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Rethinking utopianism, international relations theory, and marginalization of Africa in global politics

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RETHINKING UTOPIANISM, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY, AND MARGINALISATION OF AFRICA IN GLOBAL POLITICS

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Many studies on utopianism tend to critique known political models such as capitalism, democracy, socialism, and dictatorship. While none of these models provide a perfect political environment, utopianism seems to be the answer to prevent all political abuses. From public administration point of view, the harmonious co-existence of all political models without any interference may help to conceptualise a potential change in our current hostile global political environment and limit the marginalisation of other societies as presented in the international relations literature. Modernisation theories, debatably, have assumed that the principles of modern political administration will become more important than other traditional institutions yet these theories, which are ascribed nonrepresentational do not consider the practical realities of the consumers of those theories. Utopianism therefore is a myth, which can only be inspirational but not pragmatically achievable because of its intangible proposed theories. This paper focuses on international relations theory and the marginalisation of Africa in the context of the utopian debate. It concludes that in the absence of clear acceptable universal respect for all nations, cultures, and religions the quest for utopianism will continue to be a mere academic discourse.

Key words: international relations; theory; utopianism; public administration; Africa; marginalisation.

1 INTRODUCTION

In every discipline a wide range of theories are generated by scholars whose research interests focus in their particular areas of study. As a sub-discipline of political science, international relations (IR) have numerous theories in an attempt to "solve the problems and puzzles of state behaviour" (Slaughter 1995,

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718). Basically, according to Slaughter, there are three schools of thought in IR theory: realism, institutionalism and liberalism. Given the focus of this paper, Realism and Institutionalism are not discussed here. Liberalism as an ideological concept comes in many forms including-sociological, interdependence, republican, and institutional with the assumption that people "generally take a positive view of human nature" (Jackson and Sorensen 1999, 109). Thus, there is faith in human reasoning where rational principles need to be applied in IR. Understanding liberalism plays into many fields of IR including economics and politics. Liberal IR theory accepts the centrality of amicable approaches to conflicts or the "view that peace is a quality achieved by civil societies" (Buchan 2002, 407). According to Goldstein (2003), liberalism as an ideology tends to shape state policies. Given the normative nature of liberal IR theory, Slaughter categorises liberalism as Wilsonia, -liberal internationalism- which is "understood as a program for world democracy" (Slaughter 1995, 727).

Though there have been efforts to minimize liberalism, Slaughter notes that liberal ideas "begin with individuals and groups operation in both domestic and transnational civil society" (Slaughter 1995, 728). The international system through its numerous alliances and organizations seek to accomplish peace by reducing conflicts. This idea, Buchan (2002), Jackson and Sorensen (2005), and Slaughter (1995) argue is one of the liberal assumptions, which seeks a peaceful co-existence of all states. The authors further maintain that it is the "best way to resolve conflicts and to promote cooperation in the service of common ends is to find ways to align these underlying state interest, either by changing individual and group preferences or by ensuring that they are accurately represented" (Slaughter 1995, 729). So the basic understanding of liberalism, which is by no means exhaustively discussed here, is that Africa's interest should be part of the IR theory and the Wilsonian school of thought. It is through the incorporation of all states behaviours- political, social, religious, governance, and cultures that a global utopian theory could be achieve and acceptable.

Academically, politics is presumed to be the process through which individuals, groups, and nations reach agreement on a common or collective action despite their differences with the hope that the said action will achieve an intended *agreeable* goal. Throughout history there has been an endless number of institutions at various (community, regional, national, and global) levels in an attempt to achieve a peaceful, liveable environment for all to be in harmony but religion, politics, administrative practices, and ideological beliefs continue to divide and defeat the very existence of humanity. The greatest enemy of the human race is the human race itself as it refuses to accept diversity in its original form per creation but rather self selected few individuals, societies, and nations (the supper powers, the colonisers, slave masters, and their leaders) tend to impose or dictate what life and governance ought to be through their understanding of administration, religion, politics, and ideological beliefs. Such imposition of the few on the majority has seen the impasse of competing interest among individuals, groups, societies, and most importantly, nations. Utopianism presents a challenge for comparative political analysts as the concept questions any analytical reasoning to justify one form of government over the other. As a result, relations among nations seem to focus more on the interests and demands of powerful nations (Gavshon 1981). For example, the continent of Africa has "been both constructed and deconstructed by external forces and powers for economic and political interest, especially as the continent became a fertile battle ground for the superpowers" during the scramble for African and the Cold War after 1945 (Antwi-Boasiako 2014, 116).

There have been several IR theories, which tend to argue for a worldview where all would live under common rules, democratic principles, in harmony, though no one is advocating for world government. Nations have the right to organize and participate in any form of government since the freedom for a country to decide its political path affirms its national sovereignty. But the global political process is not free from competing ideological (the East/West conundrum), religions, and administrative interest. There is a dominant liberal theory, which seems to augment these international relations theories including utopianism. But one has to be very cautious when those democratic, religious, and administrative principles are used to provide "ideological justifications…to cloak what are otherwise seen as narrow self-interest"[2] of the few: The proponents. Utopianism is defined here as an idealist concept, which maintains the possibility of a "moment of openness and the promise of futurity in the uncontrollable adventure of modern democratic life" (Keohane 2002, 40). Others, including Charles (2012, 472–503), have also defined utopianism as:

A place that is impossible to arrive at by any known route, in that it is not really a place at all. It is therefore essential that, in order to reach utopia, one takes an unknown and unknowable route, a path determined by its indeterminacy, a passage that deconstructs its own rationalistic epistemological foundations.

The philosophical narratives, which may imaginary lead to a harmonious liberal principles, utopianism, are buried in "philosophical origins in Enlightenment thought" (Heinze 2008, 105). Unfortunately, the literature on the utopian ideology stems from normative precepts of liberalism as the template for international relations. Heinze (2008, 106), for example, did explore the evolution of Lockean liberal theory of the state "to identify the fundamental normative postulates of liberal theory as it pertains to international relations." But the question is what is Enlightenment? And under whose definition should Enlightenment be acceptable? How are these theories universally applicable to the utopian conundrum? In fact, the so-called classical philosophical theories have their limitations and could not be universally accepted as Morgenthau had noted that these narratives must be seen as myopic ideological justifications. In affirming Morgenthau's suspicion of the few, Heinze argues that international liberalism, using the Iraq War and the George W. Bush Doctrine[3] as examples, is "deeply suspicious of the balance of power politics (ibid., 110)." Thus, dominant groups and powerful nations such as the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and the United States are quick to justify their actions (atrocities) regardless of the outcome on weaker nations. For example, the invasion of Iraq by the United States under the George W. Bush Administration was for America to remake its foreign policy through its imperial ambitions. Ivan Kenneally noted that such an invasion was "an expression of their (the Bush Administration) dismissal of non-Western cultures (Kenneally 2007, 142)." Such justifications, Morgenthau would argue, tend to marginalise individuals, groups, societies, and nations that do not fit the normative categorisations as presented in the IR literature, hence the enigma with utopianism.

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[2] To Morgenthau, the conflicts around the world are about the interests and ideologies of individual nations and not what is necessarily good for the rest of the world. See Morgenthau (1993).

[3] See the origins of the George W. Bush's doctrine, available at https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages /frontline/shows/iraq/etc/cron.html.

2 AFRICA: POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, AND GEOPOLITICAL DIVERSITY

This article limits its discussion on utopianism to the marginalisation of the African continent as it is treated in the broader IR narratives. It uses historical events, slavery and colonization, in particular, and contemporary political events on the continent to argue that despite the classical philosophical political theories and political science as an academic discipline in its contemporary context, "political knowledge as a whole, consists of the observation of data and hypothetical explanation of these data" (ibid., 141). The understanding of law of nature through scientific methodological explanation of data, for example, is "purely theoretical, detached knowledge of things physical" (ibid., 142) and pragmatic (realistic). In fact, historical events are prone to interpretations therefore justification of what ought to be is only good for the presenter given the presenter's position, ideological, and political worldview.

While modern political theory tends to derive its roots from political philosophy, the marginalised African is quick to question the objectiveness of the philosophical narratives since, as Kenneally puts it, "Political philosophy is not concrete enough to provide genuine guidance for human affairs." He went on further to argue, "The very term philosophy implies that we do not possess the truth" since there is no wisdom in politics but "only the quest for wisdom" (ibid., 143) hence no one truly knows the perfect pragmatic utopian world. The narratives are only to support an idealist abstract harmonious worldview of dominant societies rejecting the rich cultures of weaker nations. If utopianism is looking for a common religion, language or culture then, in Africa, this is pragmatically impossible given the geographical differences of its countries, languages, religions, forms of administration, and other rich cultural practices. Africa, unfortunately, is not a monolithic geographical entity as it has been portrayed in the literature. Differences will, and do, exist in parts on the continent so therefore arguing for a common language or religion in the name of utopian world is highly impossible. Similarly, the quest to fight for a common political ideology, either democracy or communism, has faced endless and, in most cases, senseless military confrontations.

The diverse geo-socio-political composition of Africa draws scholars into a maelstrom of vivid living histories, political debates, cultural, and social dynamics that defy simple explanations of the complexities of the continent, hence the utopian conundrum in Africa. In fact, the classical philosophical narratives fail to comprehend Africa's cultural, political, and religious complexities. Any intellectual discourse about the continent must also reflect the socio-political realities to provide a framework for grappling with the "vast regional diversities and contradictions"[4] in relation to African history. Hence the focus on slavery and colonialism is an attempt to chronicle how the oppressed (Africans) have interacted with the oppressors (slave/colonial masters) to maintain their own culture, religion, and way of life. Using the two variables as benchmarks in the context of IR analysis as it has been for centuries, the concept of utopianism means the worldview of dominant societies becomes superior and countries that do not conform to the so-called moral values of dominant societies are marginalised as noted by Ivan Kenneally and H. J. Morgenthau. While there is plethora of African studies in other disciplines, the IR narratives in the academia tend to marginalise Africa since post-colonial IR critical theory continues to reference traditional IR literature,

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[4] Reviewers often force those who write on Africa to use the so-called classical literature in Africa, which were written by non-Africans. See Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie (2010).

which unfortunately has become the template for any intellectual discourse.[5] As Hernandez and Mancuso (1989) noted "International relations theorists take what they know about the world and create theories that rationalise the phenomenon known as world politics" (Hernandez and Mancuso 1989). IR critical theory by default is about power nations and their relations with others. IR politics, therefore, is not the production of justice and fairness but how powerful nations justify themselves and actions to weaker nations.

There is lack of interest in Africa in the IR discourse but this trend, arguably, appears to be reversing in the academia because studying Africa according to Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie (2010, 7) seems to refine "Hobbesian impulse-short lived, self-centred, impatient with collaboration, and certainly somewhat brutish." Unfortunately, the continent is seen as a laboratory with pliable theory-supporting subjects. For centuries, Europeans whose narratives are based on their concept of how the world out to be, have written on African politics, insisting on how Africans ought to behave to be accepted in the international community. Some African political leaders such as Nelson Mandela (South Africa) and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) who refused to conform to Western political demands were initially labelled as terrorists but their people (Africans) hailed them as heroes. Thus, Africa has been referred to as the *other* in the literature and such *othering* of the continent has undeniably "inscribe [*d*] Africa as the zone of 'dark backwardness,' irrespective of all social, political, and economic evidence to the contrary" (ibid.). Using *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad as an example, Chinua Achebe noted that the Conrad's book "projects the image of Africa as the other world the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (Achebe 2006, 336) despite the economic, educational, social progress by certain countries on the continent including South Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana. Despite the plethora of scholarly IR discussions on Africa in the literature,[6] Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie opine that the politics of Africa has uphill battle in deconstructing the already negative image of Africa.

It is the image of non-conformity of Africa, as portrayed in the IR narratives, which tends to marginalise Africa as the other. For utopianism to be considered under any condition, the historical misrepresentation of African politics – traditional administrative system[7] – culture, and religion must not only be understood by outsiders but have to be respected instead of forcing Africans to behave or conform to the demands and values of other cultures. This change in perspective will not be easy to accomplish because some studies, including Wyatt-Nichol and Gibson (2014), D'Souza (2002), and Maxi Schoeman (2003), formulated from afar, have linked the lack of political and economic development on the continent to corruption, lack of education, and other vices. The next section discusses how Africa has been marginalised in the IR theory and advocates for a more comprehensive and inclusive global theory if utopianism has any imaginable practical implementation. If the framework of this theoretical concept- utopianism- has any chance of becoming a reality then the theory must be all-inclusive otherwise the concept will forever remain just an academic conundrum.

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[5] Traditional IR theories and literature have become template for any critical academic work in modern IR therefore it is highly impossible for any post-colonial work. See for example the works of Sudeshna (2014) and Csanyi (2014).

[6] See the works of Adekeye Adebajo, Adebayo Adedeji and Chris Landsberg (2007).

[7] See Kwame Badu, Antwi-Boasiako and Bonna (2009). See also Tamene (2013, 15).

3 THEORIZING UTOPIANISM FROM AN AFRICAN PRISM

While it is not within the scope of this article to offer any rigid theories of IR, the paper discusses how theories of international political behaviour[8] have marginalised the continent of Africa. IR theories as established in the literature are power-driven as the narratives, arguably, tend to discuss and follow what powerful (military and economic) nations do. Power for example, is an elusive term whose theoretical basis is interconnected with various scholarly efforts in understanding conflicts and cooperative interactions in world politics. International power theory, therefore, predicates on the notion of political realism, which views powerful nations as the only actors in IR. With such an assumption powerful nations are unwilling to surrender their national sovereignty to the regulations and rules of international institutions yet those powerful nations expect weaker African nations to bow to the dictates of powerful nations and global institutions.

For example, the United States under the George W. Bush's Administration (2000–2008) accused Iraq, Saddam Hussein, of harbouring weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the United Nations (UN), an international institution, sent its inspectors to Iraq to verify the authenticity of the claim by the Bush Administration and cautioned the US to put off any possible invasion till the work of the UN inspectors was done to ensure if such accusation has any iota of truth. But the US because of its military power ignored the request from the UN, ordered the international inspectors out of Iraq, and started its bombing campaign on a sovereign nation, which lasted for ten years (2003–2013) and tens of thousands of Iraqis, civilians, were slaughtered[9] including Americans, Britons, and other nationals who were part of Bush's so-called "*coalition of the willing*." In the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 by the United States of America, James Pfiffner[10] found out that it was an attempt for the Bush Administration to impose its political *will* on a weaker sovereign nation. Despite the well crafted presentation by the then Secretary of State of the United States, Colin Powell,[11] to the UN to convince other nations to support the US's claim against Saddam Hussein of Iraq, it came to bare that the assertion by the US, supported mainly by other powerful nations such as France and Great Britain, was unfounded. In fact, no WMD were found after ten years of the US occupation of Iraq. The question then is how do weaker nations who are at the military mercy of stronger nations solve this utopia conundrum?

It is against this background that the concept of utopianism, to the realist, is just a myth since powerful nations can behave anyway they see fit as long as their actions are in their self proclaimed national interests. For example, dependency theorists, like IR theorists, view the world as comprising major and small nations or "*centres* and *peripheries"* (Anda 2000, 42) respectively with the former exercising tremendous influence over the latter. With such a realistic and pragmatic worldview, African countries fall into the peripheries where their influences in world politics have little or no effect on the centres unless

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[8] Anda, Michael O. 2000. *International Relations in Contemporary Africa*. New York, University Press of America Inc. p. 34.

[9] Though no one really knows the exact number of people who died in the Iraq War, there have been attempts by various groups to count the number of people killed as a result of the invasion. See http://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/ten-years/.

[10] Critics see Collin Powell's presentation as falsifying facts to initiate war. Jonathan Schwarz on the speech http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-schwarz/colin-powell-wmd-iraq-war_b_2624620.html. See also Pfiffner (2005).

[11] See the full speech of Collin Power to the UN Security Council at http://web.archive.org/web/2005020413 0309/http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2003/17300.htm.

the political or economic behaviour of a periphery state is of a particular interest to the centre. As a result, utopianism as universal political concept is seen as one-sided political prescription by dominant societies whose influences affect the political behaviour of African countries (ibid., 199–219). So why look for a theory or theories for utopianism which marginalises Africa in IR?

The term theory is not only limited to its scientific formulation but also provides platforms for possible explanations on events in global politics. While theories in the hard or pure sciences such as chemistry, physics, and biology may have universal acceptability, the same cannot be said, or argued for, in the social sciences where theory construction often originates from a researcher's belief system, geographical location, political ideology, or one's worldview. Consequently, many IR theories are idiosyncratic and personal rather than neutral and generalisable. Thus, the prism through which political scientists analyse world affairs is based on the interests of the analysts. This situation, unfortunately, limits the ability of scholars to identify a theory appropriate for universal acceptability. So, what is the role of theory in the search for building utopian all-inclusive global environment?

4 UTOPIANISM: THE ROLE OF THEORY

IR theory by definition seeks to answer many questions including the objectivity of understanding a concept- utopianism, for example- to reflect a global acceptance. There must be sets of reasoning behind a theory: 1. It must serve as guidance to any study, 2. It must be an excellent apparatus to challenge global prejudices, 3. It must help to grasp the contemporary world political view, and 4. IR as a discipline is defined by its theories therefore its imperative to have a better understanding of the theories that guides the discipline and other political behaviours of nations and their actors. To understand and make sense of a theory, there is the need to relate the applicability of that theory to one's political, and daily activity. In fact, a theory should be implementable where it provides not only tangible or measurable outcomes, but also it must not be seen as an end in itself (Babbie 2001).

Political theorists have often departed from these basic standards in a clear effort to vindicate intolerable behaviour of dominant nations. Slavery and colonisation, for example, have been justified from a Biblical perspective. D'Souza (2002, B9), for example, theorises that colonisation was beneficial for Africans since it *opened* native Africans to what he calls civilisation. Here, D'Souza may be arguing that outright cruelty- slavery and colonisation- should be supported as a necessary condition in promoting economic development. The question is if the slave masters were enslaved would the authors make the same argument to justify the action of the slave/colonial masters? In recent times there have been strings of apologies from the West though it took centuries for some individuals from the West to realise the need to render sincere unconditional apologies to Africans for the atrocities of slavery and colonisation. For example, in 1985, the Head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II, rendered an apology on behalf of the church while Bill Clinton (US-President, 1992–2000) and the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Tony Blair, condemned the trade in 1998 and 2006 respectively but not on behalf of their respective countries (Reif et al. 2013). So how does the concept of utopianism become universally acceptable when the centres find it necessary to justify their atrocities? It is the lack of concrete evidence to show the path to utopianism in the literature that makes the utopian theoretical argument a myth.

5 Building utopian theory

Theories, as Babbie opines, "are systematic sets of interrelated statements intended to explain some aspect of social life" (Babbie, 2001, 51). Thus, the logical starting point is formulating, a series of linked propositions derived from a chronological collection of observations on a particular aspect of life. It must be kept in mind, however, that no one theory will ever be sufficient to yield a complete explanation to a phenomenon in the social sciences. The formulation of theory, as Dubin (1978, 6) sees it, "lies in the human behaviour of wanting to impose order and unordered experience, which is not ordered by nature hence the experiences may be...theorized about, in very different ways." Put differently, the amalgamation of different variables must be incorporated in theory construction hence the need for a theory, which incorporates Africa in the utopian theory formulation is more desirable.

Thus, building utopian theory must identify the contributions of all nations (both the centres and peripheries). In developing such a theory, one should consider the aspects of the true realities (religion, politics, and culture) in their complex and interconnected form by conceptualizing them for better understanding rather than ignoring those variables in the narratives of utopian theory building. The existing utopian theory clearly excludes Africa from its formulation, which means the theory lacks global data for the concept to be authentic. Utopian theory must therefore be revisited but as Schmid and Jongman (2006, 62–64) noted it is difficult to rewrite a theory in the absence of solid data, which means the inclusion of data from Africa gives a global dimension to the utopian narratives. The data missing from the conceptualisation of utopianism as established in the current narratives in the literature are short of the administrative, political, religious, and cultural practices in Africa. The utopian concept has been developed on the basis of political and cultural understandings of mostly Western (*centre*) ideological beliefs rather than on pragmatic experiences of other (*periphery*) cultures and political practises. Oxymoronically, this approach distorts data collection and theory formulation. There is a need for a collaborative effort among proponents of utopianism to find common variables, which might help "to begin ...theory constructions" that are applicable and implementable globally (ibid., 129).

The challenge in utopian theory building is the intentional, though debatable, neglect of African political activities in IR narratives (Vale, Swatuk and Oden 2001). This approach has marginalised the continent in the global IR discourse on the "assumption that it [Africa] lacks meaningful politics" and culture (Dunn and Shaw 2001, 63; Chomsky 2006). IR theorists use political and cultural activities of powerful nations (*centres*) as template or framework for theory construction and depict weaker nations (*peripheries*) that may deviate from the *so-called* norm as failed states (Schoeman 2003, 801–804) as the mainstream IR theorists continuously exclude data from the developing world. Thus, the genesis of IR theory is skewed toward the great powers while the concept of state in Africa is both constructed and deconstructed by the great powers for economic and political interest, especially as the continent became a fertile battleground[12] for powerful nations. While this statement recalls the duel between the West and East during the Cold War, the scramble for oil and other natural resources on the continent by the developed world continues.

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[12] Africa was an ideological battleground during the cold war; see Gavshon (1981).

For example, the Bond of 1844 or the partitioning of Africa was a scramble for wealth by the West, which left Africans with nothing in terms of economic development. During this period nearing the end of the nineteenth century, European powers claimed virtually the entire continent by bargaining for separate spheres of interest that ignored the plight of the African natives. Since the European idea of Africa was mainly limited to coastal areas, inaccurate maps were used to divide the continent in a clear manifestation that only wealth, not people, their cultures or politics, mattered (Meredith 2005, 1–16). Given the contemporary discourse of globalisation (Teune 2010, 4–19) and the concept of utopianism, theorists must understand the role of each state, including African countries since out-dated premises skew conclusions that tend to undermine theory formulation. Therefore, Africa must no longer be looked at as a continent comprising colonised countries as each state can significantly influence outcomes in global affairs (Mansbach and Ferguson 2007, 529). Consequently, theory construction involving utopianism must be adapted by shedding theoretical traditions that reduce world politics to a "simple yet compelling account" (Kegley and Wittkopf 2004, 49).

6 SEARCHING FOR UTOPIAN HARMONY: REFLECTING ON THE PAST FOR A BETTER FUTURE

A new theoretical approach to Africa's importance in world affairs must not be ignored in building utopian theory. Real differences among the various countries in Africa must be factored into a more authentic understanding of the continent. Historical events must not only focus on the achievements of powerful nations but also the suffering of the conquered. Contemporary progress in political, economic, and social changes on the continent must be incorporated into the formulation of any relevant global utopian theory. Unfortunately, the old prescriptions of IR theories continue to be used to solve or predict twenty-first century international conflicts, governance, and public administration with respect to Africa's role in global politics. Those theoretical prescriptions argue that for Africa to be part of the international community, it must follow a path to economic and political modernization roughly parallel to the one the Western industrial democracies had travelled (Apter 1960, 45–65).

The quest to establish utopian world tends to ignore the past. Unfortunately, African political history as cemented in the Western literature makes it almost impossible to obtain a legitimate understanding of the continent. Yet studies show that until the arrival of Europeans, the *so-called* primitive societies of Africa had well-established, decentralised government with "astonishing degree of functionality; participatory forms of democracy, rule of customary law, and accountability" and that "no modern country, even the United States, can boast of such an open government" (Ayittey 2005, 21). The slave trade, apartheid, and colonialism changed the political, economic, language, and social dynamics of the continent. The importance of using slavery, apartheid, and colonisation to reflect the atrocities meted out on defenceless African natives is that despite the abolishment of the trade centuries ago, the scars of such inhuman supervised, legalised or legislative evils were constitutionally backed by powerful nations make it almost impossible for the oppressed to trust the oppressors who are now proponents of utopian community. The administrative system of

capitalism, for example, celebrates selfishness, which does not confirm to the traditional[13] cooperative administration of native Africans.

7 THEORY FORMULATION AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN AFRICA

The plethora of lens used to scrutinize political administration in Africa tends to ignore the role of traditional administrative practices. The administrative practices on the continent would better be understood with a deepened appreciation if the various perspectives were looked at together and synthesised. For example, any solitary approach to examining a phenomenon tends to miss critical aspects of what is to be studied. So is administration on the continent as it is measured through Westerners lens, tends to either reject or ignore the traditional and chieftaincy administrative systems on the continent (Antwi-Boasiako and Bonna 2012). The theoretical understanding of administration does not usually translate to the practice of administration in Africa. For example, pre-colonial traditional African administrative practices do not separate religion from administration. Any in-depth understanding of administration needs epistemic pluralism (Farmer 1995, 4–10), which is the amalgamation of different perspectives of the multiplicity for administrative data analyses. For instance, would administrative theory even consider traditional African administrative practices? This, and many other related questions not asked here, is what must be considered as the theoretical framework of global utopianism. Since the 1960s, most African countries have been steadily increasing their proportion of the limelight in world affairs. However, governance and political administration in Africa, George Ayittey and Kwaku Danso affirmed, have been on the decline since independence. Political instability, using the Western political administrative structures, is not uncommon but traditional African administrative institutions have persisted though not much attention has been given to traditional administration in African political literature.

It is often easier to document and discuss the collapse of public administration and governance in postcolonial Africa. Media coverage, critics, and political commentators often assist this collapse. There is a "complex notion of sub-alternity pertinent[*ing*] to any academic enterprise, which concerns itself with historically determined relationships of dominance and subordinations" (Gandhi 1998, 2). Postcolonial African studies have become a battleground for variety of disciplines and theories. Ayee (2000) refers to such phenomenon as proclivity for experimentation or laboratories for investigation. However, scholars of democratic governance and IR theorists including political analysts often discuss theoretical shortcomings and lack of development in Africa with very little understanding of the effect of the continent's post colonial past on development. Conversely, attempting to identify solutions to the lack of development and political instability in Africa should be a welcome challenge for those interested not only in the politics of Africa but administration at all levels on the continent since administrative decisions at the various levels affect the utopian discourse.

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[13] Traditional administration as presented in this article refers to the consensus administrative systems of native Africans before the arrival of the Europeans and subsequent colonisation and slavery. This administration system does not refer to the colonial and post-colonial administrative systems in Africa.

It is good to question or challenge assumptions or theories to effect change as noted by Farmer who insists, "radical change is needed in the way that we conceptualize the role and nature of *political/administrative* theory" (Farmer 1995, 4). To expand on Farmer's claim, one could argue that Africa as a political bloc has not been incorporated in a global utopian theory formulation. Therefore, those interested forwarding this utopian discourse are tasked with laying new foundations for the study of public administration and governance to strengthen Africa's global relationship with other countries; hence the importance of utopian theory, which considers the globe in its totality instead of using, selected geographical regions in global theory formulation. These foundations must include theories that would be implementable and meaningful to the various countries.

Though many studies have criticised[14] the failures of public administration, leadership, and governance in Africa (Ayittey 2005; Danso 2005), very little has been done to the radicalisation of deconstruction and constructing of theories to advance in the global political narratives. Given a postmodernist approach of reinventing government for effective performance and efficiency there is every reason to re-examine the pitfalls of postcolonial political administration in Africa from a critical theoretical and pragmatic perspective. That is, in an attempt to develop a blue print for Africa to address Africa's political structure, which encourages development, Africa must develop its IR theory with better understanding of the interests of other nations. Tactlessly, such an attempt is more likely to lead to the formulation of informal theories, which also draw constant criticisms. For example, the political thoughts of some African leaders (Schoolman 1988) faced sharp criticisms, which led to series of military coups as a result of external Western interference.

Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea, and others like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania believed in Pan Africanism where their political thoughts, *Nkrumahism-Toureism*, were to focus on the development of the continent as one political unit with a common military power but the West saw *Nkrumahism-Toureism* in the 1960s as an extension of communism. The premise *Nkrumahism-Toureism* was to reject foreign domination followed by the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism, which culminated in the European partition of Africa agreed upon by the colonial powers at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. To Nkrumah and other leaders on the continent, the artificially imposed colonial borders were to be rejected as they believe in the concept of continental African unity as the source of strength and the key to African liberation. As Nkrumah puts it, "African Unity gives an indispensable continental dimension to the concept of the African nation...Unity is the first prerequisite for destroying neo-colonialism. Primary and basic is the need for a union government on the much divided continent of Africa" (Nkrumah 1965, 253).[15] Though three world views- Conservative, Liberal, and Revolutionary worldviews (Goldstein 2003, 3–51) – are presented in the IR literature none of these squarely fits the pre-colonial traditional political thought of the African. It is therefore imperative to develop new ideological theory by deconstructing the old West/African political thought and launch the continent into a 21st century pragmatic global political theory, which must incorporate the political activities of all nations and not selected activities that please only the powerful nations.

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[14] See the writings of George Ayittey (1992, 1998 and 2005).

[15] Toure and Nkrumah were very pragmatic and of the view that the African has been dehumanized by the West. To read more on Nkrumahism-Toureism see http://www.aaprp-intl.org/pdfs/N-TIdeologyOfAAPRP.pdf.

8 UTOPIANISM: DECONSTRUCTING AND RE-CONSTRUCTING THE STATUS QUO

According to J. D. Farmer, deconstruction is not the complete rejection of the status quo but a significant resource for rethinking and reframing known practices (Farmer 1997, 12). Whiles he acknowledges the difficulties in deconstruction, he maintains that it facilitates and improves public administration and governance. The discussion on utopianism is not a new phenomenon: The concept has been looked through different prisms including socialist and democratic governance. This political ideological worldview has gone through radical thinking. For example, Ruth Kinna (2011, 279–294) did examine the concept of utopianism and argues that the new narratives of utopianism wrongfully treat the concept as socialism. In fact, in the literature different types of utopianism are discussed but that is not the focus of this paper. Kinna sees the concept of utopianism in an environment where different groups and individuals live together and are able to express their differences and interests without a dominant ideological hegemony (Alperovitz and Dubb 2012, 380–386). Her article revises the question whether there is a realistic future for utopian world? In answering that question, George Lawson (2008, 881) argues utopianism has become a political conundrum for academics, policy makers, and political commentators. He maintains that the political shift from ideology to utopia presents challenges, which are outside the known historical political experience. The utopian concept tends to question the past but distorts the analytical reasoning of present global politics but "cannot hope to tell us much about the future possibilities" (ibid., 886) of global political stability hence the importance of deconstructing the known to build the future.

Deconstruction of these political thoughts became important resources for African IR theorists but rebuilding these fading theories is diminutive in the literature. The various levels of theories already exist in the literature but there is limited discussion on theoretical collapse in postcolonial Africa. These theoretical levels may include individual, groups, organizational, institutional, governmental, and international. Each level can contribute significantly in the utopian narratives in addition to what transpires at the governmental levels. Regrettably, postcolonial political leaders in Africa often become easy targets of condemnation from theorists and academicians for their failure to adopt Western political thought to solving African problems. Deconstructionists provide interpretations that focus on the non-transparency in the complexities of established IR theories to addressing Africa's political problems. Even though traditional African societies and institutions continue to play very significant role in postcolonial politics of Africa little or no attention is accorded them. There is also the fear that utopianism might lead to world government where international integration might lead to an "ultimately into a single world government" (Goldstein 2003, 379). The search for utopian theory may lead to integration theory – a process through, which supranational institutions replace national ones. Another interpretation could be a situation where weaker nations are swallowed by the so-called *values* of powerful nations. So there is the fear that with the concept of utopianism weaker nations might lose their national sovereignty where African nations, the *peripheries*, are more likely to be victims of this idealistic imaginable abstract harmonious concept. So how do we develop utopian theory that recognises Africa as part of the international system with its traditional administrative system?

9 AFRICA'S PLACE IN THE UTOPIAN-IR THEORY

There is an irony surrounding Africa's place within the study of IR theory let alone utopianism. However, Africa occupies a precarious position in the field of IR as an academic discipline, which has been pushed to the margins of the mainstream approaches of defining IR theory by focusing on stronger nations. Critics of IR who argued about the divide between IR theory and Africa denounce this marginalisation. A study by Said (2003) maintains that Western political origins only focus on traditional IR theory indicating that African politics does not conform to the norms of IR as Africa is seen as the *other*. Despite the marginalisation, Africa is undeniably present within IR in many ways. Africa's political involvement in world affairs cannot be ignored in either world history or international politics. Given its colonial past, Africa has seen social changes and constellation of different forms of governance (traditional chieftaincy system, monarchs, military rule, union government, and democratic rule). These areas do not only present rich data for analyses to be included in the IR narratives but it also provides justification for IR theorists to take critical look at Africa in this discipline for theory building.

While the political thoughts of some African leaders have falling into the hands of critics such as George Ayittey, D'Souza, and Kwaku Danso, their analyses fail to admit the role of foreign and perpetual international interferences in the political administration and governance of Africa. So how should Africa present itself to be incorporated in the development of utopian theory? There are inter-subjective meanings, which shape individuals, groups, or societies worldview at the basic or fundamental level. One view is the idea of how historically and politically the world is made. Then there is the idea of how the world is held or controlled by certain societies (*the centres*). While critical theory in IR is difficulty to be neatly placed as a self-contained theory because its scope and methods transcend many of the other IR theories, developing an IR or utopian theory for Africa becomes a conundrum. But providing a postcolonial IR theory to include Africa presents "new ways for thinking about techniques of power that constrain self-determination, whether they emanate from within or without" (Grovogui 2007, 231).

As already established in this article, postcolonial African IR theory explores the power relations, which governs the status quo of representing the West but Africa as the *other*. It should be noted that postcolonial Africa in IR, like colonialism, has given rise to exploitation, alienation, and repression by supposedly rational, enlightened Western imperialist order. Such an order, according to E. Said, has established a binary world structure where all relationships between Western and non-Western countries are set up in the narratives of the former (*the centre*) to frame the characteristics of the other (periphery) using "Europe" and the "Orient" (Said 2003, 40) as an example. The characteristics of Western nations are considered rational, virtuous, mature, and normal whereas that of non-Western countries are irrational, depraved, childlike, and different. This observation by Said makes it difficulty for African nations to penetrate through the establishment as non-aligned entities. Africa must explore its comparative advantage in labour, raw materials, and natural resources to fill the gaps created by IR theorists. To solidify the utopian concept, Westerners must understand that the interest of African countries may be different therefore Africa must NOT be discussed as one political unit since each country on the continent may have different foreign policy (FP) interest at any given period. However, the human needs of the African are the same as their Western colleagues. The basic human rights are necessary for all humanity.

10 UTOPIANISM AND FOREIGN POLICY (FP)

The main driving force of FP and IR is national interest. All international diplomatic discussions are cantered on the core interest of parties involved and more often than not the interest of the powerful nations dominate any diplomatic negotiations regarding world affairs. Theories of public policy tend to examine long-term policy change, which are initiated by national institutions and policy makers. National institutions operate and interact with each other including interest groups to produce, sustain, and change public policies to enhance the interest of governments. Similarly, FP is meant to extent the interest of nations and how they may interact with other countries. The basic definition of FP in the literature, in part, refers to actions governments take regarding their interest abroad to ensure both security and well being of their nationals. These may include, but not limited to, the protection of national boundaries, strong economy, stability, and an orderly society. Such is the realist approach to understanding FP.

To make the interest of a nation known to others comes the importance of diplomatic relations. But first we need to understand FP and diplomacy to see how these two variables can enhance the utopian narratives. FP is defined here as the amalgamation of the decisions made on behalf of a given political unit (a country), which details the implementation of goals with direct references to its external political cohorts. Foreign policy outputs therefore determine the behaviour of a political unit within the international system. Proponents of utopianism have one time or the other seen the concept as those who believe in social equity and human freedom. This mind set is to reject the status quo but no alternatives or remedies have been found. For example, the escalation of unfavourable balance of power tends to cripple any pragmatic thought of utopianism. As African nations are been schooled to give up their weapons as sovereign nations, the preachers continue to stockpile their weaponry and strength their military institutions.

For example, "In December 2003, following nine months of secret talks between Libyan, U.S., and British officials, Libya announced that it would destroy all of its biological, chemical and nuclear weapons."[16] In the case of South Africa, there are two schools of thought regarding the so-called "*voluntarily*" destruction of South Africa's nuclear program. To President F. W. de Klerk (the South African Apartheid leader at the time) it was not only the most sensible thing to do but with the end of the Cold War and threats against South Africa considerably reduced, the country had to dismantle its nuclear capabilities by joining the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). President de Klerk maintains that with the withdrawal of over 50,000 Cuban forces from Angola and the persistence isolation of South Africa by the rest of the world, the way forward to join the world community was through negotiations and not though military force with nuclear power. But critics see the dismantling of the nuclear weapons as the fear of the all white minority Apartheid regime losing power to the oppressed majority South African blacks. As Koutonin noted the speed at which South Africa voluntarily gave up its weapons was suspicious. He "saw this speedy destruction of all the country's main military infrastructures as a sign that the

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[16] Africa is now a nuclear free continent despite attempts by some countries on the continent, to acquire nukes, which was prevented by Western powers. See An introduction to issues of Nuclear Weapons in Africa, available at http://nwp.ilpi.org/?p=1489.

racist apartheid regime and many western countries didn't want the upcoming or possible Black leaders to inherit such a powerful arsena."[17]

MacIntyre is of the view that the only plausible "response to global inequalities of power and privilege is to support attempts by its victims to escape their worst effects" (Friedman 2012, 2). A claim he acknowledges its not possible by arguing that the problem is not to reform the dominant order, but to find ways for local communities to survive by sustaining life of the common good against the disintegrating forces of the nations state and the market. Clearly, MacIntyre is arguing along the lines of functionalism and neo-functionalism (see Haas 1958, 1964 and 2001) and to further his view of state integration as result of governance, the international system needs to provide platforms to entertain national interests without nations losing their sovereignty. As one of the theories of IR puts it, functionalism as an ideological concept avails itself through a process of international integration limiting state sovereignty, which can be traced back to the works of Emmanuel Kant and Woodrow Wilson (See Wilson's 14-point political speech on January 8th, 1918).[18] Here the assumption is that globalisation should be built on knowledge, territorial, and authoritative structures. Neo-functionalism tends to build or reintroduces territorial sovereignty and minimises the role of globalisation (Risse 2005). In an attempt to place Africa in these theoretical puzzles rather relegates the continent to the margins, as it has not been able to authoritatively and conspicuously define itself in the international relations narratives.

11 CONCLUSION

The quest for utopianism has a number of affinities with international relations theories and liberalism. The perpetual peaceful world concept envisioned by proponents of utopianism tends to ignore the impact of African history. This paper looked at the literature on Africa and IR theory regarding how the former is marginalised in global politics. There is certainly lack of consensus in the literature as critical debates continue to flourish claiming a mismatch between Africa, IR theories, and the utopian concept. Slavery and colonisation are permanent scars of global politics and any attempt to rewrite global international relations to predict the future must give credence to the importance of history. Though the West cannot escape from its historical brutalities, social, and racial injustices meted out to people of African decent, the concept of utopianism establishes the hope that the is room for equal recognition of Africa in global affairs.

Despite all the efforts of the West to eradicate some of the not too proud historical periods such as slavery and colonisation, those eras are still fresh and seem to undermine any utopian debate. Nevertheless, an attempt to re-establish effective and coherent co-existence of free nations should be the focus of proponents of the utopian debate. Powerful nations are obviously central to shaping the direction of international relations given their superior military,

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[17] Many critics of the Apartheid Regime argue that the regime collaborated with the West and there was the fear of a black leader having such a weapon. The scepticism was not about the dismantling of the weapons but the speed at which it was done: See Koutonin's "The dark truth about why South Africa destroyed its nuclear weapon in 1990," available at http://www.siliconafrica.com/the-dark-truth-about-why-south-africa-destroyed-its-nuclear-weapons-in-1990/.

[18] In this speech Wilson provides world integration through openness. See the entire speech at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp Access May 22, 2014.

economic, and financial resources, which is the dominant argument underlining liberal IR theory. The centres use these tools as weapons to punish weaker countries that do not kowtow to their demands in the international system. One could also argue that their foreign policies, which Morgenthau insists are policies of self-interest make it difficult to establish any foundation for utopianism.

At the diplomatic level the coexistence of all nations provides hopeful future, mutual understanding, and possible reduction in conflicts. Nevertheless, this relationship is always seen by the *peripheries* as a system of divide-and-rule where the *centre* sets the tone of every diplomatic deliberations rejecting the political views of the weak. This divide-and-rule concept of the *centre* continues to confirm the scepticism and uncertainties in world affairs. Utopianism is an abstract ideological futuristic worldview, which is logically pragmatically impossible to achieve because of national sovereignty and interests. However, diplomacy must be seen as a path to entertain some of the characteristics of utopianism: A peaceful political environment. That is, the international system must embrace the ideas of all nations to develop a common approach in ensuring a peaceful world. The arguments forwarded by proponents of functionalism and neo-functionalism in the long run to ensure a peaceful environment in world affairs.

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