Imagining Security in *The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom*

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How is ‘the global age’ imagined in UK national security strategy, and how does this imaginary perform the conditions for the violence of the war on terror? This article addresses this question in relation to the publication of the inaugural National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom (NSS) by the Labour government in March 2008, with an updated version in June 2009, and one specific imaginary: that of ‘broadened national security’. The article argues that while broadened national security is undoubtedly a cartography of danger which facilitates the project of western governments to secure liberal globalisation, it is foremost a performativity of intimacy between the violence of UK national security and daily life; whether you live in or outside the UK. I explicate this argument in three parts. First, I provide a critical geopolitical account of national security which focuses on its function as an imaginative ontology of contemporary (political) life. Second, I explore how a ‘critical geographical imagination’ can help conceptualise the ways in which cartographies of fear and danger perform the constitutive (and destructive) effects of the NSS. Third, I apply this critical geographical imagination to broadened national security to demonstrate how the NSS exacts a terrible human cost as the UK government attempts to remake the world through this violent cartography.

**Introduction – Challenging The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom**

How is ‘the global age’ imagined in UK national security strategy, and how does this imaginary perform the conditions for the violence of the war on terror? This article addresses this question in relation to the publication of the inaugural *National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom* (NSS) by the Labour government in March 2008, with an updated version in June 2009. Unlike in the UK, the terms ‘national security’ and ‘national security strategy’ are familiar to American security discourse: from the creation of a national security apparatus following the end of the second world war (see Neocleous, 2008), to President George W. Bush’s publication of *The National Security Strategy for the United of States of America* in September 2002 and March 2006. How then should we read the publication of a National Security Strategy for the UK in 2008 and 2009, when it has traditionally focused on defence policy? (see Cornish and Dorman, 2009; Hopkinson, 2000). And the intention of the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in Westminster to follow this precedent with a new NSS in Autumn 2010, not to mention a new National Security Council and National Security Secretariat set up in May 2010 in the Cabinet Office, led by a new National Security Adviser Sir Peter Ricketts? Do these events indicate a cold war-esque national security redux, as has been argued in the U.S. context? (Gaddis, 2002). Or rather the increasing securitisation of everyday life in the era of a war on terror? (Collier and Lakoff, 2008; Sorkin, 2008). Or is this nascent national security era in UK policy simply a necessary policy recalibration by government to meet “the broader demands of the global age”? (NSS 2009: 5).

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1 These are successors to the Cabinet Committee on National Security, set up by the Labour government in 2007;
My aim in this article is to historicise and critique contemporary imaginaries of national security by applying a “critical geopolitical imagination” (Gregory and Pred, 2007: 1) to one in particular: the NSS’s so-called “broader understanding of national security” (2009: 14). In the first part of the article ‘Imagining Security’, I provide a critical geopolitical account of national security which focuses on its function as an imaginative ontology of contemporary (political) life. My aim is to offer an alternative to the rationalist approaches which dominate existing literature on the NSS, by moving beyond debates over whether it is “genuine strategy” or just “bland aspirational statements” (Gow, 2009: 126); representing what Campbell terms epistemic realism, “whereby the world comprises objects whose existence is independent of ideas or beliefs about them” (1998: 4). In the second part ‘The Performativity of Security in the War on Terror’, I explore how a ‘critical geographical imagination’ can help conceptualise the ways in which cartographies of fear and danger perform the constitutive (and destructive effects) of the NSS. My aim is to historicise the publication of the UK’s first National Security Strategy, as well as to answer two questions which are frequently asked about security in the war on terror. First, why is security so important (now)? And second, how can the war on terror secure our freedom – which, its protagonists claim, is its objective - if its practise undermines freedom in unprecedented ways? Finally, in ‘The Violent Cartography of Broadened National Security’, I apply a critical geographical imagination to the NSS’s broadened national security to demonstrate how, through its attempts to secure liberal globalisation and the accompanying geopolitical abstractions, it exacts a terrible human cost as the UK government attempts to remake the world through this violent cartography.

Imagining Security

In Politics of Security, Dillon provocatively claims that “modern politics is a security project” because the very terms we use to think about and articulate contemporary (political) life are themselves constituted and bounded by the “endless security imperative” of metaphysics (1996: 12, 19). “Metaphysics”, he claims, “is the masque of mastery; securing some foundation upon which to establish the sum total of what is knowable with certainty, and conforming one’s everyday conduct – public and private – to the foundation so secured” (1996: 20). Contemporary politics was therefore “destined” to be a security project, so rather than debate the extent to which we can appropriate “security's true meaning”, Dillon urges us to focus instead on problematising its truths and how they produce the “architecture of modern political power” (1996: 13, 16). In other words, a critique of security must begin with genealogy: “security, the genealogist would insist, is not a fact of nature but a fact of civilisation. It is not a noun that names something, it is a principle of formation that does things” (Dillon, 1996: 16, my emphasis). Furthermore, the genealogist of security wouldn’t ask “what a people is” (or alternatively what national security strategy does, and how well it does it), but instead “how an order of fear forms a people” (Dillon, 1996: 16). In particular, “bearing the imprint of the way
determinations of what is political have originated in fear, s/he would emphasise that security is a principal device for constituting political order and confining political imagination” (Dillon, 1996: 16, my emphasis).

This genealogical approach turns on its head so much of what is believed about the role of security in contemporary (political) life. Mainly, it directs our attention to the formative relationship between the ‘security imperative’, discourses of fear and danger, and imaginaries of political order; so that the latter must be understood as extending far beyond the traditional objects of foreign, defence, and national security policy. In this way, Dillon characterises security “as a kind of floating and radically inter-textual signifier” which defines the “technologically inspired discourses of Modernity”:

... state security; national security; political security; global security; regional security; territorial security; economic security; financial security; individual security; collective security; personal security; physical security; psychological security; sexual security; social security; environmental security; food security... (1996: 16).

Campbell (1998) similarly leads with a genealogical critique to explore how the nation-state is performed by discourses of (in)security, particularly those of foreign policy and national security strategy. In his analysis, the state’s attainment of a coherent and stable national identity “can be understood as the outcome of exclusionary practices in which resistance elements to a secure identity on the “inside” are linked through a discourse of “danger” with threats identified and located on the “outside”” (12). This is precisely the political performance at work when the NSS links diaspora communities “resident here” to “Al Qa’ida inspired ideology” and other “regionally based ideologies” in “the countries and regions from which they come” (2009: 38, 40-41). As it none-too-delicately claims, the UK “may be particularly exposed to the risk” of overseas conflicts or grievances being played out within its borders because “we are a very open and diverse society with numerous diaspora communities” (77).

It is through this externalising of danger that the bombings of the London transport system on 7 July, 2005 and the attempted bombings at Glasgow International Airport and in central London three weeks later, have so successfully been explained by the bombers’ relationship to ‘Al Qa’ida inspired ideology’, vis-a-vis their status as diaspora community. This is why Cynthia Weber (2006) in a critique of Werenotafraid.com’s attempt to promote an ‘imaginary of British unity’ and fearlessness after the bombings, argues that the website ultimately failed. It failed because it was unable to reconcile its message of rational and cosmopolitan British fearlessness of terrorist violence with the fact that the bombers were British nationals, and that the British security services unlawfully killed the Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes in the name of maintaining an environment of fearlessness which British Muslims felt did not extend to them. For Campbell, however, national security strategy is a performativity of danger with the primary objective of (re)defining and (re)producing the state as a spatially and morally bounded political community, for the “state does not pre-exist those performances” (Bialasiewicz et al., 2007: 407). Furthermore, Campbell argues that “should the state project of security be successful in the terms in which it is articulated, the state would cease to exist”;

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so that “the inability of the state project of security to succeed is the guarantor of the state’s continued success as an impelling identity” (1998: 12). Thus it is of no consequence that globalisation contradicts the attempts both of Werenoafraid.com to capture a ‘panhuman British unity’, and the NSS to “construct simple imaginative geographies of national communities who are purportedly under threat from externalised, terroristic people and places” (Bialasiewicz et al., 2007: 418). The survival of the nation-state as a viable entity hinges upon the performances of national security strategy to “discipline and contain the ambiguity and contingency of the “domestic” realm” by “the externalization and totalization of threats to that realm through discourses of danger” (Campbell, 1998: 64); and these performances are nothing if not tenacious. 

So far I have provided a critical geopolitical account of security which emphasises its function as an imaginative ontology of contemporary (political) life, and demonstrates how the nation-state relies on discourses of (in)security to discipline “man in th[is] spatial and temporal organization of the inside and outside, self and other” (Campbell, 1998: 62). Dalby (2010: 50) traces the origins of this critical geopolitical framework and its challenge to “the taken-for-granted mappings” of international politics and traditional realist security studies, back to Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978/2003). In this seminal work, Said introduces the concept of the “imaginative geography” to argue that the ways in which the ‘Orient’ is known as something ‘other’ depends on how an imagined ‘we’ (that is, the British, French and latterly Americans) position ourselves in a particular temporal, spatial, and moral order. “For there is no doubt”, he says, “that imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own self of itself by dramatizing the distance between what is close by and what is far away” (55). Borrowing heavily from Foucault’s notion of discourse, and much like Dillon’s and Campbell’s treatment of security, Said positions Orientalism as a constructed historical, geographical, and cultural entity which he is careful to invest with a Foucauldian emphasis on discourse as a domain of power relationships. So whilst for Gow (2009: 128) national security strategy is simply “the relationship of means to ends”; for Said, the Orient is a discourse and discourse is strategy: “The Orient was Orientalized... because it could be – that is, submitted to being – made Oriental” (1978/2003: 6). Strategy therefore requires submission and the constant and enduring “positional superiority” of the Westerner (8).

Mike Shapiro’s concept of the ‘violent cartography’ applies the performative ontology of the geographical imagination to directly refuse the “dominant strategically oriented treatment of war”; which he argues “provides a rational for violence rather than for respectful encounters” (1997: ix, 7). In particular, and akin to Campbell’s analysis, he concerns himself with an examination of “the ways that enmity-related global geographies and ethnoscapes emerge as collectivities try to achieve, stabilize, and reproduce their unity and coherence” (xi). In Shapiro’s formulation, enmity is not expressed through already existing geographical containers, such as the state or the global (articulated in the NSS by terms like “state-led threat” or “global security challenges”, 2009: 10, 25). Rather, imaginative geographies are part of the constitution of those enmities expressed through war. Along with “various ethnographic imaginaries”, geography is “a fantasy structure” which is implicated in how “territorially elaborated collectivities... practice the meanings of self and Other that provide the conditions of possibility for regarding others as threats or antagonists” (1997: xi). Like Dillon and Campbell then, Shapiro’s violent cartography employs a genealogical critique of security to the extent
that it historicises violence and war by drawing attention to the “radical contingency” of their enabling discourses – especially that of the secure nation/state.

The Performativity of Security in the War on Terror

Whilst Graham (2008) argues that ‘Orientalism’ has lost none of its relevance to understanding the geopolitical discourses of the war on terror, perhaps most notably demonstrated in Derek Gregory’s The Colonial Present (2004), Said’s sensitivity to the ways in which imaginative knowledges of time and space produce violent divisions has proved equally resilient. Gregory and Pred (2007: 1-2) promote the concept of a “critical geographical imagination” as a means to “illuminate the spaces through which terror, fear, and political violence are abroad in the world” (see also Graham, 2004; Ingram and Dodds, 2009). This ‘critical geographical imagination’ works not only by identifying “cartographies of fear”, but by “show[ing] how these representations are never merely mirrors held up to somehow reflect or represent the world but instead enter directly into its constitution (and destruction)” (2007: 2, my emphasis). It is therefore the ways in which ‘cartographies of fear’ can be conceptualised as performing the constitutive and destructive effects of UK national security strategy that principally interest me in this section.

In their analysis of how the imaginative geography of “integration” in contemporary US national security strategy renders a world of danger and insecurity that requires military force from the US and its European allies, Bialasiewicz et al. argue that performativity rather than construction is “the better theoretical assumption” for understanding how the divisive and divise practices of integration are ‘brought to life’ (2007: 406). In this argument they principally draw upon Judith Butler’s work, which they claim has two main strengths. First, it foregrounds “the politics of agency” by refuting the idea of pre-given autonomous subjectivity, and instead emphasising “a more embodied way of rethinking the relationships between determining social structures and personal agency” (Nash, 2000, cited in Bialasiewicz et al., 2007: 407). This ‘more embodied’ understanding supplants the linguistic relativity of which post-structuralist approaches are frequently accused, “without resorting to non-representational theory’s tendency to... emphasize[re] lived practice over and above images and texts” (Ibid). Second, performativity can help account for change over time because it relies on “the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (Butler, 1993, cited in Bialasiewicz et al., 2007: 407, my emphasis). This idea of reiterative and citational practice is particularly important to Bialasiewicz et al. as “the performative infrastructure through which certain ontological effects are established and through which certain performances are made possible and can be understood” (2007: 410). Thus, it is through reiteration and recitation that imaginative knowledges ‘specify the ways ‘the world is’ and, in so doing, actively (re)make that same world’ (411). In this sense, it is not difficult to see how the constant performativity of a world that is dangerous, unpredictable, and fragmented provokes a response (from those in a position to act) which seeks to soothe, neutralise, and unite.

Following Bialasiewicz et al.’s argument, I can look at UK defence policy which even before the first UK national security strategy was published in 2008 was drawing forth a new world in which
established approaches would not suffice. In Labour’s 1998 Strategic Defence Review (SDR) Defence Minister George Robertson discussed “the challenges of the 21st century”, and “a changing world, in which the confrontation of the Cold War has been replaced by a complex mixture of uncertainty and instability” (Ministry of Defence, 1998: 4) (see Cornish and Dorman, 2009). Indeed, this heralding of ‘a changing world’ seems to have been borne out by the events three years later. In ‘A New Chapter’ added to the SDR in July 2002, the new Defence Minister Geoff Hoon conveyed the Government’s shock at “a day we will never forget” (Ministry of Defence, 2002: 4). The New Chapter responded to the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington DC specifically in terms of “the potential they demonstrated for the use of our adversaries of assymetric action to achieve strategic effect”, and warns that it “is by no means the end of the story... there are no doubt more twists and turns to come to which we must be ready to respond” (Ministry of Defence, 2002: 4-5). The New Chapter was thus swiftly followed by the 2003 Defence White Paper, which reiterates the by now habitual theme of change and complexity. It is titled ‘Delivering Security in a Changing World’, and references, for example, “the changing security environment”, and “a less predictable and more complex operational environment” (Ministry of Defence, 2003: 1).

The 2002 New Chapter’s description of ‘post-9/11’ security strategy, however, means that it functions as something more than a simple filler between the SDR and the Defence White Paper. It sets forth the government’s ridiculously naive intention to “eliminate terrorism as a force in international affairs” (2002: 4) – and this despite their acknowledgement that terrorists achieve ‘strategic effect’ precisely because their particular brand of ‘assymmetric action’ evades those same practices of the national security state which it would seek to use against them. Perhaps that is why the New Chapter announces that the government’s response “involv[es] political, diplomatic, humanitarian, economic, financial, intelligence and law enforcement, as well as military measures” (2002: 4, my emphasis). Furthermore, it claims that the government has “worked closely with a wide range of other countries and international organisations, as part of the overall international response” (Ibid). It is this range of measures – some publicly vaunted and others, like extraordinary rendition, not – which I argue can be understood as a prototype of the ‘broadened view’ of national security which would emerge in the first UK NSS six years later, after a process of institutional gestation that was no doubt influenced by President George W. Bush’s own National Security Strategy of the United States of America published in 2002 and 2006 (for critical and ‘traditional’ analysis see Der Derian, 2003; Gaddis, 2002; and Steinberg, 2005). Thus, the reiteration and recitation by which imaginaries of security in the nineties and noughties specified a changed world requiring a new (eventually broadened) approach can be understood as working across spatial as well as temporal lines.

But just as imaginaries of security, and their reiteration, perform the conditions of possibility for national security strategy, so too can this performativity malfunction – if only temporarily. Using the framework of the Kantian sublime, Weber explains how the events of July 2005 caused a “rupture” in

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2It is worth pointing out here that although the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 mandated the US executive to ‘formulate and communicate concrete mid- and long-term national security strategy’, Gaddis (2002) claims that the administrations of George Bush Snr. and Bill Clinton showed little commitment, both turning in reports late and incomplete. This attitude continued into the administration of George W. Bush, which missed the 15 June 2001 deadline for its first report, but the attacks in September obviously changed the official attitude to national security strategy;
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“the imagination of British security”; and when it transpired that the bombers were in fact British nationals, this rupture became a “breakdown in the imagination of British security and of British unity” (2006: 688, my emphasis). In the midst of this breakdown, Weber closely follows the attempts of Werenotafraid.com to restore order and closure, or in Kantian terminology to perform a “defensive” or “higher recuperation” of that which is lost during rupture; in this case, “life as it was before – a life of work, play, laughter and freedom” (2006: 685). Werenotafraid.com did this by acting as a forum for members of the public to post photographic performances of ‘fearlessness’, such as people using the London tube and bus network. In the name of unity, the website also promoted a cosmopolitan, globalised, and enlightened version of fearlessness, lauding the supportive posts it received from North America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. This was an attempt, Weber feels, to “imagine a British homefront that stands as a counter-image to the one the US homefront has ideologically and aesthetically configured during the Bush administration’s war on terror, as a homefront of the fearful” (698). Ultimately, however, Weber assesses that Werenotafraid.com fails on both counts. The fatal shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes on the underground on 22 July – ironically whilst heeding the ‘we’re not afraid’ message and going about his everyday life - and the fear of British muslims about retaliatory attacks, demonstrates the violence as well as the tenacity of the performativity of national security.

By outlining in this article, first, the imaginative ontology of security, and second, how imaginaries of security perform the conditions of national security strategy through constant reiteration, recitation and resignification, I want to offer an answer to the question which has frequently been asked during the war on terror – namely, why is security so important (now)? Why, more broadly, is “the contemporary social and political imagination... dominated by the lexicon of security and the related idea that we are living in an increasingly insecure world”? (Neocleous, 2008: 2). First, I would problematise (which is not the same as disagreeing with) the notion that the war on terror ushered in an ‘increasingly insecure world’. This can begin with Stuart Elden’s questioning of the September 11 attacks as the starting point of the war on terror. He points, for example, to the cruise missile attacks of Operation Infinite Reach, launched by the US in August 1998 against camps in Afghanistan and a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan in response to the bombing of its embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar as-Salaam, Tanzania (2009: xii). Can this not be considered as the beginning of a war on international terrorism? Or even US support for Israel; the 1991 Iraq War; the “intervention and ignominious withdrawal from Somalia in 1993”, and so on? (xiii). Likewise, while acceding the importance of the September 11 attacks both as “a visible event” and “in terms of sheer loss of life... [which was] greater than any single terrorist act that preceded them”, Elden warns that such “tallies” put “accountancy in place of grief” (Ibid). And grief is an awkwardly revealing part of this politics of events, for where is the grief for the children more than twice as many of whom died on September 11, 2001 from diarrhea as in the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC? (Elden, 2009: xiii). “Let us not forget” that the events of September 11 and those which followed “are a political, spatial, and temporal marker”, which we are wholly complicit in constructing (Ibid).

If the significance we attach to September 11 is partly a performativity of grief (see Edkins, 2008, and Zehfuss, 2003, on official attempts to discipline public responses to terrorist attacks through
rituals of memory and grief), it follows that the war on terror must itself be understood as a *performativity of security*. As a result there are ethical reasons, as well as philosophical reasons (see discussion above on Dillon, 1996), why any approach which considers security as “some kind of universal or transcendental value” must be rejected (Neocleous, 2008: 2). This is not to say that the kind of security festishised in critical security studies is not noble; but like love and war, it serves better to focus on what it *is*, rather than what *should or could* be in the rarefield air of universal, transcendental history. For Neocleous, then, security must be approached as “a mode of governing, a political technology”, particularly a technique of “liberal order-building” (4-5); what Foucault has elsewhere called ‘biopower’³. Accordingly, security “produc[es] and organis[es] subjects in a way that is always already predisposed towards the exercise of violence in defence of the established [liberal] order” (Neocleous, 2008: 5).

Neocleous’ critique of security comes closest to Foucault’s objective in the *Security, Territory, Population* lectures when he asks “whether the general economy of power in our societies is becoming a domain of security?” (2004/07: 10). By this Foucault is not incredulous as to the extent of our repression by security – which is the indignation most often lying behind the question ‘why is security so important (now)?’ when security is conceived of as an external force operating with increasing pressure inside - but rather he is trying to bring to our attention to the ways in which ‘our societies’ are ontologically imagined and ordered according to a metaphysical, already-political security imperative. Therefore, asking why security has assumed a high profile in the war on terror or in the Cold War before that (and so on), is not quite the right question. Rather we should be focusing on the performativity of security by which national security strategy is able to marshall and expend all its violent resources.

If (national) security is, then, a “performatve infrastucture through which certain ontological effects are established” (Bialasiewicz et al., 2007: 410), and first and foremost the ordering of our contemporary liberal societies, then the question of ‘security or liberty?’ – which is the supplement to the original question of ‘why is security so important (now)?’ – must be answered in a way that foregrounds, similarly, the performativity of freedom. The fact, then, that during the war on terror the government has posed the ‘security or liberty?’ question to itself should immediately ring alarm bells. NSS 2008 makes explicit that “our single overarching national security objective [is] of protecting the United Kingdom and its interests, enabling its people to go about their lives freely and with confidence, in a more secure, stable, just and prosperous world” (2008: 5, my emphasis). Likewise, NSS 2009 claims that “our approach to national security must be proportionate and consistent with the cherished values of liberty in a free society governed by the rule of law” (2009: 112, my emphasis). Following the argument I’ve made so far, neither the incumbent government, nor the state, nor national security strategy can ‘protect liberty’ (30) because they are all the “architectonic political discourses of modernity” which Dillon claims, are predicated upon the security imperative (1996: 13). Furthermore, the UK government through documents like the NSS reiterates and

³ In *The Birth of Biopolitics* Foucault comments: “it seems to me that it is only when we understand what is at stake in this regime of liberalism... only when we know what this governmental regime called liberalism was, will we be able to grasp what biopolitics is” (2004/08: 22);
reinforces the validity of violent national security practices which fundamentally contradict even its own ‘cherished values’.

**The Violent Cartography of Broadened National Security**

In a statement to the House of Commons in March 2008, Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown set out the reasoning behind the publication of the inaugural *National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom*. He argued that “the nature of the threats and risks we face have - in recent decades - changed beyond all recognition”; therefore “as the new strategy makes clear, new threats demand new approaches.”

The NSS provided further insight into the emergence of these ‘new’ circumstances: “since the end of the Cold War, the international landscape has been transformed. The opposition between two power blocs has been replaced by a more complex and unpredictable set of relationships”; in particular, those resulting from the opening up of global markets and the technological communications revolution (2008: 3, my emphasis). This ‘transformed’ international landscape is mirrored in an “increasingly complex and unpredictable... security landscape”, in which “the Cold War threat has been replaced by a diverse but interconnected set of threats and risks” (Ibid). The NSS thus reiterates the imaginary of a fundamentally reconfigured security landscape which circulated throughout UK defence policy in the nineties and noughties; but importantly it also develops these earlier strategic statements by recalibrating the focus of national security:

In the past... national security was understood as dealing with the protection of the state and its vital interests from attacks by other states. Over recent decades, *our view of national security has broadened* to include threats to individual citizens and to our way of life, as well as to the interests and integrity of the state (2008: 3-4).

In this final section I demonstrate how ‘broadened national security’ with its emphasis on protecting ‘individual citizens’ and ‘our way of life’ narrows the distance between the violence of national security and quotidian experience.

NSS 2009 moves beyond NSS 2008’s primary objective “to safeguard the nation, its citizens, our prosperity and our way of life” (2008: 3), to announce that “the Government has a wider vision to create a strong, fair, prosperous and secure society, in which everyone has the opportunity to live their lives and make the most of their abilities, with fair chances for all, and governed by fair rules” (2009: 27, my emphasis). Furthermore, “this wider vision embraces a world based on cooperation between people and nations, with collective responsibility taken for collective problems” (Ibid). In this way, broadened national security works hard to perform the desirability of prosperity and security for ‘everyone’, for ‘all’, for society, which in an “increasingly globalised world” can only be guaranteed by “international stability” (106). The ways in which some western governments have used national security strategy to impose their economic agendas – or in the case of the NSS, its ‘stability = prosperity’ agenda - have been the focus of a number of critiques. Larner (2008), for example, challenges the widespread understanding that economic globalisation and national security are

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paradoxical\textsuperscript{5}; pointing to the fact that despite predictions that economic globalisation would recede after the September 11 attacks because of increased border security and surveillance, “after a brief hiatus, global flows of goods, services and people have continued unabated” (42). This is because, she argues, economic globalisation and the war on terror are “premised on the same political-economic imaginary”: they are both a performativity of global governance “premised on openness and mobility rather than on boundedness and territoriality” (Larner, 2008: 45).

Dalby (2007) focuses on the violence of this performativity of global governance in his critique of the geoeconomic trope of ‘connectivity’, promoted in Tom Barnett’s (2004) much-maligned The Pentagon’s New Map. In Barnett’s cartography “connectivity is the key” because it is the dividing line between a “Last Man”, connected to the “globalized core” and therefore “healthy, well fed and pampered by technology”, and a “Hobbesian First Man” from the “non–integrated gap”, who is “mired in poverty and violence” (Dalby, 2007: 296). Barnett claims that “in this century, it is disconnectedness that defines danger” by allowing “bad actors to flourish” and “keeping entire societies detached from the global community [read global economy]” (Barnett, 2004, cited in Bialasiewicz et al., 2007: 413).

In this way, Dalby argues that Barnett’s New Map “explicitly tries to render the world into a cartography of safety and danger”, in which it “becomes the defining security task of our age” to “eradicate disconnectedness” using the “tool” of pre-emptive war. Dalby’s critique therefore positions ‘connectivity’ as a hyperbolicised, hyper-violent version of the shared political-economic imaginary of ‘openness and mobility’ identified by Larner (2008), but it also moves much closer to the claims of a number of scholars that the war on terror does not so much ‘share’ the political-economic imaginary of globalisation, as this political-economic imaginary performs the war on terror. Ingram and Dodds (2009: 2) for example claim that the war on terror is “linked into a much wider project: the goal of securing not just specific homelands but liberal globalization itself”. Likewise Elden (2009: xix) returns to Giovanni Arrighi’s arguments in The Geometry of Imperialism (1978), that the United States “freed itself from the shackles of formal imperialism... in order to exercise its hegemony through market forces”. “Yet”, Elden continues, “the “war on terror” has demonstrated that military force may be needed to shore up the financial hegemony” (2009: xix).

The project of securing liberal globalisation through national security strategy also relies on the prolific recitation of terms of geopolitical abstraction. Dalby explains how following the September 11 attacks, “the ensuing political crisis was resolved by invoking categories of warfare”; in particular, the need for ‘global war’ to meet “the apparent violation of the sanctity of the metropolitan center by terrorists, who had penetrated from the peripheral areas” (2007: 295). This “new language of the “global war on terror”” (Ibid) - what Dalby elsewhere calls “a global war script” (2010: 54) - recasts the entire globe as a source of threat: a global cartography of danger. The problem with cartographies of danger, however, “as with the dangers of all geopolitical categories is precisely that they include too much and simplify the complex mess of human geographies into abstract human entities” (303). Or to put it another way, “geopolitical abstraction given the “objectivity” of cartography renders people and

\textsuperscript{5}This paradoxical attitude features in the NSS when it talks about the ‘challenges’ of globalsation while at the same time trying to promote its many ‘opportunities’;

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places ready for military action” (Ibid)⁶. The violent potential of global cartographies can also be discerned in Larner’s analysis of the importance of the ‘network’ – “the metaphor of the current global movement” - to economic globalisation, and thus to the war on terror (2008: 49). The emphasis accorded to free market deregulated networks vis-a-vis the “dominant nation-state geographic imaginary” (Shapiro, 1997: ix), and the difficulty of regulating the former’s flows and mobilities with traditional statist methods, has led, Larner argues, to the emergence of “calculative regimes” which bring together benchmarking and best practice standards, with risk evaluation and expert knowledge into “an assemblage that makes it possible to put objects and subjects into the same space even though they may be geographically dispersed” (2008: 50, emphasis added). These not only make “objects and subjects visible in particular forms”, but the ‘calculations’ on which they are based “embody particular conceptions of how these objects and subjects should be governed” (Ibid). When used in the war on terror to manage global flows and mobilities in the name of security, these calculative regimes act to “visibilize” terrorism as a global problem, which in turn intensifies the so-called ‘problem of mobility’ – another trope from the globalisation imaginary - in which the movement of particular population groups becomes a security issue by virtue of their ethnic, national, religious or political origins and/or affiliations (51, 53) (see also Amoore, 2006). Therefore those whom Larner terms the “irreal subjects” of the globalisation imaginary - in an attempt to highlight the imaginative rendering of this subjecthood – are cast into a binary of secure versus insecure mobility in which “global nomads, transnationals, cosmopolitans, asylum seekers, economic refugees, migrants, [and] diasporic citizens”, are remade as potential “religious fanatics” and terrorists - in other words, the ‘bad’ intermediaries who work against rather than with the (global) system (2008: 53).

The recitation of these violent geopolitical tropes and abstractions, and, moreover, their persistent and innovative resignification across a number of domains including the military, economics, and border controls, performs the conditions in which broadened national security enacts its central motif: the “interconnectedness of global security challenges in the twenty first century” (NSS 2009: 25). Broadened national security therefore performs its own global war script of connection, division, and violence. NSS 2009 devotes several sections in its opening chapters to analysing the national security implications of the so-called “global banking crisis”. But whilst the NSS assesses “that the crisis has not fundamentally altered our assessment of key security threats”, it also issues a proviso: “that is not to say it has no impact. The downturn has increased the risk that poverty acts as a driver of insecurity at the global level” (6). This linking of poverty to insecurity is not original, and since the September 11 attacks it has frequently been analysed as a determining factor in international terrorism (Pape, 2005, 2003; Krueger and Maleckova, 2003). However, the inclusion of poverty within a global cartography of danger based on the enforcement of liberal economics (read: the triumph over poverty) through military force has obvious and important consequences.

In the NSS the claim that poverty is a driver of insecurity is explained by “its contribution to conflict and fragility in developing countries”, which in turn poses a threat to the UK “whether manifested through flows of illegal drugs and firearms into our cities, or the current terrorist threat” (2009: 59).

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⁶ This concept of geopolitical abstraction is also reflected in Gregory’s (2010) work on the visual economies of war (see also Amoore, 2009);
The NSS’s response to the security implications of poverty includes “continued action towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” and “an increased development budget” (60). As regards the links between poverty and conflict, the government’s approach “brings together the full range of development, diplomatic and military tools”: specifically the Foreign Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, and the Department for International Development, who “jointly deliver the Government’s key public service agreement (PSA)... [which] prioritise[s] those conflicts which most affect UK interests and citizens and where the UK is most able to make a difference” (69). The “priorities for UK engagement” under the PSA include Afghanistan and Pakistan, Africa, including Sudan and the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans (69-70). But foremost in “deliver[ing] the Public Service Agreement” is Afghanistan:

Our response has to be rooted in helping states and the societies within them become more secure with sound infrastructure, capable and responsive government and the rule of law. For example, the UK-led joint military-civilian Provincial Reconstruction team in Helmand, which has doubled the number of deployed civilian experts in the past year, is focused on building Afghan capacity across roads, power, local governance, policing and informal justice systems (73, 11).

It is striking the extent to which this ‘military-civilian Provincial Reconstruction team’ resembles Barnett’s re-envisioning of the US military as a force of “system administrators” acting as “peacemaking, institution building service providers backed by considerable firepower” (Dalby, 2007: 301). It is also important to note that a month after NSS 2009 was published the ‘Mid Year Bulletin on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’ released by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), recorded 1013 civilian casualties for the period 1 January to 30 June 2009; 310 of which were as a result of military operations carried out by “international and national Afghan forces (PGF)” and 595 from “Anti-Government Elements”.

To characterise broadened national security as a global cartography of danger does not mean that its de-politicising and violent repercussions are not also felt inside the UK, as demonstrated by my earlier example of the treatment of diaspora communities. That violent global cartographies ‘begin at home’ as it were, is not something that is readily recognised or at least purposely dealt with in the analyses I have used in this article; which perform a sort of inverse geopolitical abstraction attempting to re-populate “inhuman geographies” abroad (Dalby, 2007: 295), whilst leaving the UK as the archetypal blank space on the map. This gap could be addressed in future work by focusing on the ways that broadened national security attempts to secure the problematic imaginary of a British ‘way of life’, bringing in Hardt and Negri’s influential theory of a ‘war ontology’ in which:

War... becomes the general matrix for all relations of power and techniques of domination, whether or not bloodshed is involved. War has become a regime of

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biopower, that is, a form of rule aimed not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all aspects of social life (2004: 13).

For example, NSS 2009 announces its “theme” of “protecting and involving our citizens in national security”, which it currently applies to countering international terrorism (because of the significance of the threat); to combating serious crime (“recognising the harm and direct consequences that such crime can have on our people, communities and economy, through drugs, violence, people-trafficking and fraud”); and to managing the risks of cyber security (“so that our people’s ability to do business, communicate, learn, and interact socially... are secure”) (30-1). This ‘theme’ builds on another, more established discourse of UK resilience (see Coaffee, 2006; Coaffee and Murakami Wood, 2006); but whereas previously, resilience was a matter for those agencies and individuals involved with critical national infrastructure, now “everyone has a role to play in building the UK’s resilience” (NSS 2009: 31, my emphasis). Accordingly, NSS 2009 announces its work on “community and corporate resilience”, which builds on earlier innovations like the National Risk Register to aid “local groups and organisations to respond to terrorist attacks as well as other common hazards” (NSS 2009: 79). After all, “our people themselves, through voluntary organisations, civic society, and the private industrial sector and all levels of government need to work together to tackle domestic threats and develop our resilience” (31).

Broadened national security also addresses so-called “disruptive threats”, the danger of which lies precisely in their “potential to provide severe and sudden damage to our people, our institutions or our way of life” (27-8). Despite disruptive threats existing in a state of future potentiality, broadened national security requires action in the present: “Wherever possible, we will tackle security challenges early. We scan the horizon for future challenges, and we aim where we can to tackle not just threats as and when they become real, but also the drivers or causes of threats before they lead to potential damage to our security” (28). This leaves the UK government in the bizarre and dangerous position of acting on threats before they become threats (see Aradau and Van Munster, 2007; Der Derian, 2003; Massumi, 2007). The increasing banality of national security also recalls Amoore’s analysis of the biometric border (2006), a system which judges the threat posed by travelling individuals based on certain ‘objective’ personal and biological data including health, financial, and travel records, and fingerprints, facial and gait recognition, and iris scans. Because in this system bodies function as “infallible and unchallengeable verifiers of the truth about a person - the ultimate guarantors of identity”, it leaves people, in the words of one civil rights lawyer, “having to dispute their own identity” (5).

Conclusion

In this article I have traced the emergence of broadened national security as an imaginary of security in “the new global age” (NSS 2009: 3); from the ‘uncertainty and instability’ which followed the end of the cold war, through the ‘global war script’ of the war on terror, and on to what appears to be the nascence of a UK national security state highly attuned to the continuing benefits of economic globalisation. In this way, the article addresses the scant attention paid within critical geopolitics both
to the publication of the NSS and to the politics of UK national security strategy more broadly, as well as gaining critical purchase on a topic which should be of central importance in critiques of security, but which is typically dominated by defence analysts who ask ‘how good is the NSS?’ and not ‘how do we understand it as part of a general economy of power that orders and imagines our contemporary societies?’

My argument does not deny that the continuing liberalisation of national economies and dramatic advances in communications technologies have produced new spatialities of global reach which fundamentally challenge established modes of governance. Rather, I have problematised the ‘imaginative leap’ which renders these changes into new threats which should, and indeed can, be managed through the reciprocal intensification and extension of the security practices characterised as broadened national security. My argument can therefore be summarised as: while broadened national security undoubtedly facilitates the project of western governments to secure liberal globalisation, it is foremost a *performativity of intimacy* between the violence of UK national security and daily life; whether you live in the UK or not. The article also therefore contributes to our understanding of how the NSS’s prescription of globally interconnected security challenges functions to proliferate rather than decrease sources of threat, and to produce subjectivities exposed to the violence of national security strategy in new ways. This is a key direction in which critical work on UK national security strategy could be developed in the future, especially as regards to how broadened national security ‘begins at home’.

**Bibliography**


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