The Big Bang Theories of International Relations (IR): Who Said What, When, How, and What's Missing[1]

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A paper presentation at the Canadian Political Science Association centenary conference, University of Alberta, Edmonton (June 13 -15, 2012)

Introduction

International Relations (IR), a distinct field of study, is assumed[2] to have been born in 1919 at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth with the foundation of David Davies as the Woodrow Wilson Chair, subsequently followed by chairs established at the London School of Economics and Oxford after Montague Burton (see Smith 1995; Brown 2007a). As back as five decades ago, Martin Wight characterised international theory as "scattered, unsystematic, and mostly inaccessible to the layman" because its form is also 'repellent' and 'intractable' (1960, 38)[3]. And in most cases, anyway, it sits comfortably as a sub-field of Political Science. This is why it remains questionable whether IR has managed to establish the uniqueness of IR as a discipline. Properly speaking, a discipline should have characteristics, methods, modes of training and habits of thought distinct from other branches of learning – well captured by the German word Fach, which means "to practise a specific trade" (Brown 2007a, 347). The eclecticism or rather fragmentation that surrounds IR theorising disqualifies it from being able to practise a trade per se or even a 'social science' (Rengger & Hoffman 1992, 127). However, it remains a very influential field of study – one that has many departments, schools and centres established in its name with several degrees awarded yearly. The point, nonetheless, is that IR does not need to be a discipline since it will hinder inter- and multi-disciplinarity, dialogue and disagreements. Eclecticism is opening up IR for this cross-communication, albeit lacking in many respects. How teachers of IR tell the story about the field's origin (with the 'great debates') is often misrepresented, leading to the assumption that the field has experienced both ontological and epistemological pluralism. Smith (2000) argues that this is far from the truth as American scholarship remains dominant. And over a decade since he made this assertion, the situation is not necessarily better (for recent evidence, see Shilliam 2011; Jones 2011; Shani 2008; Jordan et al. 2009).[4]

The paper, while targeted at the 'big bang' theories of IR, does not intend to capture all the 'key' readings available to students and scholars of IR. Instead, the goal is to focus on what I deem important to this particular paper. The paper begins with a discussion of the major debates and theories of IR. The second portion briefly examines some contributions from both

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[2] 'Assumed' is used here to denote the point that what we know as the origin of IR is what has been transmitted from one generation to the other, and based on the notion that nothing can be taken for granted, the origin, nature, scope and the purported exceptionalism of IR as told in the story remain 'foundational myths' (Schmidt 1998). To be sure, stories we have heard about 1648 and 1919 are myths – myths that perpetuate the definition of the ontology of western 'Self' as opposed to the 'Other' (see Teschke 2003; de Carvalho et al 2011). Also, Brian Schmidt (1998) has shown that IR was studies long before World War 1 and that idealism was not predominant in the interwar years as the history of IR tells us.

[3] Note that in recent times, David Armstrong (1995) has asked: why is there too much international relations theory? The argument of Wight is not because there is no IR theory per se, but rather the fact that these theories are eclectic and 'all over the place', if you like.

[4] The argument here is that while the international system is changing to reveal the prominence of hitherto 'peripheral' countries such as China, Brazil, India, and South Africa among others, international relations/studies is not changing well enough to reflect this global economic-politico changes. It is not that all of a sudden, there has emerged the need to add the non-Western world to IR. It has always been part of the field of study, only that the theories and concepts used to understand the dynamics in that part of the world are carbon copies of what was conceptualised to deal with Western problems, and thus not workable. This is the current dilemma IR finds itself in. Pierre Lizee examines this dichotomy in his recent book, A Whole New World: Reinventing International Studies for the Post-Western World (2011).

'traditional' and 'critical' theories with the quest to showcase what's missing in their accounts. The last section expands on the missing side of IR theory and underscores the difference non-Western perspectives can make if they are properly incorporated into the field's discussions. The overarching argument is that even in the face of the plethora of critical approaches, it is evident that the discipline is not representative and actually does not deserve its 'international' status. What we know and has become accepted as IR theory is often the works of Europeans and North Americans (with a few from Latin America), who espouse a particularly close-ended Westernised worldview. This closure of the field to 'other' voices and worldviews which leads to what I call a 'representational deficiency' in the field is neither acceptable nor progressive. The way forward will entail the need for IR professors to include readings from other parts of the world in their course syllabi in order to curtail the citational privilege Western theorists have gained in the field of study.

1. The So-Called 'Great Debates'

IR, as a field of study that encompasses the multiple interconnectedness of several actors, has encountered a plethora of methodological debates over the years, often categorised into three, four or even five. The first 'great debate' is reported to have occurred in the late 1930s and early 1940s between idealism/utopianism and realism, the former following the Kantian perpetual peace agenda while the latter pursues a Hobbesian state of war approach to world politics. In line with this debate, one claim by E.H. Carr was that "no political society, national or international, can exist unless people submit to certain rule of conduct" (1939, 41). However, since such a rule was absent the argument was that the League of Nations, the United States of Europe, and the Woodrow Wilson's papers are all utopian constructions that cannot curtail the 'big powers'. Thus, the realists are said to have won this debate although Navon (2001) claims that the 'first debate', being an age-old philosophical debate about human nature, is not yet over.

The second 'great debate' was between behaviouralism (scientific approach) and traditionalism or the classical approach (political realism) in the late 1950s and 1960s. The former had deductive theorists like Kaplan, Neumann, Morgenstern, Riker, Modelski and Richardson while the latter had inductive theorists like Hedley Bull, E.H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and Colin Wight. The argument of the traditionalists was that the scientific approach is "positively harmful" to IR theory as it ignores history and philosophy for models and quantifiable measurement of the social world (Bull 1966, 366). Kaplan (1966) from the behaviourist camp argued that knowledge that is communicated must be replicable, confirmable – and this is how scientific knowledge can be assessed, not based merely on hypothetical assumptions. There is no declared winner as these approaches remain integral part of IR to date.

The third 'great debate' occurred in the 1980s between positivism and post-positivism. The debate was cemented by three interrelated themes – "the preoccupation with meta-scientific units (paradigmatism), the concern with underlying premises and assumptions (perspectivism), and the drift towards methodological pluralism [as against methodological monism] (relativism)" (Lapid 1989, 239). One key feature is that 'third debate' critical theory was an inward-looking meta-theoretical project which aimed at critiquing and undermining prevailing assumptions and perceptions without providing substantive analysis of international relations (Price and Reus-Smit 1998, 263). While postmodern critics of positivism argue it suffers from a general 'Cartesian anxiety' (see, for instance, Campbell 1996; Ashley 1989 and George 1994), critics of postmodernism also argue that it suffers from "epistemological hypochondria" (see Halliday

1996, 320); a situation which indicates that the idea of postmodernism itself is simply 'banging on an open door' in its challenge of traditional IR (Osterud 1997). However, Smith (1992) argues that the 'post-positivist revolution' represents another detour in which "what is commonly treated as marginal, illegitimate, or optional thereby becomes central …" (494).

The third debate can also be characterised as between problem-solving vs. critical theories or constitutive vs. explanatory theories. And critical theory itself can be divided into critical interpretative theory and radical interpretativism according to Rengger and Hoffman (1992). To them, the former, with roots in the Frankfurt School, features works of Robert Cox, Andrew Linklater and Mervyn Frost while the latter, influenced by Foucault, Derrida and Habermas, has works of James der Derrain, Richard Ashley, Rob Walker, among others (132-3). While both stress the important role of interpretation, are 'epistemologically humble' and are sceptical of mainstream representations of international theory, the critical difference is that "knowledge-power nexus" (anti-foundationalism) is to radical interpretativism as "knowledge-interests nexus" (minimal foundationalism) is to critical interpretative theory (ibid., 136). Although it has its modernist and postmodernist forms, critical theory under this debate was committed to challenging the rationalist conceptions of human nature and action in order to emphasize the 'social construction' of actors' identities and the role such identities play in the constitution of interests and action (see Price and Reus-Smith 1998). However, the third 'great debate' is unsettled because it is uncertain who the protagonists are. While Maghroori and Ramberg (1982) assert that it is between state-centric realism and transnationalists, Lapid (1989) sees the debate between positivism and post-positivism (Smith 1995, 14). But at the same the inter-paradigm debate is reported to have emerged in the mid-1980s. The three main perspectives in here were realism/neo-realism, liberalism/globalism/pluralism and neo-Marxism/structuralism (ibid., 18). This debate is sometimes known as the third 'great debate' in which case the positivist/post-positivist debate becomes the fourth 'great debate'.

Although one can very much challenge the notion of 'great debates'[5] itself, a fourth 'great debate' is reported to have emerged in the late 1980s, launched by Robert Keohane in his 1988 International Studies Association presidential address where he made reference to the tension between rationalist approaches (for instance, neorealism and neoliberalism) and reflectivist approaches (for instance, feminism and poststructuralism) (Smith 2007, 5). The accounts of the former are positivist while the latter opposes positivism. But in essence, the central dividing line is about "how we know the world we claim know" – that is, epistemology and methodology – rather than "what the world is like," that is, ontology (ibid). While rationalist approaches, with a foundation in rational choice theory, proffer deductive explanatory accounts of the social world, reflectivists emphasise self-reflexivity, oppose value-neutrality, and are critical of established forms of knowledge or ways of doing things. But to think of this dichotomy as constituting a 'great debate' is quite misleading because the approaches Keohane refers to as 'reflectivist' are on the 'sidelines of knowledge and power', to use Tickner's (2006) phrase. In 'the House of IR', a few of these approaches are actually inside the house (liberal and standpoint feminism) while the majority remain on the borders of the house or as 'illicit' outsiders, for instance, orientalism, postcolonial IR and Worldism (see Anathangelou and Ling 2004). The point here is that the so-

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[5]Note that some scholars simply classify the existing debate into rationalism and constructivism, where the former embodies all problem-solving and explanatory theories while the latter has in its camp all the 'posts' and interpretive/critical theories (for instance, see Hay 2002, chapter 1).

called debate, or conversation if you like, has never really begun. Therefore, to compile a set of philosophical and political assumptions into 'great debates' is questionable at best, and irrelevant at worst. The fact that there is no agreement on whether these debates are three, four or five makes the whole enterprise even further questionable.

2. Traditional Theories of IR

The Oxford English Dictionary defines tradition as "a long established and generally accepted custom or method of procedure, having almost the force of a law" (1989, 354). In this context, anything 'traditional' is "observant of, bound by tradition" (ibid). The origins of the theories to be discussed below are what make them cohere as traditional theories of IR. These are theories that often dwell on ancient and classical writings from Aristotle to Voltaire, and are sometimes committed to (re)interpreting these writings as though they were written for this contemporary age. They are also traditional because they possess the force of law where, for instance, the 'realist gambit' (see Guilhot 2008) has been dominant as well as the (neo)liberal 'common-sense' (see Rupert 2003, 2005).

Realism is one of the oldest theories of international relations; it is old because most contemporary realists trace its origins to the classical writings Thomas Hobbes, Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, John Locke, among others, although these thinkers did not necessarily classify themselves as such at the time they were writing. Based on Hans Morgenthau's six principles, political realism differs from idealism because it contains a conception of national interest defined as power which guards statesmen against the fallacies of motives and ideological preferences or personal wishes (1973[1948], 8). Defining power as "anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man" (ibid., 9), Morgenthau argues that the struggle for power is an objective "undeniable fact of experience" which is "universal in time and space" (ibid., 34). Most realist discussions are couched in notions of 'international system' instead of international society or world society, and to realists this system, due to the perpetual struggle for power and "absence of truly governmental institutions," is anarchic (Waltz 1959, 11). The two major concerns of realists are power and peace (see Morgenthau 1973[1948]; Waltz 1959), although their emphasis on the former makes their interpretation of world politics rather murky and unchanging. A 'newer' version of realism, critical realism, has come to rescue both political and neo- realism from the many criticisms of theorists who are more self-conscious and critical of the 'reality' as it associates more with 'scientific realism' than 'empirical realism' (see Potomäki and Wight 2000; Brown 2007b).

In their attempt to overcome the paranoid assumptions about human nature in realist theory, English School theorists theorise about the 'international society' as opposed to 'international system'. Such a society of states, according to one of its earliest proponents, depends on "respect for the legal and moral rules" (Bull 1966, 38). In this sense morality is not limited as in the Hobbesian or Morgenthauian sense; rather in more Grotian and Kantian terms, it derives from the "higher morality of a cosmopolitan society" underpinned by pluralism and solidarism (ibid., 39). The state remains central to these theorists and they also share a mutual concern with constructivism for the "social dimensions of international life" (Reus-Smit 2009, 58). Its methodological pluralism stems from a combination of the three Rs: positivism (realism), hermeneutics (rationalism) and critical theory (revolutionism) (see Suganami 2005; Bellamy 2005b). But to be sure, the English School, for its 'methodological quietism' and the

'methodological sloppiness' in its followers "is generally considered wanting" (Navari 2009, 2) since Roy Jones first used the label in 1981.

Liberalism as a worldview or doctrine has a long history,[6] dating back to Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795) – although he did not explicitly make use of the label in this document. Deriving from the Latin word *liberalis*, meaning 'freedom', liberalism holds the notions of equality, rights, and liberty very high (Doyle 1986) – later translating into the 'free market' by Adam's Smith, Friedrich Hayek, among others classical economists. A more contemporary explication of liberalism was contained in Woodrow Wilson's *Fourteen Points* (1918). These points, issued by President Wilson in the midst of World War I, undergird most of the liberal theorising international relations has encountered. They facilitated the end of the war leading to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and the League of Nations as an international security organisation charged with the mandate to prevent, promote and maintain world peace, later succeeded by the United Nations in 1945.

Andrews (2011) has characterised neoliberal theories into three main tenets: the idea of complex or global interdependence (Keohane and Nye 1977; Keohane 2002); the rise of international organizations and transnational actors (Barnett and Sikkink 2008; Ruggie 2004; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998); and the universal applicability of norms, common rules and institutions (see Keohane 1984). International regimes are therefore defined in terms of four components: principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures (Keohane 1984, 59). Therefore, they constitute a set of patterns of behaviour around which expectations converge (Young 1982). Global governance seems to be the new term one can use to describe the continuities of the 'neoliberal moment' in IR (see Becker 2010).

Apart from the subfield of International Political Economy (IPE) which has attempted to present itself as a synthesis between neo-(or structural) realism and neoliberal institutionalism, cosmopolitanism appears to have taken centre stage in recent discussions in traditional IR. Originating from the Greek word *'kosmos'*, cosmopolitanism comes from the Stoics who believed in the *universe*. Cosmopolitanism in this sense therefore "means 'world citizenship' and implies belonging on the part of all individuals in a universal community of human beings as moral persons" (Hayden 2009, 59). Some scholars maintain that underlying cosmopolitanism is the idea of 'smart power' that denotes a fair synthesis of 'hard power' as posited by the realists and 'soft power' as conceptualized by neoliberals and constructivists (Gallarotti 2010, 1). And Held (1995) argues that although there appears to be the absence of a supranational authority – a 'higher coordinating body' – states have always been concerned with cooperation and consensus-building at different levels. In a recent publication, he argues that cosmopolitanism "can form the basis for the protection and nurturing of each person's equal significance in 'the moral realm' of humanity" (Held 2010, 69). It is globalisation that certainly provides "the raw material for its possibility" (Skrbis and Woodward 2007, 733), and this makes it a liberal approach if not neo- or post-liberal. However, even a (neo)liberal institutionalist such as Robert Keohane, whom one might argue holds similar views to cosmopolitan theorists, sees cosmopolitan democracy as "a distant ideal, not a feasible option for our time" (2003, 153 cited in Hayden 2009, 59).

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[6] Some would argue that classical liberalism is traceable to John Locke (1632-1704), French philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778) and its American founding father Thomas Paine (1737-1809) although Locke will be first in terms of ranking (Griffiths 2011, 4).

3. The Paucity of Traditional IR: Why they Are (mostly) Western-Centric

Traditional IR theories, although they are often presented to students as the 'laws of IR', fall short on many levels. First of all, they are mostly Western- or American-centric not only because the key thinkers that spearhead these theories are European or American but because these thinkers share a generally western ontology.[7] This is simply a 'world of thinking' that anybody anywhere can embody, although it is evident that the key proponents were typically born, raised, and 'disciplined' in American schools. It is, however, not dependent on any specific geographical space.

All theories have limits and weaknesses but in IR, mainstream perspectives often exhibit shortfalls that result from the unpardonable 'silences' on and systematic omissions of what could have made their explanations more meaningful. First, due to their ahistorical nature, traditional IR does nothing "except to quantify the models and to abstract them still further, by adding on epicyclical codas to the models in order to account for even further deviations from empirical expectations" (Wallerstein 1974, 387-8). Neorealism, for instance, contains an 'orrery of errors' due to its self-enclosed, self-affirming, statist, utilitarian, positivist and structuralist commitments (Ashley 1986, 257-8). Neoliberal institutionalism does not escape critique, however. To be sure, two of its key proponents revealed almost three decades ago that the epistemology of regimes fundamentally contradicts its ontology (see Kratochwill and Ruggie 1986). The definition of regimes deals with the "convergence of expectations" which gives regimes "an inescapable intersubjective quality" – meaning that "we *know* regimes by their principled and shared understandings of desirable and acceptable forms of social behaviour" (ibid., 764). However, this sharply contradicts the prevailing positivist epistemological position in regime analysis. This is quite an interesting revelation as it shows that there is no point in denying subjectivity when the object itself is embedded in social and intersubjective relations. The positivistic orientation that regime theory purports to advance is thus false and actually misleading.

Additionally, "the facade underlying this liberal notion is that it assumes all states will be having an equally jolly rollercoaster ride as all power asymmetries are erased" (Andrews 2011, 218) but this is far from what actually happens in international relations. There is evidence that "the core-periphery hierarchy has not evaporated" (Chase-Dunn and Gills 2005, 47). It is in the critique of the prevailing global system and institutions that world-systems and dependency theories remain useful. First, the historical (materialist) narratives they present adequately explain the hegemonic economic relations between developed and developing states (Frank 1969; Dos Santos 1970; Cox 1986). It indicates that a retrospective look at the past does reveal current trends, and postulate future occurrences. Their historical analyses reveal the continuities

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[7] From a personal perspective, a western ontology is one that considers the world as universal and 'out there'. The 'universal' aspect enables the theorist to think that America and/or Europe is at the centre of the universe, and the 'out there' aspect causes them to think this world can be studied objectively like the natural scientists operate in a laboratory – a situation where explanations derived from such 'social experiments' can be valid across time and space. Any theory, most grand theory, that possesses these two characteristics has a western ontology. I think Smith (2000) best captures this western ontology in the following words: "Ontologically, the literature tends to operate in the space defined by rationalism; epistemologically, it is empiricist and, methodologically, it is positivist. Together these define 'proper' social science and thereby serve as the gatekeepers for what counts as legitimate scholarship" (383). I should add that 'western' as used here is not in the geographical sense since one does not need to live in North America or Europe to embrace this ontology. At the same time, not every theory espoused in these areas adopts this ontology.

and discontinuities in trends of imperialism, neo/post- colonialism, and the future prospects of a socialist world-government or a "transformative counter-hegemony" (Rupert 2003, 186).

Second, they expose the inefficiencies in the global capital market, showing how it is not designed towards the 'real' development of all partakers. This should cause us to question and problematise the Washington Consensus and its actual intentions. By this, they also show the inherent deficits of neoliberal institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, UNCTAD, OECD, and why they cannot be regarded as 'saviours' who will deliver the poor countries from the 'curse' of poverty and disease. For instance, several decades of foreign aid application in needy countries have not resulted in any sustainable qualitative change in the lives of recipients (Easterly 2006, Moyo 2009). Overall, the arguments here resonate with the 'false promise' of liberal international institutions (Mearsheimer 1994/95), and they further expose the 'big dragons' in regime theory by showing how it conceals bias "instead of revealing and removing it" (Strange 1982, 479).

Also, applying a neo-Marxist analysis to the international institutional level, for instance, helps us understand international organizations as "arenas of struggle between global actors over the normative structures that govern (or should govern) specific issue areas" (Gale 1998, 270) instead the relatively deceptive conceptions 'mutual interests'. According to Rai (2008), "global governance hides as much as it reveals" (37). The claim is that all the prevailing governance theories and approaches are both "gender blind" and "race blind" (23). Their focus on the three main male-dominated political arenas in the global North – markets, institutions, and ideology – make them unable to appreciate what exists elsewhere. To further solidify my argument in this section, Kenneth Waltz has noted that "[i]t would be… ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics based on Malaysia and Costa Rica…" (1979, 72 cited in Tickner 2003, 301). One cannot decidedly tell what led Waltz to make such a racist statement but by making it, he reinforces the parochialism (the American-discipline-masquerading-as-international notion) built into this field of study generally which often leads to the conclusion that IR is the international politics of the US, UK, Germany, France and other 'great powers'. This poverty in traditional approaches has led to the many critical approaches, to which we now turn.

4. Critical Theories of IR

As Steven Roach asserted, "what makes critical IR theory 'critical' is its self-awareness as a theory" – an awareness woven into the critical traditions of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Habermas, Derrida, and Butler (2010, 1-2) – and we can certainly add Michel Foucault among other post-Enlightenment French philosophers. It is argued that critical theory was introduced into IR in 1981 with the publication of Robert Cox's *Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory*, and Richard K. Ashley's *Political Realism and Human Interests* (Rengger and Thirkell-White 2007, 4). A discussion of the so-called 'great debates' above has shown that critical theorists are generally post-positivist and anti-foundationalist – in that they do not accept any objective, Archimedean point or standard by which 'legitimate' knowledge should be measured. And they are also postmodern in the sense that they oppose the teleological measurement of human progress that characterises Enlightenment thinking, in addition to their quest to deconstruct established interpretations (discourse) in order to ascertain their embedded 'silences'. Let me declare my bias at this point by stating that critical theories are more policy-relevant than rationalist theorists purport it does, and it will remain vital and "indeed unavoidable" (Rengger and Thirkell-White 2007, 23). First, it does explore the nuances between

agency and structure which offers a better understanding of the two themes that undergird social and political theory generally. Secondly, its emancipatory agenda offers room for practical change as opposed to rationalist theories that are based on abstractions often residing in the ivory tower.

Although feminism was introduced into IR as early as the 1980s, feminist theories "remain invisible in the discipline" (Peterson 2003, 44). Feminist contributions to IR come with two main assumptions: The first is that international relations is a man's world, which deliberately through the "process of self-selection" excludes women in high policy positions (Tickner 1988, 430). Secondly, they argue that the structure of IR as a subject of study allows for a rather masculine interpretation of world politics, couched in notions of interests, power, war, anarchy, and struggle; cemented by patriarchy and the quest to maintain the status quo (see Enloe 2004). This reveals the 'male paranoia' in the mainstream critique of feminism (Weber 1994). As expressed in Tickner's (1997) rebuttal: "*You just don't understand: Troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists,*" the paranoia results from the fact that mainstream theorists are both unfamiliar with and threatened by the revelations of these 'other voices'. Focusing on gender implies (re)constructing both masculinity and femininity as social categories that change and vary across time and space. Their quest to subvert and rewrite IR theory by being self-conscious about marginalised and silenced voices makes the theory "uniquely *transformative*" (Peterson 2003, 41).

Post-structuralism[8] emerged in the 1980s and with the works of Richard Ashley (1981, 1984), James Der Derain (1987), Michael Shapiro (1988) and R.B.J. Walker (1987, 1993) as well as second wave theorists such as David Campbell (1998), Cynthia Weber (1994, 1999), among others to critique the meta-theoretical ambitions of realist and neorealist perspectives on international relations. Following a Foucauldian tradition (Selby 2007) notions of 'identity', 'difference', 'subjectivism', 'power/knowledge', 'representation' and 'interpretation' are central to post-structuralism. Their questioning of mainstream orthodoxies result from "a form of dissent skeptical – but not cynical – about the traditions of international relations and their claims of adequacy to reality" with the goal to revealing "the particularity and context-bound nature of judgements and assessments" (Campbell 1998, 5). For instance, on the identity/difference problematique, Campbell argues that the successful constitution of identity is achieved when a clear boundary exists to separate an 'inside' from an 'outside', a 'self' from an 'other', a 'domestic' from a 'foreign' (1998, 9). And this representation of the 'other' has been a central aspect of how America (and much of the West) has defined itself, seeing the 'other' as a dangerous 'existential threat'. A key post-structuralist claim is that the state, just like identity, has "no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (Campbell 1998, 10; see also Butler 1990). This reflects the notion of 'performative materialisation' of language, transforming into discourse (Campbell 2007, 217), and "the performative constitution of identity" (Campbell 1998, 219). And it means that theories are a necessary part of the social world (Smith 2007, 11). Although not necessarily anti-science, post-structuralism questions positivism and its three empiricist assumptions, namely; epistemic realism (that the world is 'out

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[8] Although postmodernism is often confused with post-structuralism (and much of other critical approaches) as the same, Campbell argues that the latter is only one of the "interpretative analytics" within the broader umbrella of postmodernism, informed by the works of Michel Foucault but which in itself does properly constitute what can be called a 'school' of thought (2007, 212; also Campbell 1998, 216). What they share together is the consistent questioning and problematisation of agency, power and representation.

there'); universal scientific language (which allows value-neutrality); and the correspondence theory of truth (that facts of the world can be captured in statements that are true provided they correspond to the facts and can be falsified if they do not) (Campbell 2007, 208).

Closely related to post-structuralism, I will argue, is the theory of securitization. They are related in terms of the focus on words and images as reference points or justification for the delineation of the 'us' and 'them' or 'Self' and 'Other', revealing the latter as a threat worth exterminating; mainly, the performative role of 'text' and 'speech'. The main difference, however, is that while the former is more of an approach than a theory (see Campbell 2007), the latter presents itself as a theory of security.[9] The term, with its theory, emerged in the 1990s from the Copenhagen School founded by Ole Waever, Barry Buzan and their collaborators (see Stritzel 2007; Knudsen 2001; Williams 2003; Smith 2005). The other difference is that unlike radical post-structuralists who focus mainly on the 'power structure' embedded in words and images, securitization theorists mostly consider this to be an *internal* 'facilitating condition' (Stritzel 2007, 364-5). The core claim of securitization theory is that security must be perceived as a '*speech act*' (Waever 1995, 55 cited in Williams 2003, 513) as it focuses on identity and cultural factors instead of traditional state or military perspectives (Knudsen 2001, 355). It is through these speech-acts that issues become 'securitized' and through this same medium 'threats' gain representation and recognition.

Postcolonial IR theory is one of the critical approaches in IR that explores the mutually constitutive nature of theory and practice (Bowden 2009, 9). Although it has been in existence for nearly four decades, popularised by Edward Said's ground-breaking work, *Orientalism* (1978), this approach has yet to maintain a central position in IR generally. But the postcolonial challenge is one that causes us to question the Eurocentrism embedded in IR – which emphasises "European superiority [Self] over Oriental backwardness [Otherness]" (Said 1978, 7) – including the geographical essentialism, theoretical parochialism and cultural chauvinism that cement many mainstream theories. For instance, conventional security studies has focused on the relations between 'great powers' thereby relegating the experiences, processes, practices, scholarship and histories of 'other' states and nations (see Barkawi and Laffey 2006). The argument is that if history is relevant – for instance, history of the world wars and Cold War – then the continuing history of imperialism is also worth exposing. With such parochialism in mind, postcolonial theorists agree that "IR remains guilty of forgetting and detracting from the thoughts and acts of not only people of Africa but also 'the rest' of the non-Western world" (Jones 2006, 2).

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[9] Note, however, that not all theorists under this umbrella believe securitization is a coherent theory. To Stritzel (2007), for instance, securitization requires conceptual restructuring and a detachment from the Copenhagen School in order to stand as a consistent and comprehensive security theory amidst criticisms that is 'sociologically untenable' (McSweeny 1996/9) and that it encapsulates 'several questionable assumptions' (Knudsen 2001, 358). Although Waever argues that diversity allows the theory not to point to 'any one particular type of study as the right one' (see Waever 2003), Stritzel insists that "theoretical contradictions, anomalies and inconsistent empirical applications of securitization cannot only be celebrated as 'diversity', but they also have clear disadvantages" (359). To be sure, security itself is a 'contested concept' with variations ranging from traditional realist conceptions, the Copenhagen School, constructivist security studies, critical security studies, feminist security studies, poststructuralist security studies and human security which became more prominent in the debate the ensued after the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (see Smith 2005).

The quest to overcome this taken-for-granted Eurocentrism and "Westphalian common-sense" (Grovogui 2002 cited in ibid., 3) is "a gesture toward a post-Western IR" (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004, 15), a gesture that requires a re-imagination and re-interpretation (not necessarily a rejection) of the 'West'. It stands against the cosmopolitan view of 'sameness' and its embedded notion of the 'universal' history of human civilisation (see Bowden 2009) to construct a world which appreciates the ethical complexity and incommensurability of culture, and the diversity of visions and values embodied in the different localities, states and regions of the world (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004, 8). A postcolonial reading of international relations often characterises the U.S. as "a quintessential empire" (Stoler 2006, 141), one that categorises its 'states of exception'.[10] Also influenced by the work of Foucault, notions of power/knowledge, biopolitics, and discourse undergird postcolonial IR theory (see Venn 2007). In this regard, concepts such as 'development', 'human security', and 'responsibility to protect' that underpin most humanitarian interventions[11] can be conceived as "*a liberal strategization of power and tutelage*" meant to classify and manage the world's population as biopolitical entities who are helpless and needy (Duffield 2007, 231 & 234 my emphasis). To a large extent, international politics remains fuelled by the "faith in the Enlightenment ideal of progress and humankind's universal march toward modernity..." (Bowden 2009, 3). It is this trend that invokes the thought-provoking, and often radical, challenge of postcolonial theory.

5. *How Much Critical Can it Get? The Difference Non-Western IR Makes*

While critical theory generally speaks to the condition of the non-West, it is mainly aspects of the post-colonial literature that at least refer to the works of influential non-Western writers such as Frantz Fanon, W.E.B Du Bois, Agostinho Neto, Eduardo Mondlane, Amílcar Cabral and Samora Machel, among others (see Stoler 2006; Jones 2011). Being critical without limiting or perhaps curtailing the citational power/privilege 'classical' writers of the West have gained over the years appears to be a vicious cycle which does touch on the apparent marginalisation of other voices but fails to seriously *do something* about it. It is a fact that since IR is purported to have emerged as a distinct field of study, much of what has been recorded as scholarship mainly concerns Europe, North America and a very small fraction to the 'others' of the world. To cite just one example, the 43rd book in the series, *Cambridge Studies in International Relations*, which had Steve Smith as Managing Editor and Ken Booth, Christopher Brown, Robert W. Cox, Anne Deighton, Jean Elshtain, Fred Halliday, Christopher Hill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Little and R.B.J Walker as editors declared in its blurb that "the aim of the series is to publish the best new scholarship in International Studies from Europe, North America and the rest of the world" (see Neufeld 1995, page unnumbered). The point being made here is that it is simply not enough for the non-West to be elated and satisfied about the existence of critical theory. To be sure, all the names above are considered 'critical' scholars; yet it is very easy for them to perpetuate the primacy of the Western 'self' – consciously or unconsciously – in

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[10] This 'state of exception' as defined by Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2005) is a vigilant 'threshold' between inside and out. This threshold solidifies the line between the 'self' and 'other', emphasising the notion that the society must be defended against the evil 'outside'. But as Duffield argues, "the dominance of the security mentality [for instance the war on terrorism] today has reinforced a narrow experience of life" (2007, 242): all other issues of rights and civil liberties are curtailed at the expense of securing against an existential threat 'out there'.

[11] Some postcolonial theorists will call this project 'humanitarian imperialism', as a revival of new forms of imperialism in the post-Cold War period (see Bowden 2009, 18).

a manner that makes 'the rest of the world' a unique category in juxtaposition to Europe and North America. If language does convey a great deal, then this cannot be taken lightly.

It is usually claimed that one cannot examine realism without the mention of Hans Morgenthau, neorealism without Kenneth Waltz, neoliberal institutionalism without Robert Keohane, English school without Hedley Bull or perhaps Barry Buzan, feminism without Ann Tickner or Cynthia Enloe, and even critical theory without the likes of Robert Cox, Richard Ashley, among others. All of these authors are mainly European or North American. And inasmuch as Cox's argument for instance is relevant to many people in the non-Western world, we cannot continually dwell on it as the foundation for what constitutes 'truth', much less depending on the rationalist and reductive-repetitive conceptions of neither Waltz nor Keohane. In like manner, while the contributions of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard are relevant to critical theory, they should only be used when they suit the particular case instead of merely applying them to any discussion on a wholesale mainly because they are considered 'fathers' of critical theory. It is therefore not merely polemical to argue that even "contemporary debates in critical normative IR theory remain structured by underlying assumptions and logics whose roots lie far back in European thought and experience" (Jones 2011, 62).

Inayatullah and Blaney (2004) posed a good question in the blurb of their book, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*: "How is it that international relations – the subfield of political science that might best describe, explain, and theorize cultural diversity – end up ignoring the subject?" A similar question is also asked by Jones (2006): "How is it possible that IR has paid little attention to race, colonialism, and imperialism, to the intertwined nature of the histories of the West and 'the rest'?" (10). A third question is: "Why is it that the non-Western world has been a defining presence for IR scholarship and yet said scholarship has consistently balked at placing non-Western thought at the heart of its debates?" (Shilliam 2011, 2). In all these cases, the answer for the silence or omission does not lie in oversight or forgetfulness but rather it is the result of "systematic absences" (Jones 2006, 10) that reside in the Western world's dismissal of difference, diversity, and the 'other' (see Inayatullah and Blaney 2004). These absences are the product of '*a wilful amnesia*' on the question of race, "a systematic politics of forgetting", which uses abstraction as a strategy of containment (Krishna 2006, 89). This form of abstraction, based on the principle of parsimony, chooses only what it deems matters and thereby conceals a greater portion of the Western history and its racialised structures. This 'Eurocentric omission', as Jones calls it, is deeply rooted in the tendency "to deny the very legitimacy and worth of non-Western values, traditions, practices, struggles, discourses, and thought" (2006, 12).

Non-Western IR, as already indicated above, is mainly IR conceptions and worldviews that do not possess a western ontology, meaning they do not espouse the Western 'world of thinking' whether the proponents are in the West or elsewhere. This characterisation, however, does not seek to set up essentialist binaries. As such, my focus on non-Western scholarship denotes African IR scholarship as it is the context I am more familiar with. The question then is, why is non-Western IR theory relevant or why will it make any difference? I have four main propositions to this question:

First, non-Western IR reveals the possibility of a field of study that clearly represents the name 'international'. IR is characterised by a 'representational deficiency', as I call it, because it lacks the proper incorporation and recognition of the various approaches that can help it to be properly 'international'. To be sure IR has been called different names including an "American social science" (Hoffman 1977), a "not-so international discipline" (Waever 1998), a "hegemonic discipline" (Smith 2002), a "disjunctive empire" (Yew 2003) and a "colonial household" (Agathangelou and Ling 2004; Inayatollah & Blaney 2004). This discussion did not begin just today. Thus, I emphasise this deficiency not because it has not been discussed; it is because not much attention has been devoted to it still. And if we should continue to claim that the discipline is indeed 'international', the prominent scholars should not remain just North Americans and some Europeans.

To cite one example, a recent publication titled, *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations* (Griffiths et al. 2009), reveals a tall list of all the theorists who matter in IR. The list cannot be rehearsed here but the key point to note is that while this list includes theories – from realism to historical sociology – none of the theorists listed is of a non-Western origin, although not all of them necessarily uphold a western ontology as defined above. The argument here is validated by the fact that out of fifty so-called 'key thinkers' in IR, not even one African, South American or Asian scholar is cited. This is not due to mere forgetfulness. Rather, it does indicate that "the 'who' of IR studies continues to be a select number of academics hailing primarily from the countries of the core" (Tickner 2003, 296). Let me add that it is not just about hoping that "the days of the Third World being on the margins of the discipline of International Relations will soon be over" (Caroline and Wilkin 2004, 255) but by *doing something* about the current state of affairs in a more sustainable manner.

Second, bringing in non-Western IR de-centres and de-territorializes the 'norm' or status quo by shifting the discipline from the myopic singularities ('single stories') of pervasive mainstream conceptions. As Hobson (2012) shows, IR narratives have portrayed a "West Side Story" as the purpose of the discipline is to promote and defend Western civilisation (cited in de Carvalho et al. 2011, 750), a case where broader disciplinary dialogue has been rendered irrelevant. And this is simply the outcome: "the Eurocentric give away lies in the point that they reified the West and denied the East agency" (ibid., 752). However, such a myth becomes normalised as 'common sense' because 1) the historical literature on 1648 is hardly read and scrutinised; 2) IR scholars prefer to rely on standard and mainstream textbook discussions in areas outside their expertise; and 3) there is an inherent tendency towards 'presentism' – the here and now (ibid., 756).

To Acharya and Buzan (2007),the absence of non-Western IR theory has been perpetuated not by the absolute lack of what constitute the 'good life' in the non-West but rather by ideational and perceptual forces, which fuel a mixture of "Gramscian hegemonies, and ethnocentrism and the politics of exclusion" (288). To them, this is further facilitated by the Eurocentric framing of world history and the fact that most mainstream IR theory has its origins in Western philosophy and political theory. Thinking post-Western IR will have to be able to overcome these shortfalls by rewriting the West's own history to reveal its biased representation in standard textbooks, and scholars must be ready to read outside the mainstream box for a better understanding of the genealogies that undergird most of the popular concepts in IR. In this regard, I will agree with Welch (2003) that IR theorists should stop reading Thucydides because

such reading makes them think of only wars and the overbearing power of 'the strong', inhibiting the contribution/influence 'the weak' can make/have.

Third, the incorporation of non-Western worldviews will propel the field of study towards "pluri-versality" instead of universality (see Mignolo 2009), which is good for the variety and diversity of its objects of study. Steve Smith, in his 2003 Presidential to the International Studies Association, did not mince words when he posited that "the discipline of International Relations has been a very partial one. It has been a view decidedly from somewhere, and that somewhere has been the world of the wealthy, imperial powers" (2004, 507). He argued that theorists should desist from hiding "behind the mask of value-neutrality and empiricism" to theorise in a manner that will make the discipline less hegemonic (ibid., 514). This hegemony does not only reside in the theories propounded but also the medium through which they become known. Herman Daly, a non-IR scholar, gave the following revelation in his 1996 publication.

> In 1994 I decided to leave the World Bank to return to academia. I certainly had no illusion that I was leaving blindness and corruption behind and entering a realm of truth and honesty... If I had harboured such an illusion it would have quickly been dispelled by an experience with the MIT Press that taught me that prestigious universities can sometimes be less committed to free speech and open debate than commercial publishers (Daly 1996, 10).

This is a general statement that may not be relevant to a discussion of IR as a so-called 'discipline' but it is instructive in showing the epistemic imperialism that exists in the academy. Waever (1998) in tracing the evolution of IR from Germany, France, the UK and the US has also shown this parochialism in leading IR journals and publication houses.

The outstanding question is, what is the essence of our scholarship if certain opinions will be shut down by those (gatekeepers) who possess the technological and distributive instruments requisite for the spread of these opinions?[12] This hegemony needs to be overcome by opening up the discipline to diversity and variety not just within the West but also from the non-West. This trend has resulted in the perception of Africa, for instance, as a conformist continent or a "follower-society" that will continue to imitate the west without any clear theoretical, empirical or even ideological originality (Adele 2000, 8). While some theorists argue that the existence of 'original' non-Western IR may be difficult to find or perhaps non-existent (see Bilgin 2008; Qin 2007), I argue that this difficulty resides in the fact that efforts have not been made to find them. Additionally, it does also depend on how we define theory. If the definition of theory takes up the rationalist straightjacket, where 'good' theory is measured by its six positivist criteria, namely; accuracy, falsifiability, explanatory power, progressivity (as opposed to degenerating in

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[12] Note that according to the TRIP Project survey of International Relations faculties in 10 countries, "eight of the top 10 Ph.D. programs, according to scholars in the 10 countries we surveyed, are located in the United States. And of the top 25 schools, *all* save one (Australian National University) are in the United Kingdom or the United States" (Jordan et al. 2009, 65). The top five schools are Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Columbia and Yale in that order. The most astonishing thing I gathered from this report is the fact that non-American scholars (from South Africa and Hong Kong, for instance), when they had the chance to exalt their respective Universities and scholars, still regarded American universities and scholars as the most influential.

its research programs), consistency (with what is known in other areas) and parsimony (Vasquez 1995, 230) then some non-Western contributions that employ critical narrative inquiry or 'thick descriptions' will not conform. But IR needs to move past this Archimedean point to embrace the criticality, reflexivity, and self-consciousness of the 'reality' it tries to explain.

Finally, by looking outside the West for alternative definitions of what IR entails we will be thinking of a 'post-racist' discipline (see Hobson 2007) through a decolonisation of the subject matter, management of knowledge, and concepts/methods, and academic independence or potentially interdependence. Until quite recently, there was some kind of an *embedded silence* even among critical scholars of the role of non-Western ideas/knowledge in IR. How critical and emancipatory can we get if indeed we exclude the very people we seek to emancipate from the frontiers of such debates? As it stands now, the empire of IR has become a house full of (over)privileged white American and a few British men (and a few women additions) who accept only their interpretations as what constitutes the 'real world'. According to Shilliam (2011), "the attribution of who can 'think' and produce valid knowledge of human existence has always been political; but it was made all the more so in the nineteenth century when Georg Hegel gave the philosopher a central role in the development and cultivation of the *modern self*" (2, emphasis in original). Arguing that world order is continually characterised by imperialism, Saurin (2006) notes that the need to decolonise IR is imperative. Right from the time IR is said to have come into existence, that is 1919, the assumptions, concepts, and language of inquiry have been "infused with imperial and colonial reasoning" (ibid., 24). And due to its primary quest "to nationalise social scientific enquiry" resulted in several illusions of what IR is (ibid., 31); these illusions or 'foundational myths' were facilitated by the prevailing Eurocentrism in world history – a modernity based on European discovery of 'the rest of the world' (see Halperin 2006).

A post-racist IR will not only require the centering of marginalised interpretations and voices, but also the re-interpretation (and potential de-centering) of prevailing ones to reveal their obscured shortcomings. It would also require the field of study to think beyond its decidedly stringent Western, rationalist framework by moving beyond the essentialist characterisations of 'the West' and 'the rest' as depicted by Huntington (1993) and an absolute abolishing of Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992)[13] in terms of de-orientalising the 'other'[14] because civilisation "never has a final definitive form" (Cox 1995, 14; see also Shani 2008).

Conclusion

This paper has so far been a rather truncated survey of the broader field of IR with the goal of illuminating the embedded silences of voices from other parts of the world – a phenomenon that clearly puts the title 'international' into disrepute. I remember discussing the idea behind this paper with one IR professor who disagreed with my argument that there is no (or perhaps not

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[13] Another expression of this end to humankind's history leading to a universalised history is reflected in Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1795), where he argues that unless his instructions (or 'articles of faith') are followed, world peace will not be realised.

[14] De-orientalising the 'other' not only involves problematising the binary distinction between the Western 'Self' and the Oriental or other 'Other' but it also does showcase the agency of the latter in a manner that gives them the voice to *speak*, to *represent* themselves and the intellectual or epistemic creativity and freedom to carve their *own* paths of social transformation. Said (1978) captures this quite well, so does Spivak (1988).

enough) non-Western IR. Quick reference was made to the plethora of Chinese IR theories that have been around for a while. However, my argument remains cogent since these theories are not well known by IR students, scholars and practitioners. An IR class that was supposed to focus on 'critical theories' only had one section on non-Western IR and this was mainly Chinese IR. Yet, it was fascinating to know that even the few Chinese students we had in the class knew very little or nothing about these theories in question. The point here is that non-Western IR is beyond just Chinese IR. But even if one is to settle with the minimal inclusion of such interpretations of international relations, it will have to be quite widespread and more visible in course syllabi in order for it to receive the level of engagement mainstream theories have gained.

It is easy to find a tall list of IR stalwarts in most course outlines but without the mention of scholars from the non-Western parts of the world – still inadequate where they are mentioned. Sometimes, one can be made to think these readings do not exist but, in fact, they do. Yet, they are clearly missing from most IR syllabi in the West and even elsewhere.[15] As an advice to scholars, teachers and practitioners of international relations, I will agree with Fanon's (1963) words that "We must refuse outright the situation to which the West wants to condemn us" (57). This implies taking the initiative to embrace the multiplicity and plurality embedded in IR rather than the universalist trend it has taken for so many years. For a field of study that purports to deal with world issues, it will be beneficial to embrace experiences, theories, and ideas from people of the entire world – not just a small fraction of the world. One of Smith's (2008) six wishes for a more relevant IR was for international relations to become less of an American discipline. I do agree. Until this wish is fulfilled, those of us passionate about this enterprise will be deceiving ourselves that we are studying something 'international' although we may rather in fact be studying 'American relations' and theories.

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[15] My PhD course syllabi were a bit more inclusive of some of these readings. However, if I had ended my IR career at the M.A. level I would never have come to read the works of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and the like whose writings are instrumental to the international phenomena most IR scholars study.

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