

ADECOLONIALTURNINDIPLOMATICTHEORY: UNMASKING EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

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Abstract

The subject of the decolonisation of knowledge broadly, and the social sciences as they are practiced in the developing world, is growing. This is linked to the need to decolonise the modern Kantian university as an important site for the production and reproduction of Eurocentric thought, thus subtly reinforcing the racist claim that only Europeans know, others only mimic. There is an effort towards negating Eurocentric thinking that permeates the modern knowledge system, which has failed to give expression to the experiences, aspirations and needs of people in peripheral areas of the Westernised world. This article joins this epistemic rebellion by seeking to unmask the structure in the dominant discourses of diplomatic theory. It seeks to show that in diplomatic theory, there is blatant erasure of diplomatic experiences and ideas that emanate outside the West and the silencing of voices outside Eurocentrism in its broad sense. An attempt is made to show that this, like slavery and colonialism, is a serious injustice produced by coloniality as a model of power that emerged together with the coloniser's model of the world in the late 15th century. On this account, there is a need to decolonise the narrative and discourses on diplomacy, including its dominant theories. The article, therefore, argues that diplomatic theory is yet to benefit from decolonial perspectives that put forward the need for epistemic justice as a crucial arena in the long process of decolonising the modern world.

Keywords: Decolonising; diplomatic theory; epistemicides; African diplomacy; coloniality.

Seutelwoorde: Dekolonialisering; diplomatieuse teorie; epistemisides; Afrika-diplomasie; kolonialiteit.

1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of diplomatic theory has in the past three decades in particular received a lot of scholarly attention. Initially, the proliferation of literature on diplomatic theory was largely a defence of diplomatic theory as a theory; an attempt to prove that it exists, partly in response to Martin Wight's (1966:16-33) article that questioned the existence of an international theory broadly, and therefore its components, like diplomatic theory. In his essay entitled, "Why is there no international theory?", Wight thought the theory did not exist, because "international theory" was reluctant to be theorised, but wanted to be assumed to exist. In his view, international theory

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came across as a mere impression and a string of incoherent discourses mainly by practitioners and former practitioners concerned with defending their trade. This stimulated the growth in the literature on international relations (IR) theory and, alongside this, writings on diplomatic theory also proliferated as scholars sought to respond by showing the theoretical basis for the practice of diplomacy.

From the 1970s to date, the diplomatic theory canon is fixated on defending its authenticity as a theory. In 1987, Der Derian responded to Wight's point by suggesting diplomatic theory *sui generis* is underpinned by six paradigms: firstly, mytho-diplomacy as encompassing diplomatic thinking infused with mythology and religious beliefs about interface with outsiders in ancient Western societies; secondly, proto-diplomacy as formal state-based diplomacy evolved in Middle Age Europe; thirdly, post-Westphalian diplomacy of nation-states and an international interstate system; fourthly is, what he calls, the anti-diplomacy of idealists that rejected state boundaries in pursuit of Christian universalism and utopianism in the 17th century Europe; fifthly is neo-diplomacy that socialist internationalism epitomized; and finally, techno-diplomacy denoting the influence of new technologies in diplomatic thought and practice. On this basis, Der Derian was confident that the fundamental problems of diplomatic theory had been ended. The period from the late Cold War era produced many new voices in diplomatic theory that assume to have "settled" the debate in the West about the existence and integrity of diplomatic theory. In this group, Geoff Berridge, Paul Sharp, Martin Hall, Constantinou, and so forth, stand out for making modern diplomatic theory popular. The book, *Diplomatic theory: From Machiavelli to Kissinger* (Berridge, Keens-Soper, Otte 2001), is widely used in defence of diplomatic theory in the long *duree* of history, from ancient Greece to the post-Cold War United States of America (US)-led world order. In this narrative, diplomatic theory evolved as thinkers-cum-actors from Niccolo Machiavelli, a diplomat of the city state of Florence, to Henry Kissinger, the US chief diplomat in the 1980s, reflecting on principles, norms, practices, structures and systems involved in the evolution of diplomacy. So, these scholars have sought to extrapolate from the memoirs and reflections of practitioners a set of principles, assumptions and tendencies to make up modern diplomatic theory.

The dominant discourses in diplomatic theory assume that now that Wight's concerns seem to have been responded to, the problem of gaps and silences in diplomatic theory has been solved. The debate is thought to be limited to the contestation between those who place emphasis on traditional diplomatic theory (TDT), with its focus on the central role of the state in diplomacy, and those who want to shift the focus to New Diplomacy Theory (NDT). The latter denotes the recent voices in debates on diplomatic theory that emphasise the role of non-state actors like NGOs, international organisations and business, in diplomatic practice,

especially after the Cold War period. They also elevate the importance of factors, like technology, in defining what diplomacy means and does today. In a sense, the dominant narrative in diplomatic theory is satisfied that the theory is done now; the focus is now on the nuances of its application. After all, the authors of diplomatic theory contend that diplomatic theory is much more concerned with theorizing the practice of diplomacy, than theorizing about theory (Elman and Elman 2003:6-7). For this reason, the dominant literature is about what modern diplomacy does and no longer about what it essentially is.

This article points to the fact that modern diplomatic theory suffers from a problem more fundamental than questions of theory and practice, interpretation of reflections of diplomats from Machiavelli to Kissinger, or the distinction between traditional and new diplomacy, and so forth. The fundamental problem is that diplomatic theory is a theory about what the West does and thinks, and assumed to also apply to non-Western societies. The problem, therefore, is the very epistemology and method that the diplomatic theory emerges from: Eurocentrism, which commits epistemic injustice evident in the exclusion of experiences, voices, and archives of peoples outside the geopolitical West. This implicates diplomatic theory in serious epistemic injustices that have accompanied global coloniality, the model of the world that emerged in the late 15th century on the basis of a model of power that built several entangled global hierarchies, from race to gender, knowledge to culture, language to religion to labour relations, in which the West was the apex of all hierarchies.

Coloniality is, therefore, not the same thing as colonialism: the former is an organizing principle underpinning exploitation and domination exercised in multiple dimensions of social life, including economic and political organization, sexual and gender relations, structures of knowledge, households and spirituality. It is the hidden dark underside of European global modernity. Colonialism is the reorganization of politico-administrative power in order to enable the matrices of power mentioned above. Coloniality is evident in the organization of power, of identity or humanity and humanism, and in the structures of knowledge; hence the idea of coloniality of power, identity and knowledge. The latter has expressed itself most emphatically in the evolution of Eurocentrism and its ability to conceal itself as a narrative of the modern, the rational-objective and the universal (Grosfoguel 2002).

Seen from this point of view, diplomatic theory becomes a monologue among Europeans about what they fundamentally agree about, namely: diplomacy and diplomatic theory as a story of the West about its role in modernizing the world. Therefore, time has come for a decolonial turn necessary in transforming the Western monologue to a diverse multilogue, giving a fuller account of how different peoples have handled the affairs of the polity throughout history.

2. EUROCENTRISM AND THE MONOLOGISM OF DIPLOMATIC THEORY

Arising from its roots in Eurocentrism, diplomatic theory is a monologue of the West about itself, its heritage, its voices and its archives. It is premised on the monotopic global design in which other cultures and peoples exist only as “the other”. It is a view from the epistemic West, a locus of enunciation that does not entrap Westerners only, but other unsuspecting voices forced into rationality’s devices such as “objective” analysis, free-floating signifier and zero-point thinking as “scientific method”. Even non-Westerners who have been taught the Western illusions of rationality and its conventions of writing have found themselves having to move from the basis that the West’s discourse is a universal discourse, and that the West’s experiences are those of the entire world; if not, they must be internationalized at the expense of diversity of thought. From this locus of enunciation, diplomatic theory is an account of what great Western men did, great Western countries accomplished, and great Western thinkers said; but this is presented in a universalizing language that hides the epistemic location and pretends to be international or unlocated.

It is, as Archie Mafeje has said of Eurocentrism generally, premised on the assumption that the knowing subject is a free-floating signifier or an objective subject. As Walter D. Mignolo (2009) and Santiago Castro-Gomez (2005) have argued separately, scholars have assumed for a long time that the knowing subject is transparent, dis-incorporated from the known and untouched by the geopolitical configuration of the world, unaffected by cultural underpinnings of the “modern world” as made and, therefore, that the subject begins from a hubristic point zero, mapping the world and its problem, classifying its people and projecting what is good for them. This is an illusion in the double sense: firstly, that human beings do not place before them the issues that they deal with, but history does. The second argument is that we do not choose the issues that we deal with or respond to, in the sense that we would not be calling for decolonizing knowledge if it was not dominated and controlled; we would not be making the case for epistemic justice if not for the epistemicides that we have encountered under the mantra of Eurocentrism. Rationality as a Western method is therefore an illusion masquerading as a science. To sustain itself, it needs to commit epistemicides just as the diplomatic practice it glorifies was also accompanied by cultural murder and even genocides that remain hidden in the mainstream discourse. The mapping of the world in Eurocentric terms is therefore a violent process.

Encountered outside the epistemic West, therefore, modern diplomatic theory is a field of “epistemicides” that manifest as erasure of other knowledges and the silencing of other voices in relation to the question of diplomacy. This problem, that haunts modern diplomacy and its theory, comes from the very model of global

power that came to shape the modern world, its knowledge and its political/power arrangements since the late 15th century. The making of what JM Blaut (1993) has called the coloniser's model of the world, accompanied by the perspective that assumes one province of the world, its peoples and its thinkers as the alpha and omega of theory and thought. The related mode of knowledge production universalises this provincialism. At the base of this is the model of power that Quijano (2007) called coloniality.

Eurocentrism is a perspective and model of knowledge production that began its systematic formation in the 17th century, spreading to the world at the same time the imperial European elite took dominion over other peoples, their territories, their universes and their economies. It thus became globally hegemonic at the same time as European colonial power also globalized. So, alongside Western culture, Western notions of political organization revolving around the will to power and nation-state idea, Western economic system of capitalism, Western religion in the form of Christianity and Eurocentric knowledge displaced and subordinated. In this sense, therefore, it is important to establish the fact that the model of global power has Eurocentric knowledge as one of the hierarchies that constitute it. Outside of this context, the exclusion of African and other experiences from the monologue of diplomatic theories would seem accidental and temporal, rather than arising from the very nature of the modern world as a Western-centric world, what JM Blaut sees as the coloniser's world. For Chinweizu (1987), in political, economic and social terms, this world is, "the west and the rest of us". It is in this context that it is hard to dismiss as unreasonable the observation that, like capitalism, Christianity, Western culture and Western knowledge is also encountered on the periphery as imperialism (Ake 1979). Imperialism is simply defined in Johnson's *Sorrows of empire* (2004) as a systematic domination and exploitation of weaker states and nations by stronger ones. In the knowledge terrain, this manifests in the erasure of histories, ideas, ways of knowing and politics of others in order to construct a coloniser's model of the world.

What are the implications of this on diplomatic theory as an important frame for analysing the practice of diplomacy and international relations everywhere today? What will be the basis for decolonial turn in diplomatic theory, especially in relation to matters of concern for peoples and countries in the global South and Africa, in particular? These questions are posed as crucial checkpoints that must be opened in the discussion about decolonizing social science, with special reference to international relations and diplomatic studies. This article contributes to this debate.

British historian, Kwasi Kwarteng (2012), studied, what he terms "ghosts of the British empire", the empire as the work of men, "filled with ideas of class, loosely defined, of intellectual superiority, and paternalism". Kwarteng found what

must now be obvious: that the empire built a world in which there was a distinction between what the imperial man wanted to see at home (progress, economic growth, industrialisation, security, human rights) and what it actively produced abroad (underdevelopment, conflict, dependency, exploitation, inhumanity). To this day, there is a clash between the “universalised aspirations” and the global designs that help to reproduce the opposite for developing countries. Secondly, the empire was a sophisticated mechanism for controlling the world for the benefit of the metropole; its apologists claim that this produced global democracy, but a close look at the world it produced from the very beginning was closer to “benign authoritarianism” on a world scale (Kwarteng 2012:4-8). The third ghost of empire is what Kwarteng calls the empire’s “audacity of its self-belief” (Kwarteng 2012:397); an illusion that is evident in British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli’s proclamation that, “our Empire is an Empire of liberty, of truth, and of justice” (Kwarteng 2012:391), which has become a western declaration that theirs is a cause of progress, democracy and human rights.

Figure A below is a cartoon that became famous in the US in the late 19th century, depicting Britain as a terrible octopus, the devilfish hidden in Egyptian waters far away, but present in every continent in hidden hands of exploitation, domination, violence, injustice, and taunts. It depicts a haunting presence that produces disaster for others. It illustrates this ability of the octopus, the Empire, to speak modernisation, civilisation and democracy from its head deep in the seas and yet cause mayhem, violence, barbarity, and dictatorship through its many tentacles in various subordinate places at the same time. This remains true to this day. The octopus of deceit and conceit (Chabal 2012) can only be unmasked if we learn to ask from Egypt, Uruguay or Fiji: what fundamentally is the problem that produces problems.²

One of the ghosts of the empire is the Eurocentric narrative that modern diplomatic theory fits itself into. The coloniality of knowledge finds practical manifestation in the organization of knowledge production, and therefore the production of theory. The centrality to modern knowledge of the modern university as a product also of European Enlightenment is crucial in this. The Kantian-Humboldtian university, in particular, that emerged after the Renaissance and Enlightenment universities (concerned with humanistic and secular education respectively) is crucial in this discussion, because it produces knowledge in the service of the world organized into nation-states (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012). It was the dominant idea of a university, until its gradual replacement by the corporate university in service of neoliberal global designs in the 1970s.

2 This question is Aime Cessaire’s most profound contribution to those willing to undertake epistemic disobedience. See Cessaire 1972:2.

Figure A: An 1882 cartoon in the US media depicting British Imperialism

(Source: Granger Historical Archive, <<http://www.granger.com>>)

Both have perpetuated Eurocentrism and epistemic injustices, and what Caribbean thinker, Lewis R Gordon (2006), calls the harm of disciplinary decadence. By this, Gordon means the failure of knowledge organized into natural and social/human sciences and further sub-divided into disciplines and sub-disciplines to understand the problems of the world and to provide solutions. This decadence also takes the form of arrogance where scholars come to take their disciplines as superior and complete, even though disciplines are boxes incapable of enabling the knowers to see the big picture; so thinking through disciplines is to think inside the box. Disciplined knowledge produces people who think only about a part of the problem. Constructed almost wholly in the West, these disciplines were handed down to dominate the “other” during imperialism and colonial rule so that they, too, think through, perpetuate and defend epistemic boxes they did not create. Both the old and new diplomatic theories are produced as narratives in defence or perpetuation of disciplinary decadence, rather than in challenging it.

3. OF FOUNDING FATHERS: A HERITAGE OF COLONIAL PATRIARCHY?

It is impossible to understand the chief claim that diplomatic theory owes its origin to Niccolo Machiavelli and a succession of Western political theorists and philosophers to this day, without understanding coloniality as a hierarchized model of power on which the modern world and its international system are built. Machiavelli becomes the lodestar of the period, only because long traditions of thinking about relations among polities that exist outside the Western tradition are erased and silenced into oblivion.

Machiavelli stands tall in the narrative of modernity. His thoughts about diplomacy thus become the only ones worth exalting in the 15th and 16th century in order to erase those of others before him and those who lived at the same time as him. It was in the turbulent city-states of 15th century Italy that modern diplomacy was born with the invention of resident embassies in order to make the claim that Machiavelli is the father of diplomatic theory plausible. It is claimed *raison d'état* is considered central to modern diplomatic thought and Machiavelli “discovered” it, thus posthumously takes the honour of inventing the systematic doctrine of diplomacy.

Geoffrey Berridge, the British authority on diplomacy and an influential voice in the literature and narrative of diplomatic theory, Maurice Keens-Soper and TG Otte (2001) credited the Western tradition of diplomatic thought and practice for the very genealogy of diplomacy. For them the whole story begins with a European man and ends with a North-American man of European extraction: Europe is therefore the alpha and omega of diplomacy and its theory. Therefore the contribution of non-Western actors before and after Machiavelli must be fitted into this created historical fact and its narrative, in order to confer legitimacy of it in the eyes of the Western/Westernised thinker.³ In the book discussed above, Gucciardini, Grotius, Richelieu, Wiequefort, Callieres and Satow, all males from the Euro-American world, join Machiavelli and Kissinger as fathers of modern diplomacy. It is therefore also a patriarchal narrative, consistent with global coloniality which has privileged not only the European who is a white Christian, but also a heterosexual male.

Machiavelli's diplomatic papers called *Legations* or *Missions*, as well his *The prince* and *The discourses on the first ten book of Titus Livy*, mostly written after Machiavelli was forced out of his diplomatic position in 1512, form the bedrock of the Eurocentric modern diplomatic archive (Berridge 1982:10-11). The letters and writings of the other men of his time enlisted for the honour of

3 This is a consistent trend in mainstream literature on diplomacy from classics like Behrens (1936:616-627), Mattingly (1965) and more recent works like Anderson (1993) and Sharp (2009).

being associated with the evolution of diplomatic theory also become an important part of the archive. From Machiavellian ideas comes the association of diplomacy with attempts by states to increase their power. Dominance through negotiations in the context of relative anarchy became one of the central assumptions of modern diplomatic theory of international relations (Aaron 1966). From this, diplomatic theory inherits the assumptions that diplomacy is primarily about what states do to manage a complex environment and navigate anarchy.

Francisco Guicciardini, another ambassador of the Republic of Florence, is credited with associating diplomacy with inter-state negotiations and that diplomacy depended on diplomats of good reputation. Indeed, today, the art of negotiating is considered the very essence of diplomacy, as well as questions of timing, ripeness of time and the standing of diplomats. Key negotiations, especially those that ended major European wars, are considered pivotal in marking out periods in the evolution of diplomacy in the world (Berridge 1982:33-42). Only Guicciardini is worth mentioning in this and the whole experience of peoples who built societies on the basis of the same principles, even before Florence was born, are assumed not to exist.

Hugo Grotius of Holland is credited for authoring the basis of modern diplomatic law by drawing from his experience as an advocate of the Dutch East India Company between 1599 and 1621 when he was exiled to France. Today, dominant voices in diplomatic theory and international relations describe as Grotian the perspective that international society as a system of rules and institutions is central to modern diplomacy. The influential English School of International Relations draws its central tenets from this, which is thought to be Grotian (Linklater and Suganami 2006). This extends to debates about ethical and moral questions that explains order and justice in international society as an antidote against assumed anarchy (Jackson 2000). So, it must be assumed that “others” operated in a diplomacy without any law or legal reasoning or rules of any form.

4. TRADITIONAL AND NEW DIPLOMACY: DIALOGUE WITHOUT OTHERS

These “fathers” of diplomacy and its theory laid the basis for both the so-called traditional or statist perspectives and the new or non-statist perspectives in diplomatic theory. This categorisation is taken for granted in the dominant discourses as representing dichotomies in diplomacy and diplomatic theory. The literature predominantly draws on what is called traditional diplomatic theory and what is supposed to be alternative perspectives to this in the emerging literature that emphasise non-state actors, innovation and recent breakthroughs in diplomatic theory and practice (Eban 1998).

Traditionalists are said to be those who focus on diplomacy in which the state is the central actor. The literature relates the systematic evolution of this view to Europe after the Enlightenment, inspired by classic texts of men discussed above; also men of ancient Europe (Anderson 1993). Thus, the evolution of diplomacy and diplomatic theory are credited with a shift from medieval to modern, which is a story about Europe that assumes Europe's narrative to be somehow the story of the world as well; a clear example of the erasure of others' experiences. The shift from feudalism to a system of sovereign nation-states that crystallized in 1648, is a European experience assumed to be universal and international. Therefore, the traditional diplomatic theory's assumptions about the interstate system as the site of traditional theory are not a universal and international story, but a European experience that is presented as a story of the world history (Philpott 1999).

The Peace of Westphalia that ended Europe's Thirty Years War is said to have given diplomacy and its theory critical organising concepts, such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, interstate negotiations, equality of states, and balance of power. It is, in a way, the genesis of international law of diplomacy. The concept of balance of power emerged as a guarantee of peace among European states, but the same enabled the dominant European states (Austria, Britain, France and Prussia/Germany) to export violence elsewhere, but this is not part of the mainstream discourse in diplomatic theory yet. The dominant narrative accords the experience of Europe precedence over experiences of the "other" with the birth of the new state system, its principles and expansion, which was domination, exploitation, barbarity on a grand scale and violence.

The idea of the nation-state arrived in Africa, Asia and the Americas in the form of the system of colonial rule. In the colonies only white people had citizenship rights, while the rest, especially indigenous people, were objects, that is, dispensable people. Racist diplomacy was preeminent in the sense that it accorded preference to whites until the 20th century (but hitherto, the author sustains the notion that it has not stopped). It was an interstate and diplomatic system haunted to the core by the colour line. It was a colonial diplomacy in that it was in the service of imperial designs, constantly claiming, as Disraeli did, that the "other" actually desires the interventions of the empire. It was premised on colonial states relating on the basis of values, rights and interests that only applied to Western states, while maintaining control of a host of subordinate states called colonies as dependencies without rights, access to values and without interests. Yet, the dominant narrative presents this in a manner that Europe's advances are internationalised and thus the trauma of the "other" is hidden.

Another pillar of diplomatic theory that is problematic is the assumed distinction between high and low politics. The former is said to be fundamentally concerned with matters of war, peace, employment of state power against other states,

demarcation of territories, arms control, and military alliance cohesion. Diplomacy is presented as a civilised activity of order in a world where high politics engenders anarchy (Bull 1977). Matters of socio-economy including human development, humanitarian aid, communication, information, and so forth, are deemed peripheral issues of low politics and, therefore, outside the mainstream of diplomatic theory. In this context, the idea that diplomacy is war by other means reveals that the underlying logic of power is one of domination and war, and diplomacy has the same purpose. This does not give space for alternative experiences, such as those that do not draw a line between low and high politics, and which privilege power as co-existence, rather than domination.

Traditional diplomatic theory has a low regard for the role of the so-called non-state and sub-state. It is associated with the growing role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), corporations, international governmental organisations, media institutions, criminal and terror groups (Cooper and Hocking 2000). They are assumed to exist only on the margins of state-dominated diplomacy. In the global South, the state is part of an inheritance of shame from colonialism; a manifest fact of global coloniality in that they were imposed. So, the parochial tendency that critics within the mainstream point out about the TDT is not just about the state-centric nature of the perspective, but also its Eurocentric orientation. It does not happen only in European controlled governments, but thanks to universalization of logic, of coloniality and of power, other governments too replicate this as if normal. The injustice is not only one relating to a dim view on low politics and non-state sectors, but it is also cultural and epistemic injustice.

Associated with the failure of traditional diplomacy to prevent a devastating war in early 20th century Europe, new diplomacy is announced as a promise to overhaul the entire diplomatic system and to fashion a new, more peaceful international order (Stevenson 1997). This is predicated on the need for support of the community of nations and multilateral relations broadly, a greater understanding of public opinion and its impact on foreign policy, and the growing effect of communications infrastructure. What is generally seen as marking alternativeness to new diplomatic theories is awareness of the power of new technologies for economic expansion, political stability and security and how these impact on the interstate system. All these matters sound innocent, until one realises that the new era of democracy was underpinned by the dawn of history announced by advocates of liberalism (a label for a specific brand of Western thought) associated with the former US president, Woodrow Wilson. It would embody the narrative of liberalism as the “saviour of Europe” and a champion of a “new world order”, a utopian tradition of diplomacy (Walworth 1986). This was diplomacy interested in peaceful co-existence among “major powers” in the world (Tucker 2004). It is thought to be a shift beyond the state and its secretive tendencies towards a more public

form of diplomacy and a “democratisation of foreign policy” (Kissinger 1994:53). The new agenda for diplomacy would be disarmament instead of arms race, free trade and self-determination. The inception of the League of Nations in 1918, and later the United Nations Organisation, would also see the expansion of summit diplomacy, the emergence of new actors in the form of corporations, NGO and intergovernmental organisations, and the expansion in the range of issues on the substantive agenda, from food security to health for all, to women empowerment, environment, and so forth (Hocking 1999).

The dominant narrative in traditional theory also speaks of diplomatic theory as giving stronger emphasis to shared values and interests and helping the interstate system to develop a regular pattern of interaction determined by national interests and governed by accepted rules of diplomacy. On this basis, TDT involve debates about values, norms and interests as central tenets of diplomacy. These values, norms and interests are assumed to be universal, because Western states have them and spread them to the world as a form of moral duty (Kissinger 1994). Democracy, rule of law and human rights are among the values around which consensus in the dominant literature exists as crucial for international relations and diplomacy.

The mainstream diplomatic theory, therefore, tends to justify its neglect of many diplomatic actors by casting these actors as a problem where they do not align with statist thinking about international relations. It takes a dim view of the public nature of IGO and NGO meetings, seeing this approach as about playing to the gallery, taking time from the business of real negotiations (Berridge 1982:158).

5. DIPLOMACY WITHOUT OTHERS: THE SCANDAL OF THE ENGLISH SCHOOL

Mainstream perspectives in diplomatic theory and IR, from realists to idealists to constructivists, post-modernists and Marxists have shown themselves committed to preserving Western ways of seeing the world. They assume as a given the position of the West in world history and its reproduction as a monologue. The Europeanisation of the world was presumed to be for the good of the others whose lives were changed, whose cultures were wiped out, whose humanity was questioned, whose knowledges were erased and whose voices were silenced (Headley 2007).

Andrew Linklater (2010:11) has this to say about the English School, “The English School is a Western theory that seeks to explain and indeed to defend a Western set of practices while recognising that international society must continue to evolve now that it has outgrown Europe and the West”. He goes on to claim that the English School deserves credit for challenging dominant views. He goes even further to say it, “most clearly understands the necessity of building bridges between Western and non-Western perspectives on international relations”.

Sensing the need to demonstrate this ability to reach out, Linklater says, “[s]uch bridges can explain in more detail the actual processes by which non-Western ways of life came to be incorporated in a European-dominated international society” (Linklater 2010:12). He does not specify these processes of incorporation, but it is clear from what is said that the supposedly positive outcome of the processes are actually highly problematic examples of audacity and self-praise. It does not occur to Linklater that incorporation in a European-dominated society requires injustice against others. To be incorporated, the other people and their ways must disappear as independent and different in order to exist as incorporated “others” within the Westernized world system. No people live and desire to be incorporated in a dominant sector of society so that they do not exist as unique and different people. No group wishes to lose their freedom, independence, ways of living and thinking, but when they do, they often experience this loss as pain and injustice.

Incorporation created a Eurocentric international society that the English School and the rest of mainstream international relations take for granted, and thus fails to raise difficult questions, such as, if a society was made recently, what happened to other societies or ways of existing in the world? But in this case, we know that African traditions, music and hairstyles, for instance, can be seen appearing in the Western society, owing to the barbaric and cruel process of slavery. Diplomacy is one of the fields in which the culture of one is imposed on the “other” under the guise of professionalism and diplomacy.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL SOUTH AND AFRICA

The dominant narrative about diplomacy is an alienated discourse with limited value for explaining the role of the global South and its regions, like Africa, in changing international relations. It makes it hard to account for various forms of inter-state relations that predate Western contact, an important part of the early indigenous states and their civilisations. For instance, diplomacy played a crucial role in Mapungubwe, ancient Ghana and ancient Nubia. In spite of this, as indicated above, pre-modern diplomatic experience in the literature is European. It makes it difficult to account for diplomacy of modern pan-Africanists like WEB du Bois, CLR James, George Padmore, Marcus Garvey, Henry Sylvester Williams, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor’s Negritude, Aime Cesaire, Jomo Kenyatta, Cheik Anta Diop, and Carter G Woodson. The discussion of the ideas emanating from the thoughts and actions of these actors is beyond the scope of this article, but suffice to mention some of the works that are relevant in analyzing this.⁴ It is not designed to explain the South agency that was represented by Suharto of Indonesia, Gamal Abdel Nasser and Jawarlal Nehru of Indian post-World War II, leading to

4 Glazier (1973); Nnamdi (1970); Du Bois (2007).

the Bandung consensus, the Non-Aligned Movement and G77. It is not framed to do justice to the agency of the revolutionary diplomacy of Haile Selassie, Gamal Adel Nasser, Ben Bella, David Dacko, William Tubman, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Milton Obote, and Julius Nyerere.⁵

The diplomatic theory that guides the analysis of diplomatic engagements across the North-South divide is predominantly the Machiavelli-Kissinger tradition of diplomatic theory that reinforces the diplomatic practice of this tradition. It is the mainstream theory extended to the developing world on the assumption that what works for the West should also work for “others”. Scholars from the West who have taken further the work of generations of thinkers on this subject from Machiavelli to Kissinger, have further entrenched Western theory as universal and commonsense. They have conspired to hide the injustice of universalising the traditions of practice of one region and thought; thus imposing on “others” ideas of state and its diplomacy, as well as diplomatic theories.

For instance, the diplomacy of major emerging powers from the developing world in the UN and other structures of multilateral global governance is understood and framed through the Western tradition of thought. By this I mean that the concepts and assumptions we employ to interpret the emergence of major developing countries as key and influential actors in international diplomacy, especially in multilateral negotiations on trade, climate change, international development and finance for development, come from the study of states and economies of the North, whose circumstances are very different from those of Brazil, India, Indonesia, Turkey, and South Africa today. There is a clear attempt to subject the experiences of the developing countries to the thinking from the West, including the idea that states are in a struggle for survival constantly seeking hegemony over one another even though a closer examination of the conduct, thinking and intentions of these countries can suggest another possibility, such as peaceful existence on the basis of justice, fairness and equity.

Africa is analysed using borrowed concepts, like regional hegemon based on a concept of power implied in the Western paradigm of will to power as domination, even though Enrique Dussel (2008), a philosopher from the South, has shown that there is another logic called the will to live, the will to co-exist. The motto of the peaceful rise of China is cast aside in the literature that looks at 15th century Spain and 19th century Germany and Britain. Hence, there is this obsession with the potential of China dominating the globe, because dominant schools of thought come from the tradition of dominating empires that succeeded one another and dominated on their behalf, the US being the latest. It is assumed that power in

5 Space does not permit the discussion of some of the salient ideas that these voices have contributed. See, for instance, Julius Nyerere’s idea of vectors of unity for a new world in the essay, Nyerere (1979).

the hands of “others” would be used for the same power: to exclude, subordinate, brutalise and denigrate many in order to exalt a few.

The growing wealth and confidence of some countries of the South is framed as “emerging powers”, a discourse framed in the Western notion of power as dominance and competition, rather than co-existence and the will to live. The dominant literature has concluded that the West cannot be out-competed in the arena of military power and now the focus is on whether the “emerging powers” employ so-called soft power, though this term is used to mean softer forms of imperialism and thus it confuses the growing role of the South as some replica of the rise of Western colonial empires in previous centuries. The association of the term “soft power” with enticement, attraction, persuasion, and marketing belies the fact that it is attraction between a global empire and weaker “others”, meaning it is not really soft for those on the receiving end. Many of these terms, on examination of their genealogy, provide the emergence of a complex set of meanings that leads to a big difference between how a concept is understood when seen from the view of the dominant of the world and when viewed from the vantage point of the dominated.

The thin, but growing literature interpreting African diplomacy expects Africa to be a province of “international” society as a key site of diplomacy (Murithi 2014; Brown and Harman 2013). The starting point places the European experience, audacity of self-belief, and its myths about itself worked into dominant theories and stories about diplomacy at the core of the discourse about African diplomacy. The concepts central to Western thinking about diplomacy, including statist versus non-statist diplomacy, state and non-state actors, are taken for granted as if they were not context specific and regional in their purview. Progress in African diplomacy comes to mean the extent to which it conforms to the Western-centric mainstream. The deficiencies have to do with Africa’s lagging behind “international” (read Western) practice. These include the size and capacity of its diplomatic service, the ability to negotiate to the advantage of Africa’s diplomacy and national interest.

Africa’s unity or united stances in international affairs can, in this context, be seen in the negative light as a problem in the world’s march forward. For instance, Africa’s Ezulwini Consensus details the continent’s decisions on the UN Security Council reform, insisting on the principle of adequate regional representation, demanding two permanent seats for Africa. This has been criticised as being a “showstopper”, a spoiler in negotiations with a potential to reach some compromise. It is thought to be unreasonable mainly because the Permanent Council members have no interest in ceding any ground to forces for change (Cilliers 2015). China’s role here mirrors that of states that have been recruited into the centre in order to become lubricants of the global order of power, even against the interests of developing countries (Bond 2013).

Spivak's question mentioned above stimulated a twenty-year debate about the voices of subalterns and the capacity of the dominant to hear, which unfortunately has eluded the disciplines of political science and international relations. Thus, an opportunity to grapple with the question of silence and erasure was missed (Morris 2010). Indeed, the Asian, African, Caribbean and Latin American experiences and "voices" are conspicuous by their absence in the works of the few European-North American men who dominate diplomatic theory. They are cast outside diplomatic history in the process of centering the Western subject in the narrative. They are absent, because they are not in the record; their archive may be assumed to be non-existent by virtue of its absence in the diplomatic theory literature. It can lead to a rhetorical question as to whether subalterns speak of relations among polities and states in their various forms, which in fact is the question whether they are "being listened to" as they speak from the hellish zone of nonbeings that modernity requires for it to exist as a zone of beings.

It is an epistemic positionality that justifies calls for radical decolonisation of thought, including the jettisoning of conceptual devices employed for perpetuation of social science of the colonial empire (Wa Thiong'o 1986). What would happen to diplomatic theory if concepts of will to live, living well, circles of life, peaceful co-existence, liberation, decolonization, decoloniality, *Ubuntu* (alternative humanism as co-existence), Africinity, pluriversal world, post-Western world were made central to the discourse? Some suggest that only then can we think about transcending modernity as a single path of life towards a true pluriversal possibility for the world (Grosfoguel 2009). What is the implication of unthinking the assumptions upon which diplomatic theory is based: the state as only the nation-state, the notion of power as dominance, the values as classic Western values only, the models as post-Enlightenment European experiences?⁶ At the heart of all this is the pursuit of epistemic justice as an important corollary of political, economic, and cultural justice that the whole project of decolonisation and liberation entail.

7. CONCLUSION

Central to the argument of this article is that the decolonization of knowledge and epistemic spaces begin with unmasking the coloniality of current innovations in knowledge, including those taking place in diplomatic theory. It makes the point that at the heart of the problem is a new model of power that led to the idea of knowledge, instead of knowledges, and the dominance of one provincial and ethnocentric perspective area on the basis of its claims to rationality and universality. Diplomatic theory contributes to the perpetuation of the audacity of

6 These are questions raised for university approaches to knowledge production in Odora-Hoppers and Richards (2011).

the Western narrative about itself as the alpha and omega of thought, presuming that, as Berridge's famous book title implies, diplomatic thought and practice is a monologic story from Greece to the US, a story by the West about its esteemed role in the long duration of history. So, diplomatic theory is yet to benefit from decolonial efforts in pursuit of epistemic justice and an end to the imperialism of social science (Ake 1979). This article limits itself, therefore, to unmasking this reality by going over the key assumptions of diplomatic theory in the hope that this will stimulate debate on this and on what ought to be done to decolonise diplomatic theory. It is a critique of the dominant narrative of diplomatic theory in order to pave the way for writings on silenced and erased archives and voices as part of alternative theorizing about diplomacy or theorizing alternative diplomacy.

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