



GENERAL ASSEMBLY ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE ASSEMBLEIA GERAL جمعية عمومية

#CODESRIA14

**Creating African Futures in an Era of Global Transformations:
Challenges and Prospects**

**Cr  er l'Afrique de demain dans un contexte de transformations mondialis  es :
enjeux et perspectives**

**Criar Futuros Africanos numa Era de Transforma   es Globais:
Desafios e Perspetivas**

**ﺑﻌﺚ ﺃﻓﺮﻳﻘﻴﺎ ﺍﻟﻐﺪ ﻓﻲ ﺳﻴﺎﻕ ﺍﻟﺘﺤﻮﻻﺕ ﺍﻟﻤﻌﻮﻟﻤﺔ :
ﺭﻫﺎﻧﺎﺕ ﻭ ﺁﻓﺎﻕ**

Decolonial humanism and the Africa's presence in international diplomacy

Siphamandla Zondi



08 - 12 June / Juin 2015

Dakar, Senegal



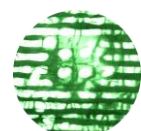
Africa is 'un-free' because its power to determine its economic, political and social destiny is circumscribed by global power dynamics and unequal world economic order that unfolded from the slave trade, through imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism up to the current global information age that radiates from the western metropolitan centres. Ndovu-Gatsheni, 2013ⁱ

Abstract

On close examination, African agency in international affairs is occasioned by the dreams of a post-colonial world, a world for all. A common humanity in which all prosper is forestalled by the reality of global coloniality and its manifestation in the bifurcation of world humanity into a zone of fully sovereign states whose people are considered full enough beings to deserve the full enjoyment of human rights in form of prosperity and affirmation, on the one hand, and a zone of nations and peoples whose sovereignty is denigrated and whose humanity is called into question by their being denied the full enjoyment of rights and privileges. This Cartesian paradigm of humanity, which permits racism, genocides, wanton violence, suppression and exploitation of one set of human beings by others on the basis of embedded ideas of superiority and inferiority underpinned imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and the dominance concept of humanity/humanism in the age of globalisation. It explains the accepted idea of subordinate states and superpowers in the international relations theory and literature, and explains new manifestations of imperialism in the form of external interventions in Africa's affairs including efforts to divide the continent in international negotiations. It also manifests in neo-colonial tendencies of the African political class whose members can also be found conniving with dominant powers and their institutions to perpetuate global coloniality. It manifests in the fact that African agency in international diplomacy is short-lived, constrained, denigrated and even scorned. On the basis of the growing archive on Africanity and decoloniality, the paper will outline decolonial humanism as an alternative basis for authentic African agency, an alternative paradigm of world humanity and humanism that makes the idea and reality of a world for all possible.

Introduction

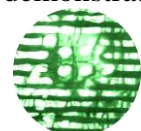
This Cartesian notion of humanism and humanity speaks the language of salvation, while it engenders a hellish existence from peoples on the periphery. It speaks human rights when it permits and justifies genocide and violence in the lives on the other. It advocates the rhetoric of prosperity, while it nests and justifies an economic logic that perpetuates poverty and underdevelopment for the subalterns of the world system. It speaks the rhetoric of progress when in practice it permits barbarity for the peoples and states on the periphery of the world. It has an extensive language of humanism, much of which credited to the work started by Immanuel Kant, but in practice it entrenched the bifurcation of humans into a hellish zone of non-beings inhabited mainly by peoples out of the west who are supposed to be damned into



bare life, banned existence and exception from normal moral codes, and the zone of beings occupied by the sovereign and normal human beings, those presumed to be superior and civilised. It preaches universal cosmopolitanism as a mask for undermining the diversity of worlds, cultures and forms of human existence by homogenising them under a western world system, culture and forms of human existence. It has a strong discourse of human rights, liberties and norms by which the conduct of states and human beings are conditioned for international order to exist, yet it also permits a few states mainly from the west or those which the dominant west licences to act outside this normative framework, so as to dehumanise and kill. It preaches democracy, co-existence, interdependence and peace, but it thrives on undemocratic control of institutions of global governance, dominance and hegemony over others often justified in the name of order or rational response to threats and on war as a political strategy. It also has a lot to say about pluralism, plurality and multipolarity in respect of the structure of global power, often exaggerating the ideals of a world without imperialism, which is the concentration of global power in few states, when in fact it works to preserve the power and privilege that the west acquired during the period of and through imperialism, slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

It is the argument of this paper that under these conditions, international relations both as a political practice and as a theoretical and academic practice are haunted by falsehoods, distortions and untruths when considered from the view of those living on the periphery of the world system that international relations organise. Seen from the perspective and lived experiences of peoples of the Africa and the global south broadly, international relations do not conform to key theoretical propositions of mainstream IR theories and political discourses that dominate the conduct of international relations. Instead, international relations and diplomacy are experienced in ways not too dissimilar to how imperialism, global colonialism and neo-colonialism were experienced, as a system to marginalise, dehumanise and subordinate them as a people and areas of the world. It is suggested here that it is not possible to understand this without understanding from within the south and Africa how the current world system is constructed and how it has produced a succession of world orders, the last of which is the UN-based world order affected by the phenomenon of globalisation. On this basis, international relations become to an extent a little more than a discourse, rhetoric and practice of the west over others and international diplomacy becomes bifurcated between the powerful dominated by the west and the rest existing on the margins constantly battling exclusion.

The paper uses the Africa's international diplomacy to demonstrate the complex limitations that "international" relations, global humanism born out of global coloniality and a world system produced through successive processes of slavery, colonialism, imperialism and globalisation impose on Africa's agency. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the area of international negotiations where Africa has battled to keep a united position precisely because without such concerted action, solidarity and alliances the international relations system renders it impossible for Africa to negotiate its way out of poverty and external debt, being the epicentre of global epidemics, injustice and other ills. So, this paper employs empirical evidence drawn from the analysis of African common negotiating positions to demonstrate



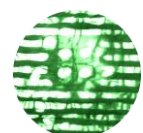
this argument. We begin by describing in brief the dominant discourses that alienate the African and south experience of international relations, a monologic dialogue that excludes voices of the south and yet masquerades as an “international” relations discourse. We then turn to suggesting an alternative way of reading international relations, which we shall call simultaneous globally decolonial and particularly Afrocentric in nature. On this basis, we will go over the experiences of Africa in international negotiations for purposes of illustrating the argument. We will then conclude with a few observations.

The Monologic Discourses: International Relations Theories

Political science as an area of study concerns itself with understanding the conduct of political/public power or of politics. It does this by applying theory and empirical study of political systems, political culture and political behaviour. It seeks to understand the relationships and other dynamics that underpin political events, developments, conditions and phenomena and on that basis to produce principles about the world of politics operates. Although, the term political science has only been used since the 19th century, it is thought to have been in existence for over 2000 years when philosophers and other inquisitive people sought to systematically answer the question: how can human beings best govern themselves? or could they best manage their own affairs?

Answers ranged from a variety of thought that human beings just cannot govern themselves on their own without divine providence, arguing that prayer than politics was the way to govern human society to a variety of perspectives that while agreed on human control over affairs of human condition disagreed on how much and in what form exactly. There were some who thought only some people were morally entitled or intellectually able to control their fates, for example men rather than women, Greeks rather than Persians, propertied class rather than working class, Christian Europeans and not peoples of Europe’s “new World”, Anglo-Saxon Americans and not indigenous Americans or slaves, white settlers in Africa and not black and so forth. In this sense, the questions about who morally deserve and intellectually can govern themselves and others is ancient, but has persisted to this day albeit using a new and more sophisticated language of democratic and undemocratic rule, political leadership, government and governance and so forth.

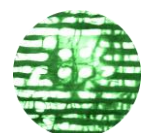
Further, this also led to discussions about relations between those who governed and those who would be governed that included questions of the moral uprightness of the rulers, their intellectual faculties, the ethics of their conduct and predisposition. It led to questions about how much power they hand vis-à-vis the powers and rights of the governed. Related questions about the ultimate point of human existence, whether human beings are condemned to the impulses of their biology (the private space that Greeks called the zoe) including predisposition to greed, violence and physical survival, and if glory, good life, liberty, salvation, liberation, ethics and other considerations were goals of political life.



A lot of the modern academic discipline and practice of political science borrows from the experiences and discourses of the Greeks of 2500 years ago including the concepts that describe political arrangements: “politics”, “democracy”, “aristocracy” and “tyranny”. The underlying assumptions about the freedom, independence and self-government also underpin political science discourses today. The Greek polis with its unique political arrangement today known as democracy survived wars, invasions and occupation by external political forces although over time the nature of the political system did change under various phases of external dominance. From this experience a lot of general principles about domestic politics and international principles have been deduced to make up key assumptions or theoretical propositions underscored by political science. Similarly, Greeks did not just think of themselves as being governed differently from their Asiatic neighbours in Persia, but thought they had politics and Asiatics did not. They came to think that politics could only exist in a city state – a polis or republic, and under the rule of law. They thought in Persia, there was no politics because the kings were masters over slaves rather than governors over citizens.

In the writings of early Greek thinkers, especially Herodotus, Aristotle, Plato and others, the idea of political systems as Greeks knew and practiced it came to be assumed as the political system lock, stock and barrel. This is consolidated into main theoretical propositions about the political system that place a few western man at the very centre of the discipline. These include Greek thinkers, Plato and Aristotle, who thought about two options of political order, one in which a philosopher-king rules and justice ensures harmony among classes proposed by Plato and the rule by middle classes on the basis of constitutional government described by Aristotle. St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas disagreed on whether constitution, law, common good and reason could be the basis for a world of politics governed by man as the latter proposed, which the former thought was an incomplete form of peace, order and justice in the absence of providence. Nicolo Machiavelli conceptualised the idea of a republic governed by a new form of prince who must manage a complex set of competing interests on the basis that allows for him to act immorally for a positive end.

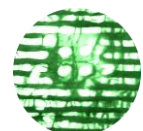
Modern political thought is also the work of European men from Thomas Hobbe whose argument in favour of supreme sovereign power resonate with political scientists and politicians to this day. John Locke’s argument for a representative government that is popular but limited by rules and responsible is ubiquitous in contemporary political discourse. Jean Jacques Rousseau established the idea of popular sovereignty and will as central to a modern political system and this has been used to argue for popular participation and so forth. John Stuart Mill’s message that anchored the concept of liberty influenced today’s thinking human rights as individual freedoms that political systems must protect and advance. Karl Marx was a sort of aberration in this whole tradition of political thought in that though he came from the same dominant and hegemonic region of the world, his thought challenged the whole canon of thought and practice by seeing in the whole system (justified largely by political thought) as underpinned by structural inequality conditioned by relations that classes had with means of production and imperialism in order to for universal human emancipation via communism. This political thought has had a huge influence on political forces against western hegemony



in general, the anti-imperial and anti-colonial forces including liberation movements in many parts of the global south.

Political science gave birth to international relations as a sub-discipline concerned with relations among states and other actors on the world stage. The principal theories of international relations are an extension of political science theories about the domestic real of the state; they are largely state-centric although sociological theories from the west and a growing body of non-western/even anti-western theoretical propositions have opened space for thinking beyond the state as the centre of political life. For the purpose of this paper, these theories are understood as relating to contending views of the world and how it functions; and the basis of relations between states and other actors on the international scene. Two theoretical schools of thought that have dominated the discipline for decades, realism and idealism, relate the role of the state in the world believed to be either anarchical (realists) or capable of being orderly through the functioning of institutions, norms and the growth of the 'international mind'. The former had a pessimistic view of human nature as driven by survival and acquisition of control over others, a view extended to the conduct of states in the international system in order to stress the predisposition towards coercion and violence, and where there is no conflict, the states are bound together by forcible consent. The mission of the state is survival as rational actors that decide to accumulate power as a form of insurance against negative distribution of coercive power or they respond to the anarchy through cooperation and building institutional frameworks to govern the anarchy of the international system (hence, a sub-school called institutionalists). Idealism or liberalism emphasise the possibility of order and progress in the system, showing that democratic national character of states predisposes them towards cooperation with other states and non-state actors. Sociological theories that came to explain the social dynamics in international relations include constructivism, which brought to the fore the importance of agency and human motivation as well as the ascribing of social meanings to variables like military power, institutions, economic relations and domestic imperatives, meanings conditioned by a mixture of history, beliefs, ideas and norms. They argue that states do not act just out of the desire to maximise interests, but also out of considerations about the appropriateness of their actions, which is a matter mediated by norms. The English School shares constructivism's concerns with social meanings, norms, and ideologies while emphasising the importance of explanatory methods and the attention to historical considerations about state behaviour.

The emergence of what is called critical approaches to the subject of international relations associated with the application of Marxist thought to the subject and the work of the Frankfurt School has helped underline the fact that the various schools of thought outlined above actually shared basic assumptions about the nature and character of the world and its constituent parts. They are positivist theories, taking for granted the construction of power and states as well as the idea of international relations as principally framed by state-to-state relations, thus understate the crucial role of the structure of economic relations nationally and internationally, the interests and conduct of capital, the role of gender and culture, the colonial relations and exclusion of parts of the world outside the North American-European world.



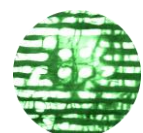
Otherring in IR Thought

A distinction must, however, be made between the Frankfurt School of critical thought that though located outside positivist traditions of western is still locked with broader Eurocentric thinking and the multiplicity of critical thought that locates itself outside European/Eurocentric thought. The latter has suffered the worst neglect in international relations theory and discourses generally compared to the former. It has been neglected even by critical thought, leading to the distinction between mainstream critical thought and subaltern one. So, while a body of literature has emerged whose focus is on exclusions in IR thought, much of this refers to neglect of thought born within and tied to the west in many ways, such as post-modernism and post-colonialism that are inspired by belligerent European thought of the likes of Derrida and Foucault.

What is often neglected still are voices from the very margins of the modern world such as the variety of perspectives belong to the broad school of thought known as decolonial thought or decoloniality represented by works of Walter Dignolo, Ramon Grosfoguel, Anibal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, and Sabelo Gatsheni-Ndlovu in spite of the distinctness of their messages about the nature of the international system and relations that evolve in it. There is also a complete neglect of African/Africana thought both in mainstream rationalist/positivist thought and mainstream critical discourses alike. In this sense, insights that could be derived from the observations, interpretative works and scientific imaginations of the likes of Ngugi wa Thiongo, Claude Ake, Dani Nabudere, Molefi Asante, and others. African and decolonial feminist thought is also being marginalised in IR thought, thus limiting the extent to which we can fathom the full-scale of international relations, international politics, international diplomacy, world order/affairs, global political economy and so forth.

International relations thought has therefore suffered the weakness of being an integral part of generally Eurocentric hegemonic paradigms that assume the European experience, ideas and observations to be universal. Like most of dominant thought in social sciences, it has the disadvantage of being produced with western modernity that engenders systems of hierarchies with the west at the top. While it has been produced and reproduced by scholars physically located in various parts of the world, it has largely been epistemically speaking firmly located in the centre of the modern world, the North American-European zone. So, its locus of enunciation belies the fact that it is being propagated from all parts of the world. In this sense, it is party to epistemic injustice that marks the western dominance of knowledge principally because of its Eurocentric nature. Seen within the epistemic location called the west, it is a variety of schools of thought, sometimes fundamentally distinct, but outside this location, it is a body of thought joined together by certain foundational principles in Eurocentrism.

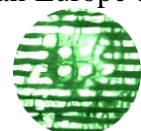
The first is the myth of a non-situated “Ego” (subject), a free-floating subject who is concealed, hidden and erased from the analysis in the name of objectivity. The location and the subject are always decoupled to conceal its situatedness and thus lay claim to being the universal voice, concealing the fact that it is about European experiences, perceptions, ideas,



beliefs and so forth. This enables the ego-politics of knowledge that Eurocentric thought is haunted by, the assumed superiority of western ways of thinking.

The second is the elevation of the European subject to status previously to be God's, the God's-eye-view, the source of universal truth beyond time and space with capacity to access the laws of the universe and produce scientific knowledge and theory. It thus inaugurates a theo-politics of knowledge. This is the implication of Rene Descartes' "Cogito ergo Sum" (I think therefore I am) or the principle of rationality as the foundation of western thought founded on the separation between mind and body, mind and nature, in order for European thought to claim its being beyond a particular point view, what Colombian philosopher, Santiago Castro-Gomez calls the 'point zero' perspective, and to claim that its subject is what Archie Mafeje calls 'a free-floating' signifier. It adopts abstract universalism as a cover to erased from the analysis its epistemic location. In this sense, western philosophy upon which western social science is based privileges the "ego-politics" of knowledge over the "geopolitics" and the body-politics of knowledge.ⁱⁱ This enables the European subject to dismiss non-western knowledge as particularistic rather than universal, culture/tradition rather than science and thus justifying its marginalisation, silencing and erasure.

Thirdly, because Eurocentrism was an integral strategy to the construction of the western model of power of global vocation sometimes called modernity for which the idea of race was a tool for creating new models of human relations between the conqueror and the conquered, it is implicated in the coloniality of global power today. Just as the new power matrix in the economic realism required the Europeanised global capitalism and in the political realism Europeanised political systems, it also required Eurocentric epistemic paradigms. The Europeanisation of the three factors in the modern global power - identity, power and knowledge - constitutes an important explanation of western-centric world system today. I borrow the term "Europeanisation" from egoistic European writings celebrating the extension of Europeanness to the world, the most recent that I have come across being John Miles Headley's *The Europeanisation of the World*, which defends the Western civilisation (in the name of Europe, note the conflation of terms whereby the west is Europe) for being the origin of dominant ideas, forms of institutions, norms, and so forth exported to the world in order to make them universal. Towards the end, the book considers the world outside Europe in the form of questions rather than explanations, which is consistent with tradition of western thought where the non-western world is presented in the form of doubts, scepticism and questions.ⁱⁱⁱ In a debate regarding the idea of the extension of western modernity to the world, thereby homogenising the world after the image/imagination of Europe, Jerry Bentley, suggests that the Europeanisation of the world "is possible only because of a prior globalisation of Europe", thus shedding light on the connection between imperial processes by which Europeanisation happened and globalisation through the entrenched of a westernised world was realised.^{iv} To accomplish this, the fact that a European intellectual giant like Thomas Locke borrowed his idea of representative government from the works of an African Muslim philosopher, Ibn Tufayl, of Morocco.^v This and other lessons that European classical philosophers learned from learning centres in Africa and Persia had to be erased in the same way that the Mulism Moors needed to be removed from Iberian Europe at

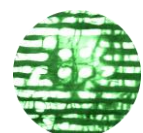


the inception of western modernity in order to give the European man a racially pure credit for his exploits and inventions as evidence that he only had the capacity for rationality in the sense that Descartes meant when he proclaimed, 'I think therefore I am'.

According to Anibal Quijano, the success of Western Europe in becoming the center of the modern world, developed within them ethnocentrism, a trait common to colonial dominators and imperialists. "But in the case of Western Europe," he went on to say, "that trait had a peculiar formulation and justification: the racial classification of the world population after the colonisation of America."^{vi} In the knowledge field, this ethnocentrism took the form of seeing the world through the eyes of Western Europe, as a creation of Europe, as field for the application of European ideas and models of politics and as its footstool. Thus, the world and all that was in it belonged to Europe or was ready for Europe to take. In this sense, Europe is not just a geographical region of the world, but it is a geopolitical phenomenon imagined for purposes of giving expression to the egopolitics and body politics of modernity. Eurocentrism also thrived on the idea of human history as a trajectory that departed from a state of nature and culminated in Europe. Europe was the destination, the end of history, the ultimate civilisation, and is the destination of humankind. So, in this sense there is radical way of understanding the meaning of Europeanisation of the world that Headley and others explain. Quijano, who seems not have encountered Headley's work, used Europeanisation in this way: "Eurocentric pretension to be the exclusive producer and protagonist of modernity – because of which all modernisation of non-European populations, is, therefore, a Europeanisation – is an ethnocentric pretension and, in the long run, provincial."^{vii}

This explains the sense that the principal theories of international relations and their propositions take for granted that the European history and its intellectual heritage are universal. The European nation-state, the European political systems, and European thought are in and of themselves the sum of international relations as a practice and academic discipline. Typical of Eurocentrism, except in a few cases, mainstream discourses and theories do not use the adjective "European" or "western" to describe the thought, the history on which they are based, the empirical evidence used to buttress them because Eurocentrism conceals its subject and hides its location. It does not situate itself, but quickly homogenises other experiences under its pretensions and thus universalises itself. So, though all mainstream theories and the founders therefore named in the outline above come from Western Europe, they are called fathers of modern political thought. They are universalised in order to particularise any thought as Muslim, African, Asian, ethnic and so forth and thus marginalise it. Eurocentrism thrives on negations of other ways of knowing in order to enthrone ways of Europeans as the centre of knowledge just as it has been made a centre of power and centre of human identity.^{viii}

As Ndlovu-Gatsheni says, just as "the Africa that exists today is the creation of Western hegemonic thought that subordinated everything in Africa as they pushed Europe and North America into the top level end of the civilization and development ladder", the knowledge produced in and about Africa "reinforce Western hegemony over the African continent; and



the schools, colleges and universities continue to contribute towards universalization of Western values”^{ix}.

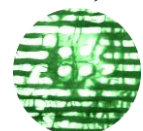
Under these conditions, students of politics and international relations in the south and Africa are invited to participate in alienated discourses, an extraverted contemplation of a “common” humanity, as Mafeje would put it.^x Filtered through Eurocentric negations, the African experiences of international relations is subject to distortions, fabrications, omissions and erasures. The account of Africa in international relations generally distorts and denies its historicity and humanity, its agency and autonomy.^{xi} The paradigm of silence produces paradigmatic silences evident in the sanitisation of Africa’s traumatic experiences at the hands of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and globalisation.

Decolonial Alternative: Humanism and Diversal IR

Enrique Dussel’s answer to the question whether thinkers and actors from the south can think and act outside of the matrices of power constructed by Eurocentric modernity is “transmodernity”,^{xii} which to transgress and transcend modernity in order to imagine worlds that penetrate each other on the basis of the renouncing of Eurocentric negations and pretensions central to modernity.^{xiii} Zeleza conveys the same intention when he argues, in agreement with Congolese thinker, Jacques Delpechin, for the decentering of the European experience in order to recenter the marginalised ways of knowing including the African ones. This is what subaltern thinkers of South Asia have called provincializing Europe in order to allow for space for the flowering of alternative modernities in place of modernity, diversity in place of universality, plurality in place of homogeneity.^{xiv} It is make other worlds possible in the sense not unrelated to the raging struggles of the victims of globalisation, the casualties of global prosperity, being waged by social movements on the margins of the international system. Critical to this is to unmask the coloniality of the master narrative of European modernity, its dark underbelly, as a case of epistemic injustice deserving of as much shame as political and economic injustices of colonialism and imperialism. It is on that basis to move a step further towards epistemic disobedience,^{xv} a conscious rebellion against epistemic transgressions, and determined negation of Eurocentric negations.^{xvi}

In Delpechin’s terms, transcending alterity embedded in Eurocentric epistemology entails recentering Africa in its own history and story by reconstituting the practices and paradigms of producing knowledge in order to decenter knowledge production, thus making possible for diversity necessary for decolonial cosmopolitanism. He argues for reclaiming the African agency and autonomy in knowledge, its historicity and humanity. The decentering process has meaning if it is also intended at reconstruction the world history, the world narrative as whole, thus stripping the Eurocentric discourse of its universalising pretensions.

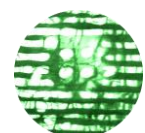
Ndlovu-Gatsheni suggests that all this would require a remaking of humanity in order to rid of the taint of coloniality, saying: “The real challenge has been how to ensure ethical conditions of human peaceful coexistence that takes into account the politics of recognition and difference.” As to what this precisely mean, Caribbean philosopher, Lewis R. Gordon, and



sheds some light. If the colonial matrices of power are constructed on the basis of Eurocentric philosophy founded on “a peculiar death ethic that renders massacre and different forms of genocide as natural”,^{xvii} then the alternative must be found in the rediscovery of the politics of life. This is an argument for what Dussel calls the “will to live”^{xviii} in place of the idea of ‘will to power’, which presupposed that humans everywhere are driven by self-interests, the desire to impose their will on others and therefore war and anarchy were a given human nature replicated in the conduct of states in the international system.^{xix} The colonial human ethics that justified war, domination, demonization, dehumanisation and exploitation have to be replaced by ethics of liberation that make possible a paradigm of peace, love and co-existence, and a world where many worlds fit, as Mignolo puts it.^{xx} Maldonado-Torres explains this well enough to deserve a long quote:

The obliteration of the trans-ontological takes the tendency of producing a world in which war becomes the norm, rather than the exception. That is the basic meaning of the coloniality of being: the radical betrayal of the trans-ontological by the formation of a world in which the non-ethics of war become naturalized through the idea of race. The damne’ is the outcome of this process. Her agency needs to be defined by a consistent opposition to the paradigm of war and the promotion of a world oriented by the ideals of human generosity and receptivity.^{xxi}

On this basis, he went on to suggest that decolonisation was ultimately a product and an act of decolonial and justice whose goal is “to restore the logics of the gift through a decolonial politics of receptive generosity.” The attempts at decolonising the administrative structures of colonial rule that is called independence ended colonialism (in the sense of juridico-administrative structures), but allowed coloniality (the multi-layered matrices of power by which human relations are ordered since slavery) to persist. Independence thus gives birth to neo-colonialism rather than a decolonial system or world. Five years after independence and while the celebratory drums of *uhuru* were still beating, Kwame Nkrumah made an unusual observation at the time. “Old-fashioned colonialism is by no means entirely abolished.”^{xxii} Instead, he said, [i]t still constitutes an African problem”. While he also observed what he thought was its retreat and that its end was irreversible, he was astounded that instead of liberation that was anticipated, “In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism.” He saw that hardly had the new flags been raised that there reappeared from within the entire system of states something similar to colonialism and imperialism before it. It was a revolutionary observation that cast doubts on the Eurocentric pretensions that by granting independence colonial empires were in fact decolonising the African polity and the international state system. On close examination of independence as an experience of the new political class and citizen, Nkrumah noticed a model of power or structure of power relations reminiscent of previous stages of imperialism. The new state was “in theory” independent because it “has all the trappings of international sovereignty” – the

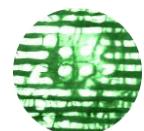


flag, the new capital, a new government, UN membership, new legal status, buildings etc- but in reality its “policy” – the real power to decide, to allocate resources, to exercise agency – was directed from outside.

The neo-colonial situation was, as Nkrumah observed, a “question of power”, the appropriation of it by a few states at the centre of the world system, thus rendering the system bifurcated just like the idea of humanity it is based, between domination state and subordinate states. The latter state lacked the essence of sovereignty (was robbed of it) and its peoples lacked humanity (was denied it) because such a state “is not a master of its own destiny.” Nkrumah made a further observation crucial for our discussion. He said this factor was “a serious threat to world peace.” In this sense, rather than anarchical behaviour of contending states, or weak institutions or arms race or confused state identities or even natural disasters, the threat to world peace and order was the very model of power that world system epitomised. The world system was thus a threat to world peace, a threat to the world. One world imposed on all through slavery, colonialism and other forms of imperialism was a threat to the world in which many worlds fit. This is powerful idea completely ignored in international relations theory and discourses including these classified as critical thought.

For this reason, it is not possible to think authentically about the African experience of international relations from within western modernity, mainstream or critical. The Eurocentric pretensions erases the African experienced, lived reality and voice by ignoring it, muting it or distorting it in order to preserve the alienate discourses from above. The perspective of international relations from below inscribed by a decolonial idea of humanity, ethics of humanist liberation, requires the negation of the alienated discourses and the infusing of new voices. Mafeje is re-assuring that “Initially, such representations will not be credited by those who uphold the status quo.” But, he went on to say, “If they be robust and persistent, they will sooner or later elicit a plea from men and women of reason and goodwill for a dialogue.”^{xxiii}

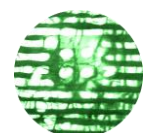
In the discipline of international relations, this includes writing the colonial, imperial and neo-colonial experiences back to the world diplomatic history and contemporary IR analysis. It is to tell not just of how ideas look when they depart Europe, but also how they are encountered when they arrive in Africa. It is to turn the fig inside out, so to say. The ideas of western political thought and their application have a different meaning at their point of departure from they are experienced at the point of arrival on the African continent. In this sense, the extension of western nation state to Africa in the early modern period was accomplished through violence and genocides and its entrenchment through the 19th and 20th century happened through ruthless suppression and exploitation. The western ideas of liberty and representative government were tainted with racial prejudice so that in Africa they were an example progress to be experienced only by colonists. Rousseauian popular sovereignty conditioned by western bifurcation of humankind into a zone of beings and a zone of non-being applied to whites who were considered to be humans and not to Africans considered beings without soul. The idea of the constitution and law as the source of common good for orderly politics that evolved from Aquinas’ ancient thought and has become prevalent in western thought was surreal for Africans for whom constitution was used to exclude and



legitimise their dehumanisation. Liberalism's idea of institutions' critical role for fostering interdependence and cooperation and thus tame the anarchy of the international system has no meaning for Africans who have been seen their countries ensnared in debts given by international financial institutions and marginalised in institutions of global governance. The notion that norms, identity and culture have the effect of infusing ethics into the operations of the international systems, the assumption that the international system is constructed in the process of negotiations is a false promise for Africa because its identity, its ideas, its beliefs and its norms are particularised and erased to make way for western ones. Suggestions that the political system of democracy catalyses world peace preached by politicians and scholars from countries that continue to resist the democratisation of the UN Security Council, the process of selections heads of IMF and World Bank are untruths designed to deceive and foist western democracy on others.

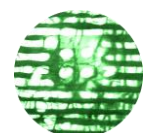
For Africa, the international system remains colonial in an era alleged to be post-colonial; the world system is neocolonised. It is colonial in the sense that there are continuities between the structure of power that underpinned colonialism and imperialism and what pertains today. Power and privileged is concentrated in countries of North America and Western Europe. There is therefore a *de facto* bifurcation of what is supposed to be a common humanity between those who enjoy the rights, liberties, power and privileges and those who do not in a manner reminiscent of colonial distinction between the superior and inferior, the conquerors and the conquered and the dominating and the dominated. Interestingly, the subordinate continued to come from the societies that were also dominated under colonial rule, meaning that from the perspective of the dominated the post-colonial has not yet arrived. Yet, the dominant voices speak repeatedly about post-colonial this and that, and the need for Africa to end its "dependency" on the West. They demand that Africa move on, the past is history and it should look into the future they have imagined for it.

Under these conditions, while Africa has improved its agency in respect of international negotiations diplomacy, for instance, by adopting common positions negotiated among African countries in order to enable them to speak with one voice and use their large number to their advantage, the structure of global power is such that western powers have residual power and advantage in the international system they made and sold to the world as international. For instance, during climate change negotiations where Africa has argued for a common, but differentiated responsibility so that countries that have contributed most to climate change should take stronger and more costly steps to militate climate change impact and to fund adaptation measures, the west poured scorn on the idea on the basis of its "belief" in equality of nations and equal responsibility in pursuit of common futures. Although completely outnumbered and although Africa's positions were also shared by the large group of 132 developing countries (the G77 +China), in spite of minor internal differences, the less than 30 European countries resisted successfully in the Conference of Parties in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2009, in Cancun, Mexico in 2010, in Durban, South Africa in 2011, in Doha, Qatar in 2012, and in Warsaw, Poland in 2013. Yet, European thinkers blamed Africa for not being united enough to bring success to its position and thus absolved Europe of its responsibilities.^{xxiv}



During the negotiations on the UN Security Council Reform, Africans had a common position that demanded two veto-wielding seats in the permanent component of the Security Council plus three rotating seats, and that Africa will indicate to the UN which countries would represent it from time to time. Called the Ezulwini Consensus after the African Union Summit in Ezulwini, Swaziland, where the position worked over a period exceeding year was adopted, the common position caused a stir in Eurocentred discourses. It was argued that Africa was being unreasonable in demanding the right to two permanent seats; it was thought it was close to mad to insist that such should be veto-wielding, a privileged preserved to the victors of the Second World War and those they choose. It was thought that Africa was not negotiating in bad faith by placing a “non-starter” proposition on the table. It was said well beforehand that Africa would cause the collapse of negotiations and therefore fail the agenda of reform. When indeed negotiations failed to reach a consensus because the powerful and privileged western permanent seat holders refused point blank to consider sharing the permanent seats with the “new” actors and to share their privilege of a veto. The tendency for countries to vote independently and even against western motions was used as warning that granting veto to countries like these would increase stalemates in the Council.

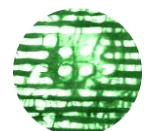
Now, these discourses placed on Africa the duty to compromise, but it had nothing in its hand to compromise. This perpetuated the idea that normalises the illegitimate power of the west over the central mechanisms of the modern system. Although these discourses claim to see the logic in reform, but yet they pour scorn on the essence of reform, for without redistributing decision-making power at the apex of the UN reform has no meaning. The shift of responsibility for failure to Africa is to condemn the subordinate for demanding the fundamental principles of equality, democratic decision-making, fairness and equity. The intransigence of the west is erased from the discourse in order to absolve it of imperialist allegations and to bestow on it a moral high ground of honest negotiator. The idea that African countries lost their case because they would cause mayhem in the Security Council is demonise independent voting and criminalise ever disagreeing with western powers during negotiations. This is fundamentally anti-democracy, anti-liberty and colonial. The reform debate shunted to the a committee that is kept in perpetual search for consensus, while the Secretary General who championed the reform process was replaced literally through the power of the west by one unwilling and unable to ever put the matter firmly on the main agenda. Thus, the residual power of the west in the world system they designed and presented to others as common humanity was deployed to kill a major project in decolonising global governance. The academic discourses reinforced political conduct of western powers to achieve for the west the perpetuation of the heritage of power and privilege acquired through slavery, colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism, and now being maintained through globalisation.^{xxv} So while Africa responded pragmatically to the colonial matrix of global power and its marginalising effect by improving its ability to persuade the dominant on the negotiation table, and pushing countries to forego their national interests for the common African good, the powerful responded with scorn and disdain. Thus, the Eurocentric negotiations accompanied by pretensions of being guardians of norms, rules and moral conduct persist to this day.



Conclusion

In spite of their quantity and the appearance of heterogeneity, the dominant narratives in the discipline of international relations generally and with respect to Africa's international diplomacy are in fact predominantly Eurocentric claims and pretensions to universality and objectivity made possible by the colonial matrices of power in respect of identity, power and knowledge. They are claims based on an idea of humanity as bifurcated into beings and non-beings; the beings and the becoming; those with ontological density in their eyes and those they consider to lack it. The modern world made possible by successive stages of slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism/globalisation does not place Africa at the bottom of the geopolitical hierarchies, but also at the bottom of the geopolitics of knowledge. This paper sought to demonstrate the need for epistemic disobedience as part of the effort to decenter alienated discourses about Africa's role in the world and to recenter its agency and humanity.

-
- ⁱ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. 2013. *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa Myths of Decolonization*, Dakar: CODESRIA, p. 48.
- ⁱⁱ This whole criticism borrows from the critique of Eurocentrism by Mafeje, A. 2011. 'A Combative Ontology,' in Devisch, R. and Nyamnjoh, F.B. (eds.). *Postcolonial Turn: Imagining Anthropology and Africa*, Bamenda and Leiden: Langaa, pp. 31- 41 and Grosfoguel, R. 2011. Decolonising Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking and Global Coloniality, *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, no page numbers.
- ⁱⁱⁱ See Headley, J.M. 2007. *The Europeanisation of the World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. See also Fukuyama, K. 1989. 'End of History,' *National Interest*, 16 (Summer), p. 1.
- ^{iv} Bentley, J. 2012. 'Europeanisation of the World or Globalisation of Europe?', *Religions*, 3, pp. 441-54.
- ^v Russel, G.A. 2010. 'Ibn Tufayl's Hayy ibn Yaqzan and Lock's Essay on Human Understanding', *Journal of the History of Neurosciences*, 19, pp. 53-4.
- ^{vi} Quijano, A. 2000. 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America', *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1 (3): 533- 80, pp. 541-2.
- ^{vii} Quijano. 'Coloniality', p. 544.
- ^{viii} Delpechin, J. 2005. *Silences in African History: Between Syndromes of Discovery and Abolition*. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers.
- ^{ix} Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'Coloniality', p. 52.
- ^x Mafeje, 'Combative Ontology', p. 32.
- ^{xi} Tiyaambe Zeleza has the same to say about mainstream African history, which is still produced pretty much in conformity to the long-established Eurocentric traditions, methodologies, paradigms and theories. See Zeleza, P. T. 'Banishing the Silences: Towards the Globalisation of African History'. Available at www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/zeleza.pdf (accessed on 2 December 2009).
- ^{xii} Dussel, E. 1995. *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of the Other and the Myth of Modernity*, New York: Continuum.
- ^{xiii} See also Maldonado-Torres, N. 2011. 'Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy and Critique – an Introduction,'



Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1 (2): 1-16, p. 7.

^{xiv} See, for instance, Chakrabarty, D. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

^{xv} I am borrowing from Walter Mignolo's 2009 piece entitled 'Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and the De-Colonial Freedom', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26(7-8): 1-23.

^{xvi} Mafeje, 'Combative Ontology', p. 32.

^{xvii} Nelson Maldonado-Torres. 2008. *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*, by Duke University Press, 2008, p. xi.

^{xviii} Dussel, E. 2008. *Twenty Theses in Politics*, Durham: Duke University Press.

^{xix} See Nietzsche, F. 1968. *The Will to Power*. New York: Vintage.

^{xx}

^{xxi} Maldonado-Torres, N. 2007. 'On the Coloniality of Being', *Cultural Studies*, 21(2): 240 – 270, pp. 260-1.

^{xxii} Nkrumah, K. 1965. *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of imperialism*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons.

^{xxiii} Mafeje, 'Combative Ontology', p. 33.

^{xxiv} See, for instance, Hoste, J-C. 2010. 'Where was united Africa in the climate change negotiations?' *Africa Policy Brief*, 2, February.

^{xxv} For a fuller discussion of the fate of common positions in the face of unchanged structure of global power, see Zondi, S. 2013. 'Common Positions as African Agency in International Negotiations: An Appraisal', in Brown, W. and Harman, S. *African Agency in International Politics*, Oxford: Routledge, pp. 19-33.

