking 2010). This practice is so established that it is increasingly the focus of ironizing advertising such as those produced by SAIH Norway (c.f. 'Let's save Africa – gone wrong' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbqA6o8_WC0; 'Africa for Norway' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJLqyuxm96k)

[12] See L. A. Richey and S. Ponte, 'Brand Aid and Africa', *Review of African Political Economy* 39/131 (2012) pp.136–7.

[13] D. Brockington, 'Celebrity interventions', *Review of African Political Economy* 39/131 (2012) pp.147–49; I. Kapoor, *Celebrity Humanitarianism: The Ideology of Global Charity* (Abingdon: Routledge 2013).

[14] For a comparison see the more pragmatic efforts led by West African artists in their collaboration "Africa Stop Ebola" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruYQY6z3mV8).

[15] Spurr cited in D. Campbell and M. Power, 'The Scopic Regime of Africa', in F. MacDonald, R. Hughes and K. Dodds, *Observant States: Geopolitics and Visual Culture* (London: IB Tauris 2010) p.175; see also D. Campbell, 'Geopolitics and visuality: Sighting the Darfur conflict', *Political Geography* 26/4 (2007), pp.357-82; L. Jarosz, 'Constructing the dark continent: Metaphor as geographic representation of Africa', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography* 74 (1992), pp.105-15.

[16] Cf. E. Mawdsley, 'Fu Manchu versus Dr Livingstone in the dark continent? Representing China, Africa and the West in British broadsheet newspapers', *Political Geography*, 27/5 (2008), pp.509-529.

[17] Mudimbe cited in J. Parker and R. Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007) pp.4-5; V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Indiana University Press 1994).

[18] Quoted in M. W. Lewis and K. E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1997) p.106.

[19] A. M. Field, 'Rebranding the Dark Continent', *Journal of Commerce*, (2012) p.26; C. Osei and A. Gbadamosi, 'Re-branding Africa', *Marketing Intelligence and Planning* 29/3 (2011), pp.284-304.

[20] A. Versi, 'No More Negative Images Please', *Kenyan Airways Msafiri Inflight Magazine* 80 (March–April 2012), pp.92–100, http://www.brandafrica.net (accessed 17 December, 2012); P. Muzanenhamo, *The Role of Brand Africa in Sustainable Development: A Diasporan Perspective* (PhD Thesis, Warwick Business School; University of Warwick 2014); Field (note 19); Osei and Gbadamosi (note 19).

[21] Quoted in Brand Africa, 'Brand Africa Forum Report 2010' (note 7) p.18

[22] E.g. Ibid, p.4.

[23] See this special issue's introduction on this point.

[24] M. Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013); C. S. Browning, 'Nation Branding, National Self-Esteem and the Constitution of Subjectivity in Late Modernity', *Foreign Policy Analysis* 11/2 (2015) pp.195-214.

[25] C.f. K. Dinnie, *Nation branding: concepts, issues, practice*. (London: Routledge 2015).

[26] J. Sharp, 'Subaltern geopolitics: introduction', *Geoforum*, 42/3 (2011) pp.271-273; J. Sharp, 'A subaltern critical geopolitics of the war on terror: postcolonial security in Tanzania', *Geoforum*, 42/3 (2011) pp.297-305.

[27] Sharp, 'Subaltern geopolitics' (note 26) p.271.

[28] Sharp, 'A subaltern critical geopolitics of the war on terror' (note 26) p.298.

[29] J. Sharp, 'Geopolitics at the margins? Reconsidering genealogies of critical geopolitics', *Political Geography* 37 (2013) pp.20-9.

[30] Slater quoted in Sharp, 'Subaltern geopolitics' (note 26) p.272.

[31] C.f. N. Parker, *The Geopolitics of Europe's Identity: Centers, Boundaries, and Margins* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan 2008).

[32] Sharp, 'Subaltern geopolitics' (note 26) p.271.

[33] Sharp, 'A subaltern critical geopolitics of the war on terror' (note 26) p.298.

[34] Ibid, p.298;

[35] See F. Fanon, *Black skin, white masks* (Pluto Press 1967).

[36] Laing describes the ontologically secure person as someone who has a 'sense of his presence in the world as real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person'. In contrast, the ontologically insecure person experiences deep anxiety about all these things. They may feel at risk of losing their autonomy and begin to doubt their very existence and subjectivity. R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (Tavistock Publications) pp.39, 43-9. As Zimbler notes, this sense of *ontological* erosion and violence can be read as a pervasive theme in Fanon's writings, as well as those of other decolonial thinkers. In colonial or apartheid societies this form of violence was sustained both materially and culturally. J. Zimbler, *J. M. Coetzee and the Politics of Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2014) pp.54-5.

[37] See H. Adi and M. Sherwood, *Pan-African history: Political figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (London: Routledge 2003); J. Ki-Zerbo, 'African intellectuals, nationalism and pan-Africanism: A testimony', *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Language, Gender and Development*, (2005) pp.78-93; G. Martin, *African Political Thought* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan 2012). For an interesting intervention on the intellectual history of pan-Africanism and its roots beyond the nineteenth century see M. O. Eze, 'Pan Africanism: A Brief Intellectual History', *History Compass* 11/9 (2013) pp.663-74.

[38] See J. Hodder, S. Legg and M. Heffernan, 'Introduction: historical geographies of internationalism, 1900-1950', *Political Geography* 49 (2015) pp. 1-6.

[39] Sharp 'Geopolitics at the margins?' (note 29); Sharp, 'Subaltern geopolitics' (note 26); Sharp, 'A subaltern critical geopolitics of the war on terror' (note 26).This is particularly the case when one contrasts it with the hegemonic geopolitics of the age – notably those of late European imperialism so famously captured in the 'Scramble for Africa'.

[40] M. Sherwood, 'Pan-African Conferences, 1900-1953: What Did "Pan-Africanism" Mean?' *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 4/10 (2012) pp.106-126.

[41] F. Gerits, '"When the Bull Elephants Fight": Kwame Nkrumah, Non-Alignment, and Pan-Africanism as an Interventionist Ideology in the Global Cold War (1957–66)', *The International History Review* 37/5 (2015) pp.951-69; L. James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (Springer 2014).

[42] Parker and Rathbone (note 17) p.34.

[43] G. Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (Taylor and Francis 1987).

[44] See C. Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A short political guide* (New York: F.A. Praeger 1965).

[45] See D. Rothermund, *The Routledge companion to decolonization* (London: Routledge 2006) pp.127-95, 222-38; V. Prashad, *The Darker Nations-A Biography of the Short-Lived Third World* (LeftWord Books 2007).

[46] C. G. Contee, 'Du Bois, the NAACP, and the Pan-African Congress of 1919', *The Journal of Negro History* 57/1 (1972) pp.13-28; S. C. Dunstan, 'Conflicts of Interest: The 1919 Pan-African Congress and the Wilsonian Moment', *Callaloo* 39/1 (2016) pp.133-150.

[47] A. Cabral, 'National liberation and culture', *Transition* 45 (1974) pp.12-17.

[48] This was a particularly relevant change in that it purposively mirrored the European imperial powers' exclusion of race as a framing device in the Paris Peace Conference. See Dunstan (note 46) p.139.

[49] On this question in Nyerere see Sharp, 'Geopolitics at the margins' (note 29); I. G. Shivji, 'Nationalism and pan-Africanism: decisive moments in Nyerere's intellectual and political thought', *Review of African Political Economy* 39/131 (2012) pp.103-16. In addition to this, note that subversive uses of nationalism are as old as nationalism, with the spring of nations of 1848 as a particular example (i.e. pan-Slavism).

[50] See M. A. Vieira, 'Understanding Resilience in International Relations: The Non-Aligned Movement and Ontological Security', *International Studies Review* 18/2 (2016) pp.290-311; Sharp, 'Geopolitics at the margins' (note 29) p.23.

[51] Martin (note 37) pp.58-9); K. Nkrumah, *Africa must unite* (Praeger, Inc. Publisher 1963); Gerits (note 41). For Nkrumah, while national liberation was important, this alone 'must never be regarded as the final solution to the problem raised by the economic and political exploitation of our peoples' (quoted in Martin (note 37) p.88).

[52] G. M. Khadiagala, 'Pan-Africanism and Regional Integration', in N. Cheeseman, D. M. Anderson and A. Scheiber (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of African Politics* (London: Routledge 2013) pp.375-89.

[53] C.f. Y. Zerbo, 'La problématique de l'unité africaine (1958-1963)', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 212 (2003) pp.113-27; Khadiagala (note 52) p.377; Gerits (note 40).

[54] See Zerbo (note 53) for more detail on this point.

[55] C.f. Viera (note 50).

[56] 'Africa can redeem its past glory and renew and reinforce its strength for the realisation of its destiny' (Nkrumah as quoted in Brand Africa (note 7) p.4); see also T. Ikalafeng, 'New Brand Afrika', *Samsung Magazine* (October 2014). Available at http://www.ikalafeng.com/Article/2014/10/new_brand_afrika .

[57] Martin (note 37) chs. 5 & 6.

[58] R. Ajulu, 'Thabo Mbeki's African renaissance in a globalising world economy: the struggle for the soul of the continent', *Review of African Political Economy* 28/87 (2001) pp.27-42; G. Mohan, 'Born again: the African renaissance in London', *Review of African Political Economy* 26/82 (1999) pp.524-6.

[59] C. Moore, 'Thabo Mbeki and South Africa's African identity: a review of 20 years of South Africa's Africa policy', African Identities 12/3-4 (2014) pp.371-89.

[60] I. Taylor, *NEPAD: Towards Africa's development or another false start?* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers 2005); P. Chabal, 'The quest for good government and development in Africa: is NEPAD the answer?' *International Affairs* 78/3 (2002) pp.447-62; J. Tsheola, 'South Africa's form of globalisation: a continental posture paradox for insertion and dependence', *Political Geography* 21/6 (2002) pp.789-811.

[61] '[B]rands are an asset (…) and repository of value for individuals, organisations, institutions and/or nations. Brand Africa seeks to achieve its goals by promoting partnerships and a catalytic environment for investment and active citizenship' (http://www.brandafrica.net/About). Brand Africa has five 'initiatives' by which it seeks to do this – two are for public speaking and deliberation around branding strategies and policy, two are for ranking corporate brand performance and 'nation brands' in Africa, and lastly, the 'brand Africa fellowships' is a program offering scholarships to exceptional African youth. For information on how these 'nation brands' are calculated see Brand Finance, Brand Finance Nation Brands 2015, p.20 (http://brandfinance.com/knowledge-centre/reports/brand-finance-nation-brands-2015/) (accessed 26 August 2016).

[62] See Y. Fan, 'Branding the Nation: What Is Being Branded?' *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 12/1 (2006) p.9.

[63] See Brand Africa 100® initiative (http://www.brandafrica.net/Initiatives.aspx). Note also that this is a constant theme of the various video interviews posted on the Brand Africa website: http://www.brandafrica.net/Videos.aspx.

[64] As in http://www.brandafrica.net/Initiatives.aspx (accessed 20 August 2016).

[65] Brand consulting partners listed on the Brand Africa website include: TNS, Brand Finance and Brand Leadership http://brandafrica.net/Partners.aspx.

[66] See A. Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1995).

[67] Brand Africa (note 1) p.2.

[68] http://www.brandafrica.net/Partners.aspx (accessed 21 April 2015).

[69] http://www.brandsouthafrica.com/who-we-are/trustees (accessed 21 April 2015).

[70] Although South Africa as a state gained its independence from Britain earlier in the twentieth century, the markedly anti-decolonial character of the state (i.e. apartheid) withheld key processes of decolonisation such as racial equality.

[71] International Marketing Council of South Africa, *2010/11 Annual Report*, (2010/2011) p.5 (http://www.imc.org.za/annual-report/704-annual-report-2010-2011) (accessed 17 December, 2012); Brand South Africa, *Annual Report 2011/2012* (Johannesburg: Brand South Africa 2012) p.26. Available at http://www.brandsouthafrica.com/who-we-are/annualreports/818-annual-report-2011-2012.

[72] Brand South Africa, *Annual Report 2013/2014* (Johannesburg: Brand South Africa 2014) p.8. Available at http://www.brandsouthafrica.com/who-we-are/annualreports/1118-annual-report-2013-2014 .

[73] International Marketing Council of South Africa (note 71) p.5.

[74] Brand South Africa, *Annual Report 2012/2013* (Johannesburg: Brand South Africa 2013) p.14. Available at http://www.brandsouthafrica.com/who-we-are/annualreports/915-annual-report-2012-20130; Brand South Africa (note 71) p.8; International Marketing Council of South Africa, *Annual Report 2009/2010*, (2009/2010) p.4 http://www.imc.org.za/annual-report/668-annual-report-2010 (accessed 17 December, 2012); International Marketing Council of South Africa (note 71) p.5.

[75] Brand South Africa (note 71) p.18.

[76] For instance, the annual Brand Africa 100 index for 2014, which Brand Africa produces in collaboration with Brand Finance, notes that of the 100 most valuable product brands in Africa 23 were African, of which 11 were South African, with those 11 South African brands accounting for 91% of the value of all African brands making it into the top 100. Kenyan brands were second at 5%, with

Nigeria third at 3%. Farai Gundan, 'Made In Africa: Brand Africa Announces 2014 Best Brands in Africa', 21 November 2014. Available at http://www.forbes.com/sites/faraigundan/2014/11/21/made-in-africa-brand-africa-announces-2014-best-brands-in-africa/ . The Brand Africa 100 index is available here http://www.brandafrica.net/Rankings.aspx.

[77] See https://www.sadc.int/themes/economic-development/investment/investment-promotion/ and http://www.brandafrica.net/Network.aspx

[78] The evidence is rather that in return for access Western nations have tended to play down such concerns, while China (an increasingly heavy investor in Africa) does not appear to concern itself with such things as a matter of principle – but perhaps also as part of its own competitive identity strategies by offering a different model of development assistance.

[79] Browning (note 24).

[80] This initiative rests on the twin pillars of a state cabinet, GRECIMA (see http://www.grecima.org/) and a private marketing company created by one of the Angolan president's children, Semba Comunicações (see www.semba-c.com).

[81] C.f. S. Scholvin, *The Geopolitics of Regional Power: Geography, Economics and Politics in Southern Africa* (London: Routledge 2016) pp.176-8; R. S. de Oliveira, 'Sobre as relações entre Portugal e Angola ao fim de trinta anos: um ensaio crítico' *Relações internacionais*, *8* (2005) pp.55-72; V. Martins, 'Angola in 2010: forging identity in foreign policy making', *IPRIS Lusophone Countries Bulletin: 2010 Review* (2010) pp.3-7.

[82] For a reflection on why this may be a good strategic option see Zarakol's discussion on Japan's, Turkey's and Russia's efforts to shed stigma. A. Zarakol, *After Defeat: how the East Learned to Live with the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011).

[83] C. Robertson, 'Rwanda is Sure to be the Singapore of Africa by 2020', Rwanda Development Board (2005) (http://www.rwandainvest.com.cn/DetailA.asp?ID= 296&intMaxID=9); S. M. Meagher, 'The darker underside of Scott's third wave', *City 17*(3) (2013) p.396; A. Ansoms and D. Rostagno, 'Rwanda's Vision 2020 halfway through: what the eye does not see', *Review of African Political Economy* 39/133 (2012) pp.427-50.

[84] M. Castells, *The rise of the network society: The information age: Economy, society, and culture* (John Wiley & Sons 2011).

[85] The Economist, (2012). *Africa's Singapore?*. [online] Available at: http://www.economist.com/node/21548263 [Accessed 10 July 2015].

[86] Sharp, 'Subaltern geopolitics' (note 26) p.171.

[87] Sharp, 'Geopolitics at the margins' (note 29) p.23.

[88] International marketing Council of South Africa (note 71) p.5; Brand South Africa (note 71) p.26.