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# DAVID SLATER

## Questions of (In)Justice and the Imperiality of Power

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# ÍNDICE

Introduction 1
Beyond the Euro-Americanist Veil 3
The Post-Colonial as an Analytical Opening 5
Intervention and the Geopolitics of Injustice 10
Naming, Framing and the Power of Representation 15
Popular Self-Determination in the Shadow of Imperial Power 20
Bibliography 30

DAVID SLATER

# Questions of (In)Justice and the Imperiality of Power

'… If it is to be intellectually as well as politically productive, critical work must be ready to confront imperial denial and the flourishing revisionist scholarship that supports it'
(P. Gilroy, 2005, p. 143)

'I do not think that the massive structural dislocations, violences and injustices of the present simply invite pessimism … they can also invite militancy and optimism, an occasion for political resistance that arises from the infinite demand of an ethical commitment'
(S. Critchley, 2008, p. 94)

'I do … take note of the rich legacy of sophisticated left-wing thought in the South, for it is here that the future is likely to be decided'
(G. Therborn, 2010, p. xi)

## Introduction

In this paper I want to concentrate my focus of attention on the way the analysis of questions of (in)justice are framed[1]. I shall do this in a particular context of North/South relations, which I consider to be still relevant and not displaced by the all-encompassing dynamic of globalization. Of the varying types of spatial justice, or what Nancy Fraser[2] calls 'scales of justice', I shall examine some key aspects of international justice and its transgression and violation in a world system characterized by acute geopolitical asymmetries of power. There are three issues that I want to consider.

[1] These two terms of injustice and justice exemplify a dynamic interrelation which helps us avoid a rather static interpretation of the obstacles to justice and all the debates about achieving a just society without analyzing the structural and enduring causes of injustice.

[2] N. Fraser, *Scales of Justice: reimagining political space in a globalizing world*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2008.

First, the political and conceptual contiguity of justice and democracy will be examined with an emphasis being assigned to the nature of Western interventions in societies of the global South[3]. I am particularly interested in the idea that Western terminations of democratic governments in the global south have been salient examples of geopolitical injustice and the violation of popular sovereignty;[4] – equally, there are related issues of memory and historical forgetfulness which need to be taken into account, no matter how briefly.

Second, it is intended to examine the interwoven nature of the 'politics of framing', the geopolitics of naming and complex questions of representation. Here, we need to recognise that international injustice takes place in a theatre inhabited by subjects or agents affected by what Butler[5] calls a differential distribution of affective and moral responsiveness. In some cases this differential distribution takes on acute forms, wherein certain subjects, such as the inhabitants of the 'occupied territories', and especially Gaza, have been represented by the Israeli state as being 'terrorists' or more generally as being complicit with terrorism, and not worthy of public grievability[6].

Third, I want to highlight the question of popular self-determination, and the unevenness of its sustainability in the spaces of the global south. It can be suggested that the relations of freedom and justice within a political commu-

3 Throughout the paper I shall use terms such as global North/global South, first world/third world without taking on board the continuing debates and disputes over their meaning and applicability. I will attempt such a discussion on another occasion. For my purposes here I will tend to use the global North/global South couplet more frequently since the categorization of the three worlds of development is less apposite than was the case in the past.

4 I use the term 'geopolitical injustice', but following Soja's perspective we could also use the term 'spatial injustice' as the Western interventions are expressions of spatial power in an international context. See E. W. Soja, *Searching for Spatial Justice*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

5 J. Butler, *Frames of War*, London and New York, Verso, 2010.

6 For an insightful discussion see J. Butler, *op. cit.*, pp. ix – xxx.

nity can only be established, adequately defended and successfully developed by members of that community: popular self-determination then is the right of a people by their own efforts to become free, to foster a democratic politics and to question the injustices that continue to be present. To move away from injustice and oppression cannot be achieved through outside intervention; it has to be realized independently and there is here a key interconnection between emancipation, the throwing off of injustice, or the ability to secure liberation, and self-determination, which subsumes emancipation but also underlines the capacity for the assertion and affirmation of agency and the concerted movement away from the structures of injustice and oppression.

Before dealing in some detail with these three interwoven themes, it is necessary to introduce two analytical contextualizations which will provide a frame for our subsequent reflections.

## Beyond the Euro-Americanist Veil

The first contextualization concerns the limits and obstacles that a Euro-Americanist perspective inflicts on social science enquiry[7]. What do we mean, then, when we say that a particular study or specific section of analysis is Euro-Americanist? In briefly answering this question one can identify three interconnected tendencies. First, a defining feature of Euro-Americanism is its inclination to portray the West as being special and superior when compared to the non-West. Thus, for instance, in sociology, Max Weber argued that the Occident was synonymous with rationality, which

[7] In other texts the terms 'Western ethnocentrism' or Westocentrism' or 'Eurocentrism' are used; however, there is no space here to go into detailed discussion of their subtle differences, but the reader might consult R. Connell, *Southern Theory*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007, for a clear overview; D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference*, Princeton, and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2008, for a more historically–oriented approach; and sections of the first chapter of D. Slater, *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2004, for a link with geopolitics.

was linked with an assertive notion of an 'irrational non-West.' This viewpoint has not disappeared as we can see from a recent NATO study where the non-West is associated with what is referred to as the 'loss of the rational'[8]. In a more critical literature comparable biases are still visible, so for example, in much contemporary political theory, the West is seen as special, being the primary and central haven of human rights, enlightenment thought, reason and democracy, and in the domain of radical philosophy it is predominantly the West that is seen as being self-reflexive[9].

Second, within a Euro-Americanist frame, the special and ostensibly superior features that are posited as being uniquely possessed by the West are further regarded as being internal or intrinsic to European and American development. There is no tangibly present awareness that such development might be the result of a process of cross-cultural exchange. Not only is there a process of self-affirmation but also a deeply-rooted failure to leave open or to give significance to the possibility of the West actually learning from the non-West, as a consequence of cultural encounters.

Third and last, the development of the West is held to constitute a *universalist* step forward for humanity as a whole. Such a standpoint has been captured in both traditional Marxist views of a progressive succession of modes of production and in the Rostowian notion of the 'stages of economic growth', with the West offering the non-West a mirror for its future development. In a related manner, a particular framing of Western democracy is taken to be appropriate for export, acting as a template for subsequent dissemination[10].

8 NATO, *Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World*, report submitted by the Noaber Foundation, The Netherlands, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington DC, 2007, p. 41.

9 For examples of this kind of perspective see D. Slater, *Geopolitics..., op. cit*, pp. 10-11, for a critical consideration.

10 D. Slater, 'Exporting Imperial Democracy: critical reflections on the US case', *Human Geography*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2009, pp. 24-36.

These three elements –the special and superior, the internally independent and the universal –form the basis of Euro-Americanist representations and they tend to go together with negative essentialisations of the non-Western other. At the same time, there is an insistent and enduring belief in the key historical and geopolitical significance of the West as the essential motor of progress, civilization, modernity, justice and democracy. This is coupled with a view of the non-West as being passive, stagnant or recalcitrant as well as being a sullen recipient of Western progress – in sum, as peoples without history and without a geopolitics of their own.

## The Post-Colonial as an Analytical Opening

In contrast to what I have sketched out above as the key deficiencies of Euro-Americanist visions, a post-colonial perspective highlights the primary significance of colonial/imperial encounters[11]. Hence, studies of, for example, globalization, development, modernity, social movements and spatial justice need to include the colonial/imperial as constitutive of a West/non-West relationality that is embedded in all these thematic sites. In this context, Gilroy[12] observes that the fundamental question of Europe's dominance of the world has been grossly underestimated by social and political theory; he

11 There are of course many ways of interpreting the post-colonial, and one particularly stimulating intervention is to be found in an interview with A. Mbembe, 'What is Postcolonial Thinking? An interview with Achille Mbembe', *Eurozine*, http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-01-09-mbembe-en.html (September 2010). Mbembe makes two points that are worth underscoring. First, in contrast to those approaches that imply that the colonized subject is passive and lacking in agency, Mbembe suggests that the colonized person is a living, talking, conscious, active individual whose identity arises from a three-pronged movement of violation, erasure and self-writing (*Ibidem*, p. 3). Second, Mbembe argues that post-colonial thought shows that colonialism itself was a global experience which contributed to the universalization of representations, techniques and institutions… it shows that this process of universalization far from being a one-way street, was basically a paradox, fraught with all sorts of ambiguities (*Ibidem*, p. 4).

12 P. Gilroy, 'Fanon and Améry: theory, torture and the prospect of humanism', *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 27, No. 7-8, 2010, pp. 29-30.

goes on to write that 'the extent of that system – which saw, at the start of the 20th century, some 55 per cent of the world's population under the colonial yoke – is not appreciated as an historical phenomenon with contemporary consequences'. This failure to appreciate the central importance of colonial and imperial power has weakened a whole range of studies concerning global change and the conflict-ridden nature of international relations.

One of the most pivotal features of the impact of colonial and imperial interventions concerns the durability of particular ways of framing or representing the meaning of the colonial/imperial encounter. For example, in the field of international law, the Spanish jurist and theologian Francisco de Vitoria, writing in the sixteenth century, appeared to promote notions of equality and reciprocity but in actual fact finally legitimized endless Spanish incursions into Indian society. Vitoria's apparently innocuous enunciation of a Spanish right to travel and sojourn came to be extended in to the creation of a comprehensive system of norms that were constructed so that any Indian attempt to resist penetration was taken to signify an act of war that justified retaliation (for example, for an Indian to keep certain people out of the city or province as being enemies was taken to be an act of war). Consequently, each encounter between the Spanish and the Indians entitled the Spanish to 'defend' themselves against Indian aggression and in so doing expand Spanish territory[13].

A significant point we can take from this passage concerns the initiation and subsequent durability of incursions and invasiveness. Attempts at resisting colonial and imperial penetration have consistently been met by a battery of measures (military, economic, cultural, psychological) that have sought to undermine and destroy the spirit of independence that has nourished projects of resistance.

13 A. Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 13-31.

One of the most deeply-rooted elements of the colonial and imperial mentality concerns the projection of universalist Western values and practices. For example, in 1917, Woodrow Wilson declared that American principles and policies are also those of every modern nation, of every enlightened community; 'they are the principles of mankind and must prevail'[14]. Fast forwarding to the 1960s, we find that one of the major protagonists of modernization theory, Lucian Pye, asserted that there was a 'Western insistence that societies that do not voluntarily act as nation-states must be compelled to do so even if this means direct assistance and open intervention in their affairs'[15].

In the twentieth century and beyond, the Western projection of ostensibly universal values has been accompanied by a determination to intervene in societies of the South to impose Western regimes of truth[16]. Perhaps it might be argued that after the end of colonialism, such projects of intervention became a thing of the past.

14 W. Wilson, 'A League for Peace' in Larson, D. L. (ed.), *The Puritan Ethic in United States Foreign Policy*, Princeton, New Jersey, D. van Nostrand Company, Inc, 1966 , p. 187.

15 N. Inayatullah and D. L. Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, London and New York, Routledge, 2004, p. 106.

16 In the 1950s, the head of the CIA commented that his organization was an instrument of subversion, manipulation and violence, including secret intervention in the affairs of other countries (see H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York and London, A Harvest/HBJ Book , 1975, p. xx, footnote no. 4). In the early part of the Cold War, the number of CIA employees involved in covert operations grew from 302 in 1949 to 2,812 in 1952. By 1952, they were stationed at 47 locations outside the United States, as compared to a figure of 7 in 1949, and the annual budget for secret activities had mushroomed from $4.7 million to $82 million (see J. L. Gaddis, *The Cold War*, London, Penguin Books, 2005, p. 163). This went together with a well-established programme of military assistance (see M. T. Klare, *Supplying Repression: US Support for Authoritarian Regimes Abroad*, Washington DC and Amsterdam, Institute for Policy Studies, 1977, pp. 31-33). More recently, in the post-Bush era, emphasis has been placed on leading by example rather than by force. Thus, for example, the National Security Strategy for 2010, stresses the following: 'our diplomacy and development capabilities must help prevent conflict, spur economic growth, strengthen weak and failing states, lift people out of poverty, combat climate change and epidemic disease, and strengthen institutions of democratic governance' (The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, May 2010, Washington DC, p. 11). Clearly, there is no lack of ambition.

It is at this point that we can usefully refer to the concept of the 'coloniality of power', which was first coined by the Peruvian sociologist, Aníbal Quijano, and subsequently used by a network of Latin American researchers[17]. For Quijano[18] what is contemporaneously described as globalization is the outcome of a process that began with the constitution of America and colonial/modern Eurocentred capitalism. According to Quijano, one of the main dimensions of this model of power has been the social classification of the world's population around the idea of race, whereby it is further argued that the racial axis has a colonial origin which has proven to be more lasting than the colonialism through which it was brought into being. Hence, for Quijano[19] the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes a core element of coloniality, which in addition to being strongly associated with the hierarchy of race is also connected to a subalternization of the knowledge and culture of the oppressed and excluded groups that originated with colonialism and which has continued into post-colonial times.

From Quijano's original conceptualization a number of Latin American social scientists have applied the term in their work, giving emphasis to the needed differentiation of colonialism from coloniality. Mignolo[20], for instance, writes that while colonialism refers to specific historical periods and places of imperial domination, coloniality is the 'underlying matrix of colonial power that was maintained in the US and in South America and the Caribbean after independence'[21].

17 See, for example, W. D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2011; and M. M.oraña, E. Dussel and C. A. Jáuregui (eds.) *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2008.

18 A. Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America', *Nepantla, views from south*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2000, pp. 533-580.

19 A. Quijano, 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality', *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2-3, March/May 2007, pp. 168-178.

20 W. D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2005.

21 *Ibidem*, p. 69. In a similar vein, the Colombian philosopher, Castro-Gómez

Whilst the distinction between colonialism and coloniality is useful, it can be suggested that the term 'coloniality of power' can be contrasted with a broader term that I would call the 'imperiality of power'[22]. Hence, whereas imperialism can be thought of in terms of the strategy, practice and legitimization of the invasive power of a Western state over other predominantly non-Western states, whose political sovereignty is thereby usurped or undermined[23], imperiality refers to the perceived right, privilege and sentiment of being imperial or of defending an imperial way of life in which geopolitical invasiveness is justified. In other words, Western societies harbour imperial discourses that are rooted in the history of their geopolitical relations so that a strategy of imperialist expansion can be discursively sustained through a reliance on a direct appeal to a deeply sedimented sense of imperial privilege. Part of this imperiality is reflected in the existence of an imperial ethos of care and posited reciprocity in which the imperial power expects the imperialized society to express its gratitude for, for example, being invaded, since it has been liberated and introduced into a superior way of life, expressed in terms of 'civilization', 'modernization' or 'democracy'[24].

demarcates the two concepts as follows: whilst colonialism refers to a historical period, which in the case of Latin America largely ended in the early part of the nineteenth century, coloniality refers to a technology of power that persists today, founded on the 'knowledge of the other' –coloniality is not modernity's 'past' but its 'other face'. Se S. Castro-Gómez, 'The Social Sciences, Epistemic Violence and the Problem of the "Invention of the Other"', *Nepantla – views from south*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2002, pp. 276.

22 The term 'imperiality' has been used by Krishnaswamy, but the definition used here is quite different from mine. Krishnaswamy defines imperiality in terms of a break and a continuity with older forms of imperialism, and also as a parallel concept to the coloniality of power. See R. Krishnaswamy, 'Connections, Conflicts and Complicities' in Krishnaswamy, R. y J. C. Hawley (eds.), *The Post-Colonial and the Global*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008, pp. 12-13. (see footnote 24).

23 Knight in his essay on US imperialism/hegemony and Latin American resistance, proposes a similar definition, noting that imperialism involves a 'substantial and asymmetrical' diminution of sovereignty through the exercise of power in its varied forms, including military, political, economic and cultural. See A. Knight, 'U.S.Imperialism/Hegemony and Latin American Resistance' in F. Rosen (ed.), *Empire and Dissent: the United States and Latin America*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2008, p. 47.

24 The imperiality of power is in many ways closely connected to the raciality and

## Intervention and the Geopolitics of Injustice

In the field of international justice, the geopolitics of Western interventionism would, within a post-colonial approach, be highlighted as exemplifying the longevity of an invasive logic. This invasive or imperial logic can be contrasted with the official discourse of spreading democracy and progress, whereby the West's intervention is often represented as being part of a long-term project of diffusing democracy to the non-Western world. In contradistinction, it can be argued that the West, and specifically the United States, has been responsible for both the *termination* of democratic governments in the global South, and the nurturing and buttressing of military regimes, most clearly visible in times of super-power rivalry[25]. With respect to the termination of democratic governments, one can mention Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Chile in 1973 and Nicaragua during the 1980s, although the last-named case did not include a military take-over[26]. As far as support for military regimes is concerned, we can mention Argentina in 1976, Brazil in 1964, Indonesia in 1965 and Uruguay in 1976, and the list becomes con-

sexuality of power. For one exemplification of this point, see A. L. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: race and the intimate in colonial rule*, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 2010, p. xxiv. This author suggests that 'nowhere is the personal more political than in the security regimes of imperial formations that anticipate what interior states need to be controlled'. Moreover, there is a significant connection here with the notion of an 'imperial unconscious' whereby the history of colonial and imperial encounters have left behind deeply-sedimented attitudes, prejudices, values and orientations which can help to legitimate newly-deployed imperial strategies. It is precisely because these attitudes of superiority lie beneath the surface, not having been processed, that they can influence events in concealed and unchallenged forms.

25 The willingness to support military dictatorships was made transparently clear at the beginning of the 1950s when foreign policy expert G. F. Kennan (1950) remarked that 'where the concepts and traditions of popular government are too weak to absorb successfully the intensity of the communist attack, then we must concede that harsh governmental measures of repression may be the only answer'. See R. H. Holden and E. Zolov (eds.), *Latin America and the United States: a documentary record*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 196.

26 For Iran and Guatemala, see, for example, J. L. Gaddis, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-171.

siderably longer if we also include African examples. Moreover, it needs to be added that Western powers continue to support undemocratic regimes such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain[27].

When we look at lists of injustices in the world, it is not unusual to find that these sorts of geopolitical interventions indicated above are rarely if at all mentioned. For example, in a short article on the nature and range of international justice, Sen[28] lists the following types of injustice: slavery, the subjugation of women, the extreme exploitation of vulnerable labour, the gross medical neglect of the bulk of the world population today, the prevalence of torture which continues to be practised by the pillars of the global establishment, and the quiet tolerance of chronic hunger[29]. Clearly, these are all relevant sources of injustice, but the violation of popular sovereignty certainly needs to be included in the list; in fact I would argue that such a violation is a cardinal or *foundational* form of international injustice.

The gravity of interventionism is sometimes ostensibly legitimized by the suggestion that the West is taking democracy to a country that needs it. But how can we justify the imposition of one form of democracy on to another society, such as Iraq or Afghanistan? As Butler[30] concisely puts it, what does democracy mean if it is not based on popular decision and majority rule… can one power 'bring' or 'install' democracy on a people over whom it has no jurisdiction? In addition, as Butler points out[31], those who kill in

27 M. Hasan, 'The west averts its eyes from the brutes of Bahrain', *The Guardian*, 12 July 2011, p. 29.

28 A. Sen, 'Pip was right: nothing is so finely felt as injustice. And there the search begins', *The Guardian*, 14 July 2009, p. 26.

29 A similar point could be made in relation to Sen's book on the idea of justice. This is an admirable text and full of insights, but it does omit this rather important aspect of international injustice. See A. Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, London, Penguin Books, 2010.

30 J. Butler, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

31 *Ibidem.*

the name of democracy or security, or those who make incursions into the sovereign lands of others in the name of sovereignty often do so as if they are executing a kind of 'global responsibility'. How justifiable is such an assumed responsibility? It is surely quite unjustifiable since it is based on imperial reason; what *is* required, as Butler suggests, is a rethinking and reimagining of the meanings of global responsibility so that the geopolitics of imposition and the imperial appropriation of the concept of responsibility can be countered and transcended[32].

The persistence of a Western invasive logic has been a continuing feature of international relations and a rooted expression of the negation of spatial justice whereby the asymmetries of geopolitical power are anchored in the history of the colonial/imperial encounter. In addition, it is worthwhile reminding ourselves that in the West the reality of this invasive logic has often been little more than a shadowy presence in the studies of globalization, modernity, development and democracy. Not infrequently, although the situation is changing, the colonial and imperial have been located in an older time and space with only limited residues of relevance for the contemporary world[33].

32 Notions of 'global responsibility' and popular self-determination will be discussed in the last section of the paper.

33 In the field of international relations, it needs to be said that in the last few years one has seen the emergence of a critical literature which has challenged the traditional myopia concerning the coloniality and imperiality of power. For example, see T. Barkawi and M. Laffey, 'The Postcolonial Moment in Security Studies', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 32, April 2006, pp. 329-352; P. Darby, 'Pursuing the Political: A Postcolonial rethinking of Relations International', *Millennium*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2004, pp. 1-32; and A. Tickner, 'Seeing IR Differently: Notes from the Third World', *Millennium*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2003, pp. 295-324. And more recently see A. Acharya, 'Dialogue and Discovery: In Search of International Relations Theories beyond the West', *Millennium*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2011, pp. 619-637 and K. Hutchings, 'Dialogue between Whom? The Role of the West/Non-West Distinction in Promoting Global Dialogue in IR', *Millennium*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2011, pp. 639-647. In the domain of critical geography, there has been a recent surge of analytical interest in colonial and imperial encounters – see for example S. Dalby, 'Imperialism, Domination, Culture: the continuing relevance of critical geopolitics', *Geopolitics*, Vol. 13, No. 3, July 2008, pp. 413-436; D. Harvey, *The New*

In this context, Mbembe[34] draws our attention to the relative lack of analysis of force and violence in international relations, and his point is well-taken. Through the social science literature into popular media narratives, the historical presence of Western violence has been downplayed, if not completely omitted from mainstream discourse[35]. However, at the same time, we need to remember the entanglements and complexities of colonial and imperial encounters. It was Ghandi[36] who suggested that the universalization of imperialism could not be explained by the violence of coercion alone; it was also a consequence of the fact that many colonized people accommodated themselves to the invasiveness of colonial and imperial power, becoming consciously complicit in a narrative that they partially embraced.

The diversity of response to the projection of geopolitical power is also important to take into account. Hence, if, for example, we examine the trajectory of US-Latin American relations, we can identify at least four different responses to the dissemination of US power in Latin America.

*Imperialism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003; and G. Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: the legacy of Halford Mackinder*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009. Also one should not forget J. M. Blaut's earlier text: *The Colonizer's Model of the World*, London and New York, Guildford Press, 1993. In other disciplines such as sociology there has also been an upsurge in the analysis of colonial and imperial questions – for one example, see G. K. Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

34 A. Mbembe, 'What is Postcolonial Thinking?' *op. cit.*

35 In the case of Britain, Gilroy amplifies the point about forgotten colonial wars by arguing that there has been a mysterious evacuation of Britain's postcolonial conflicts from national consciousness which has become a significant cultural and historical event in its own right. See P. Gilroy, Postcolonial Melancholia op. cit., pp. 87-89. On violence in relation to the colonial, Mbembe reminds us that there were three types of violence: first a founding violence that underpinned the right of conquest and the prerogatives flowing from that right; second, a type of violence that sought to justify the colonial order, to legitimize its necessity and universalizing mission, and third, a related sort of violence was designed to ensure the colonial authority's maintenance, spread and permanence. See A. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, p. 25.

36 A. Mbembe, 'What is Postcolonial Thinking?' *op. cit*.

First, one has a tendency to embrace the 'Americanization' of the Latin South, a position which has been referred to as the 'Miamization'' of the southern continent; here we are talking of a process of quasi-assimilation with a notable absence of a critical perspective on the United States. Second, one has a tendency to accommodate to the hegemonic position of the United States, which can be contrasted to a position of indifference and, fourthly, we have varied modalities of resistance to US power[37]. The heterogeneity of response to US power should not be overlooked, and a similar point applies to other West/non-West encounters.

One further theme that needs to be mentioned, a theme which gives us a link to the next section, concerns the significance of other voices, or the presence of other agents of knowledge. In this context, it was Said[38] who reminded us that the universalizing discourses of Euro-America assume the silence, willing or otherwise, of the non-Western world; 'there is incorporation; there is inclusion; there is direct rule and there is coercion'. But there is only rarely an acknowledgement that the colonized people should be heard from, their ideas known and discussed[39]. This then constitutes another form of injustice, often ignored in the discussion, whereby dialogues and narratives are implicitly founded on a notion of a Western conversation. What happens here is that it is insidiously assumed that the subjects of a serious dialogue or argument or controversy have a Western or Anglo-American lineage. In addition, one finds through the politics of framing, naming and representation, that certain peoples and nations are granted less right to justice than others – the plight of the Palestinians being the

37 For a discussion of these tendencies of response to US power, see, for example, P. H. Smith., *Talons of the Eagle*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

38 E. W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1993, p. 58.

39 This Western proclivity has certainly not disappeared, as the journalist Aditya Chakrabortty recently demonstrates when writing about the Indian poet and writer Rabindranath Tagore, who was born 150 years ago. Chakrabortty shows the widespread lack of interest in Tagore in the West, or at least in the UK, where very few newspapers and magazines covered his work – see A. Chakrabortty in *The Guardian*, 31-05-2011, p. 14.

most salient example – such peoples are constructed as secondary agents in a world covertly, or sometimes overtly, envisaged as being intrinsically Western, or perhaps captured in that pervasive phrase 'the international community'.

## Naming, Framing and the Power of Representation

In this section, I want to examine some aspects of the interwoven concepts of naming, representation and framing, and I shall do so in relation to the persistence or, one might suggest, deepening of international injustice[40].

Naming is not innocuous; to name is to shape, exclude, include, form and deform identity; it is to confer or deny privilege. Naming is the means whereby we attempt to order and structure the chaos and flux of everyday life which would otherwise remain an undifferentiated amalgam of varied elements. By assigning names we impose a pattern which allows us to order and differentiate the world. In this sphere, some writers argue that a new form of domination is created through the hierarchical naming of categories so that, for example, some societies are seen as already developed in contrast to others that are developing, or in the domain of war non-Western insurgencies are not infrequently described as being 'barbaric', whilst Western state violence is implicitly legitimized[41].

[40] It might be wondered why I use the term 'international' rather than global. This is to draw our attention back to the pivotal nature of the nation state, which whilst being profoundly affected by globalization, still holds a central position in the world system.

[41] For instance, in a recent statement before his resignation, General Petraeus asserted that Afghan insurgents were willing to carry out 'barbaric' attacks against civilians (see *International Herald Tribune*, 19 July 2011, p. 8). In contrast, no mention is made of the casualties resulting from unmanned US drone attacks in Pakistan (see *The Guardian*, 18 July 2011, p. 16). For a relevant analysis of naming and war, see, for example, H. Dexter, 'New War, Good War, and the War on Terror: Explaining, Excusing and Creating Western Neo-Interventionism', *Development and Change*, Vol. 38, No. 6, November 2007, pp. 1055-1071.

Another relevant point concerns the fact that clearly powerful states reveal their geopolitical orientation through either the way they may refrain from naming, or through the way they may critically name a government they regard as being a geopolitical threat. So, in the case for example of Indonesia in the mid-1960s, whilst in two years Suharto's armed forces massacred an estimated half a million communists, plus killing an estimated 200,000 people in East Timor, the United States never named Indonesia, a bulwark in the anti-communist defence shield, as a dictatorial or terrorist state[42].

In the 1980s, in another example of the power of naming, Nicaragua was systematically named a 'communist' state, and the United States continued to destabilize the Sandinista government, even though it had won a fair and free election in 1984. And, despite being found guilty of violating international law by the International Court of Justice in The Hague the Reagan Administration continued to finance *contra* guerrillas who terrorized significant sections of the Nicaraguan population. President Reagan named these guerrillas 'freedom fighters', but the record shows that the *contras* razed to the ground cooperatives, schools, health clinics and power stations and tortured, raped and murdered civilians, including foreigners who were helping to rebuild Nicaragua. By 1985, the *contra* had executed close to four thousand civilians, wounded an equal number and kidnapped roughly another five thousand[43]. However they continued to be named and represented as 'freedom fighters'.

Whilst the politics of naming can alert us to a field of conflict[44] and to a war of interpretations, in addition, the concept itself invites us to go further and consider the processes of framing and representation.

42 V. Lal, *Empire of Knowledge*, London and New York, Pluto Press, 2002.
43 G. Grandin, *Empire's Workshop*, New York, Metropolitan Books, 2006, pp. 116-117.
44 M. V. Bhatia, 'Fighting words: naming terrorists, bandits, rebels and other violent actors', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2005, pp. 5-22.

On framing, Judith Butler makes a number of insightful points. For instance, she suggests that 'the frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured…are politically saturated … they are themselves operations of power'[45]. In a similar vein, it can be argued that our frames of interpretation do not simply reflect reality, but rather they engage in a strategy of containment, enforcing what counts as reality. Thus, as Butler[46] observes, the frame is always throwing something away,' always de-realizing and de-legitimizing alternative versions of reality.' This is particularly evident in the context of the 'war on terror' where the United States is supposedly bringing civilization and order to the ostensibly pre-modern, pre-democratic Islamic other – in fact what it brings in reality is violence and torture as the instruments and sign of civilization[47]. As Butler[48] expresses it, the point at issue here is the 'barbarism of the civilizational mission, and any counter-imperialist politics … must oppose it at every turn'.

Keeping these observations in mind, we can make a link with the consideration of international injustice by referring to Fraser's[49] idea of the politics of framing, which connects with Butler's own approach to framing. Fraser has argued that there have been two dimensions of justice: redistribution, and recognition, which capture the socio-economic and cultural facets of (in)justice. More recently she has added a third dimension, namely represen-

45 J. Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

46 *Ibidem,* p. xiii.

47 The idea of the West diffusing civilization to the non-West has a long history and it is important to make the connections with past periods so as to show how deeply sedimented certain ideas are. Making such connections helps to account for their continued effectiveness in the current period. For an excellent and critical discussion of the contrasts between Eastern and Western civilization, see, for example, J. M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

48 J. Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

49 N. Fraser, *op. cit.*

tation, which is treated as a political dimension of justice. Fraser asks can the 'relations of representation be unjust in and of themselves, apart from the effects of maldistribution and misrecognition on their operation?'[50]. She answers this question by linking the politics of framing to the politics of representation. Fraser writes that when political space is unjustly framed, the result is the denial of political voice to those who are banished to the fringes of the global system[51]. Hence, representation relates to the interconnection of symbolic framing and political voice. For Fraser, as representation names the political dimension of justice, it helps us to understand the question of the frame as a question of justice. In other words, taking a radically reflexive approach, we would not be satisfied with treating problems in the form in which they are given within an established frame, but rather we would make the frame itself the focus of attention and potential reconstruction. And at the same time, the concept of representation has a duality so that it can signify both the way a political domain is framed and the form taken by a process of political articulation.

Whilst Fraser brings together questions of framing and representation, Critchley[52] introduces an aspect of naming that is also relevant to framing and representation. He argues that politics is about the naming of a subjectivity, and organising politically around that name, so previously, for example, Marx's name for the political subject was the proletarian, or more concretely the proletarian as communist. Today, Critchley[53] argues that the political task is one of 'inventing a name around which a political subject can be aggregated from the various social struggles through which we are living'.

50 *Ibidem*, p. 145.

51 There are many examples one could mention, but one of the most salient illustrations of the unchecked power of multinationals has been the case of Union Carbide and the Bhopal disaster. At the same time, the profoundly negative effects of 'regime change' geopolitics in countries of the periphery should not be forgotten.

52 S. Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, London and New York, Verso, 2008.

53 *Ibidem*, p. 103-104.

One example can be taken from the emergence in Mexico of indigenous identity as a political category. What is noteworthy here is the way in which a new political subject is formed against the repressive actions of the state through the articulation of a new global name – the indigenous. Or, in other words, we can say that the Zapatista struggle has created a new political category – the indigenous – which has local, regional, national and global significance, although it is necessary not to overplay the newness of the indigenous, since this political category has an extended history in Mexico and elsewhere[54].

Together with the emergence of new political categories, we have the question of how to approach the representation of justice in a world characterised by a dissonant relation between democratic politics and a resurgent imperiality of power. First of all, we can identify the problem of an absence of the political in well-established writing on justice, as exemplified in Rawls[55] and to a lesser extent in Sen[56]. Mouffe[57] has compellingly argued that mainstream writers tend to reduce the field of politics to a rational process of negotiation among private interests under the constraints of morality. As a consequence 'conflicts, antagonisms, relations of power, forms of subordination and repression simply disappear and we are faced with a typically liberal vision of a plurality of interests'[58].

54 For the Mexico case Harvey's study is particularly valuable. See N. Harvey, The Chiapas Rebellion, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1998. For some more up-to-date analyses see R. Stahler-Sholk, et al (eds.), *Latin American Social Movements in the Twenty-First Century*, Lanham and Plymouth, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008.

55 J. Rawles, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971.

56 A. Sen, *The Idea of... op. cit*.

57 C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, London and New York, Verso, 1993.

58 *Ibidem*, p. 49. Carl Schmitt put this point rather aptly, noting that 'liberal concepts typically move between ethics and economics…from that polarity they attempt to annihilate the political as a domain of conquering power and repression'. see C. Mouffe, *op. cit*. p. 49.

In our discussion so far, we have emphasized the relevance of debates around questions of naming, framing and representation, and this has led us back into the centralising theme of power and politics, within which our thoughts on injustice, democracy and the imperial need to be further explored.

## Popular Self-Determination in the Shadow of Imperial Power

This underscoring of the importance of conflict, power and resistance can lead us into an extended examination of the clash between the quest for international justice[59] and the oppressive effects of the imperiality of power. Expressed more specifically we can suggest that there continues to be a conflicted relation between the struggle for popular self-determination and the imperial geopolitics of interventionism.

Let us begin with a few clarifying questions. First, how do we define popular self-determination when it has been suggested that self-determination is one of the most important and obscure concepts in international law and political theory? For instance, does self-determination refer to the self-government of a particular socio-political group by this group or are we referring to a new government emerging out of a colonial situation? Without any doubt colonial rule was a clear transgression of the principle of self-determination, but at the beginning of the twentieth century the dominant Western view was quite different. Under the influence of writers such as J. S. Mill it was widely believed that colonialism was justified by its beneficial effects on subject peoples; hence, for example, at the end of the 1870's, British Prime Minister

59 For a comprehensive, albeit a little dated, review of theories of international justice see, for example, C. Brown, 'Review Article: Theories of International Justice', *British Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. 27, 1997, pp. 273-297.

Benjamin Disraeli defended the military suppression of colonized peoples because only British rule could provide 'order and justice' which were advantageous elements for any political community [60].

Taking a position that was a little more critical, Hobson[61], in his introduction to the 1938 edition of his influential *Imperialism: a Study*, stressed the causative factors of territorial expansion, the control over backward peoples, the mission of civilisation and the safe-guarding of existing colonial possessions. He went on to identify two principles; first, that 'all interference on the part of civilized white nations with "lower races" is not prima facie illegitimate, and second, that such interference cannot be safely let to private enterprise of individual whites'[62]. If these two principles are put into practice, it follows, Hobson continues, that 'civilized Governments *may* undertake the political and economic control of lower races' (emphasis in the original) - in a word, that the characteristic form of modern Imperialism is not under all conditions illegitimate. Hobson then asks the question, what are the conditions which render imperialism legitimate? Three conditions are postulated.

First, any interference with the government of a so-called lower race must primarily be directed at securing the safety and progress of the civilization of the world, or 'the good of humanity', and not the special interest of the interfering nation.

60 C. R. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 99. In 1859, set in a context of the Crimean War, the Indian mutiny and the construction of the Suez Canal, the liberal philosopher J. S. Mill published an essay entitled 'A Few Words on Non-intervention'. As a supporter of imperialism, he believed in the 'civilising' mission of the British empire, but he set limits on when a state should intervene in the internal affairs of another. For a detailed and insightful analysis of J. S. Mill's mutating perspective on colonies, see D. Bell, 'John Stuart Mill on Colonies', *Political Theory*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2010, pp. 34-64.

61 J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism, a study*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1988.

62 *Ibidem*, p. 232.

Second, such interference must go together with an improvement and elevation of the character of the people, who are brought under this control.

Lastly, the determination of these two preceding conditions must not be left to the arbitrary will or judgement of the interfering nation, but must flow from an organised representation of civilized humanity.

Hobson's deployment of the term 'lower races' reminds us of Quijano's critical concept of the 'coloniality of power', which intertwined raciality with coloniality; and it was clearly the case that support for colonialism went together with a paternalistic and racist stance on non-Western peoples[63]. However, from the end of the Second World War the power of colonialism began to wither away, and national liberation movements put onto the agenda the issue of independence, or what Ribeiro[64] calls the 'nationality of power', and popular self-determination. Nevertheless, as Prashad[65], reminds us, 'created by a wave of struggle, the new nations neither reorganized social relations effectively nor disrupted the colonial –type state structure bequeathed to it'. In addition, when popular self-determination is linked to the struggle against imperial power, it is necessary to avoid any implicit eulogization of such a struggle, and keep in focus the point so cogently made by David Scott[66], namely that in the tran-

63 A.R. Wallace, the co-discoverer of the theory of evolution, also used the term 'lower races', and commented that 'when Europeans with their greater energy took over the land, the lower races could only be saved if they were swiftly civilized. But civilization could be acquired only slowly. So the disappearance of the lower races was only a question of time'. See S. Lindqvist, '*Exterminate All the Brutes*', London, Granta Books, 1998, p. 132.

64 G. L. Ribeiro, 'Why (post) colonialism and (de)coloniality are not enough: a post-imperialist perspective', *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2011, pp. 285-297.

65 V. Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*, New York and London, The New Press, 2007, p. 203.

66 D. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, Durham and London, Duke University, 2005.

sition from colonial rule to post-coloniality, tragedy might well be a more appropriate narrative than romance[67].

As has been already noted, and without wanting to sound banal, it is self-evident that the colonial and the self-determining are completely incompatible. Moreover, when we move to the core meaning of the imperial, the connecting, controlling and conflicting lines with the self-determining still remain in place, but they are not as prominent and visible as with the colonial encounter. At the same time, it is important to remember that the tensions, and antagonisms between the imperial and the self-determining are still with us, as for example, the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq clearly testify. In this context, self-determination, democracy and justice are linked together and fundamentally independent of the invasiveness of imperial power[68].

However when the specificities of the United States, and in particular its power in the world, are examined, the straightforward idea that the US is unremittingly against self-determination, fully opposed to the realities of independence for the nations of the world, is not totally correct. Expressed differently, whilst the United States has developed as an imperial power that confronts the articulation of other independent positions, (for example, in relation to the diffusion of the 'pink tide' in Latin American countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador), nevertheless the United States, as an intrinsic part of its post-coloniality, has continued to claim self-determination as a

67 Elements of both tragedy and romance were present in the journey to independence, but it is certainly the case that, as Scott argues, perhaps too much emphasis has fallen on the romantic side of the struggle against colonialism. For a thoughtful overview of these processes see, for example, V. Prashad, *op. cit*.

68 For a useful discussion of the links between democracy and self-determination see, for example, J. M. Ruiz Soroa, 'Democracia y Autodeterminación', *Claves*, December 2010, No. 208, pp. 4-12.

specifically American idea[69]. This contradictory juxtaposition, or clash of conflicting identities, emerged as a result of the defeat of British colonialism on the North American continent which, in turn, was followed during the nineteenth century by the US' expansion and development of imperial power.

What this means is that the US is the only Western nation that can be characterised as a 'post-colonial imperial power'. By declaring its independence from Britain, the US became a post-colonial society, and this has given it a lineage which has influenced the formulation of its foreign policy and the overall representation of itself in and to the world. Hence, when the US has intervened in another country, or threatened to intervene, a discursive separation has been made between the governors and the governed or between the government and the people; in other words, the United States has assumed the mantle of protecting the people of another country, as in the Cuban case with the Helms-Burton Act of 1996[70]. This is clear evidence that the imperial state has a history of aiming at the appropriation of the political sovereignty of peripheral and more vulnerable societies.

More recently, in a widely circulated speech given in 2011, President Obama reminded Americans that 'we must remember that what sets America apart is not solely our power, it is the principles upon which our Union was founded … We stand not for empire, but for self-determination ... (t)hat is why we have a stake in the democratic aspirations that are now washing across the Arab world' (quoted in Simpson[71]. In this passage, Obama connects with a

69 As Simpson reminds us, 'self-determination occupies an uneasy place in the history of US foreign relations', within which it was envisaged as both principle and peril. See B. Simpson., 'Bernath Lecture: The United States and the Curious History of Self-Determination', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 36, No. 4, September 2012, p. 675.

70 For an original treatment of US–Cuban relations, see, for example, L. A. Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 2008.

71 B. Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 693.

long US tradition of representing itself as a guardian of democratic virtue and a steward of the self-determination of the world's peoples. In this text, one has a connection with the discourse of exceptionalism and the claim that America's special destiny permits it to pursue policies aimed at democratising dictatorships because its own existence is worthy of special measures – a rationale not permitted to other nations. There is also here a presumption of innocence, or as Barber[72] puts it 'the myth of innocence protects America … from the onerous burdens of historical responsibility for war or anarchy or injustice or conquest.' This myth of innocence is deeply rooted in US geopolitical history, going together with an oft-negative representation of other societies[73].

What we can add at this juncture is the observation that whilst the narrative of US foreign policy has been detrimentally affected by its unreal adherence to a pervasive image of benevolent innocence, nonetheless there are certain breaks in the cloud wherein specific defence intellectuals or government leaders have expressed views that go against the current. One example springs to mind; in his 1995 book on the Vietnam war, entitled *In Retrospect*, the ex-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara identified a number of reasons for the disaster of Vietnam. The first four causes, which Cooper[74] highlights, are revealing. They are as follows: a) we exaggerated the dangers to the US of Vietnamese actions and we misjudged their geopolitical intentions; b) we viewed the peo-

72 B. R. Barber, *Fear's Empire: war, terrorism and democracy*, New York and London, W.W. Norton & Company Ltd, 2004, p. 81.

73 Jabri, in discussing issues of representation, acutely points out that in the context of Middle East politics the Arabs and Muslims are never the victims of a violence that stems from elsewhere, but always its perpetrators. She continues by stating 'the Middle East and South Asia are seen as the sources of instability and geopolitical danger, their populations 'volatile', and their politics variously feudal, tribal and tradition-bound…'. Thus the complexity of Middle East politics is stereotyped and essentialized. See V. Jabri, *The Postcolonial Subject: claiming politics/governing others in late modernity*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 136.

74 R. Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: order and chaos in the twenty-first century*, London, Atlantic Books, 2004, p. 93.

ple and leaders of South Vietnam in relation to our own experience; c) we underestimated the power of nationalism to motivate a people to fight and die for their beliefs and values, and d) our judgements of friend and foe alike reflected our profound ignorance of the history, culture and politics of the people in the territory where we were engaged.

These are points that go to the heart of the matter, revealing the depth of misunderstanding, misjudgement and prejudice that plagued the prosecution of America's war in Vietnam. But symptomatically the same mistakes have continued to be made; - the most powerful nation on earth does not seem to possess the analytical acumen or ethical humility to move the ground on which it stands. And why not?

This is where economic analysis, no matter how necessary, cannot provide, by itself, any satisfactory answer to this haunting question. It is a central theme for this third and last section of the paper, but in addition it can be suggested that it is one of the key issues for the paper as a whole. I would argue that neoliberal globalisation, or more generally the nature of the global times in which we live, cannot be understood without an investigative appreciation of the place of the United States in those global times. That also means that a grounded consideration of (in)justice , human rights and democracy can hardly be effective if it evades this kind of global contextualisation, within which the continuing imperial power of the United States remains at centre stage[75].

One of the key pillars of this power has been the desire, will, capacity and justification to intervene in the affairs of other countries. Not infrequently, this fact of intervention is interpreted in the setting of the Cold War, and the inten-

75 For a stimulating anthology on US geopolitics and globalization, the reader might consult J. L. Orozco, (coord.), *Hacia una Globalización Totalitaria?*, Mexico, Fontamara y UNAM, 2007 This work includes a series of chapters dealing with the US-Mexican context.

sified rivalry between the two Super-Powers after the end of the Second World War. What is missing in this kind of treatment is the realization that America's geopolitical interventionism is more historically rooted and takes us back to the dawn of the Republic.

Thus it can be noted, for example, that in the period from 1798 to 1895, the US made 103 interventions in a variety of countries – instances, ranging from Nicaragua to China, from Argentina to Japan and from Hawaai to Portuguese West Africa. The predominant aim was to protect American interests and lives[76]. These were embryonic military interventions coming before the perceived danger of the Bolshevik Revolution and the birth of communism, and they were followed in the twentieth century by a more sustained and globally spread series of interventions which have continued into the twenty-first century[77].

Behind these incursions and penetrations, as intimated in the first section of the paper, one encounters a picture of the United States as a 'global sovereign', arrogating to itself the power, whenever deemed necessary, to act above the law. Its continual blockade of Cuba since the early part of the 1960s; its rejection of the World Court jurisdiction over its attack in the mid-1980s on Nicaragua, or what was defined as the 'unlawful use of force'; in lay terms 'international terrorism'[78]; its more recent illegal invasion of Iraq and President Obama's extended and illegal use of drones for targeted assassinations in Afghanistan and Pakistan[79]. All these instances and more reflect a sovereign posture that ignores the norms of international law.

76 H. Zinn, *The People's History of the United States*, New York, Longman, 1996, pp. 290-291.

77 For a quite comprehensive overview of US global interventions at the end of the twentieth century see W. Blum, *Rogue State: a guide to the world's only superpower*, London, Zed Books, 2002, pp. 125-167.

78 N. Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's quest for global dominance*, London, Penguin Books, 2004, pp. 14-15.

79 Today, writes Singer, the US military has more than 7,000 unmanned aerial

To stand above the law in the context of global power has a history that takes us back into the nineteenth century, giving the theme a longevity that is often not appreciated. One of the features that emerged in the nineteenth century was a particular intermingling of expanding geopolitical power and a sense of destiny, a kind of global predestination that has been carried through into the twentieth century and beyond[80]. There is an urgent need to challenge this imperial supremacy and certainly if international justice is to be taken forward the projection of US power needs to be confronted. This is not to say that US power is the only barrier to the strengthening of international justice, but I would argue that it is certainly one of the most crucial limitations to the spread of international justice.

At this juncture, it seems appropriate to bring the discussion to a close with a signpost for further analysis. The above remarks can take us back to the early sections of the paper where some ideas were introduced concerning the imperiality of power[81].

As indicated at the outset, whilst imperialism might be defined as an invasive strategy that is developed within the political space of the state, and in this particular case within the imperial state of the United States, this does not mean that imperial ideas are only confined to this domain; rather they can be seen as being potentially sedimented in all the varying spheres of

systems, popularly called drones, with a further 12,000 more on the ground. In 2011 they carried out hundreds of strikes in six countries, transforming the way our democracy deliberates and engages in what we still think of as war. In one particular case –Pakistan– the United States has carried out more than 300 drone strikes since 2004. See Peter W. Singer 'Drone Strikes on Democracy', in *International Herald Tribune*, Jan. 21-22, 2012, p. 6.

80 For a detailed analysis of what has been called 'geopolitical predestination' see, for example, A. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, Chicago, Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1963.

81 For some further analysis of the imperial difference and the imperiality of power see, for example, D. Slater, 'Rethinking the Imperial Difference: towards an understanding of US-Latin American encounters', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2010, pp. 185-206.

Western society and economy. Here, imperiality can be treated as a composite term that infers the right, privilege and sentiment of being imperial or of defending ideas of Empire in which the geopolitical invasiveness of Western power is justified. Hence, Western societies such as the United States and Britain contain imperial discourses that are rooted in the history of their geopolitical relations, and one of the consequences of this is that an active strategy of imperialist expansion can be sustained through a direct appeal to a deeply sedimented sense of imperial privilege.

The extent to which imperial attitudes, sentiment, prejudice and projection become an intrinsic part of any society will depend on the battle for ideas or more concretely on wars over geopolitical meaning, which are characterised by struggles over what is remembered, and how, and what is consigned to oblivion and in what way[82]. Even more importantly, much will depend on the resilience and effectiveness of social movements, as well as on progressive governments in different parts of the world. The challenge is great and the time is limited.

82 There is a parallel here with Gill's notion of an 'imperial common sense' which he defines in a variety of ways, noting for example that 'imperial common sense assumes the maintenance of structures and practices of global inequality that permit the USA and its principal allies to consume the lion's share of global resources in ways that are often violent, unjust and unsustainable and associated with the intensified exploitation of human beings and nature'. See S. Gill, 'Towards a Radical Concept of Praxis: Imperial 'common sense' Versus the Post-modern Prince', *Millennium*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2012, pp. 506-507.

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In this article, some key aspects of international justice and its transgressions are examined in a world context characterised by acute geopolitical asymmetries of power. Three interwoven issues are analysed. First, justice and democracy are analysed in the context of Western interventions in the global south. Particular emphasis is given to the idea that Western terminations of democratic governments in the global south have been emblematic examples of geopolitical injustice and the violation of popular sovereignty. Second, it is pointed out that international injustice takes place in a setting inhabited by subjects or agents witch are impacted by a differential distribution of affected and moral responsiveness. This theme is considered in a context of the politics of framing and issues of representation. Third, the question of popular self-determination is examined in relation to the continuing presence of imperial power. It is argued that the relations of freedom and justice within a political community can only be established, defended and successfully developed by members of that community.

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David Slater is Emeritus Professor of Political Geography at Loughborough University, and Associate Fellow at the Institute for the Study of the Americas in the University of London. His research focuses on three interwoven themes: a) The Imperiality of Power and Geopolitical Memory; b) The Post-Colonial and Democratic Politics; and c) The Changing Face of Euro-Americanism. He has published 6 books and over 100 scientific articles and book chapters. Moreover, he has taught in Universities in Latin America, Europe and Asia.

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