

Is the field of international relations (IR) able to overcome the lack of universality and the colonial standards of ethics within the discipline? This lack of universality is being challenged by some, while others are being praised for conforming to the status quo. The call for reparations, for example, calls for a new form of ethics in IR (beyond states and beyond previous historical forms of injustices). Then we have African politics in the international arena, which attempts to undergo ethical transformation, while adhering to western standards. This transformation entails addressing the violation of human rights within certain African states, while also holding states accountable to a standard made by those affected by these violations. This arena of politics and current norms (under construction) can possibly be incompatible with the standards of ethics imposed by westernized/colonial ideals of ethics within the continent of Africa. I aim to address these issues of ethics in IR from both a historical and social justice perspective when it comes to the Global African Community (diaspora and continental).

The lack of universality in IR is being challenged in the study of new forms of international development such as reparations. Authors such as Martha Biondi and Catherine Lu argue in favour of such compensation that has happened historically and recognizes the existing systemic barriers that prevent such an endeavour in certain societies today. Biondi presents reparations in the form of self-determination, economic compensations and social development of the African American community which many civil rights groups and leaders in the

past and present fought for. The (evidently traumatic and non-consensual) economic contributions of enslaved African American people was a defining feature of American capitalism though the economic development of the post-slavery Black community has been completely undermined. Due to this, African Americans presently experience “the highest rates of poverty, unemployment, low wages, health disparities incarceration inequities, and so much more” (BLM, 1, 2021). Without reparations, the structural discrimination that purposely holds Black people back will continue to thrive -- “it's something we simply refuse to accept.” Empowering the economic rights of the African American community must be underscored in the grand scheme of their human rights and development. Reparations are a major component of African American activism and advocacy:

The first demands for reparations were made by enslaved people in the pre-Civil War era, and since emancipation there have been long-standing movements demanding reparations throughout the U.S., the Caribbean, Africa, and the Diaspora. (BLM, 1, 2021)

Precedence and examples for financial reparations have been witnessed worldwide from governments and national companies responsible for slave labour and death (Holocaust, Hawaii, Japanese Americans WWII). Alternatively, Truth & Reconciliation Commissions have been established in South America and South Africa. This rise of globalization has given rise to this movement towards reparations. While Biondi presents this challenge to how ethics has been traditionally presented. Lu expands on the reparative responsibility of the colonizer

state. Lu presents the example of Japanese colonialism in South Korea and the ways that reparations have ensued (an apology and treaty) vs what South Korea expects from them (victim compensation).

Secondly, Biondi asserts that the movement towards reparations has introduced a discursive power dynamic of African Americans becoming creditors and owed a debt rather than just victims of economic exploitation. While authors such as Ariel Colonos, when juxtaposed to Biondi, can argue that reparations for African American communities for slavery is perhaps a contemporary issue, much more challenging of the existing order of things and powers. This transformation in dynamic is the reason that the concept of reparations is often contested by those in power because it flips white supremacist ideals of dominance on its head:

Many skeptics zero in on the question of a remedy— imagining it as impractical due the scope of the injury, or as a political minefield whose implications and price tag are destined to inflame whites. But these objections simply describe the enormity of the task rather than delegitimize it. (264, Martin et. Al, 2007)

For example, reparations in the form of education can be provided through investigative journalism into the contributions and exploitation of slaves. Reparations calls for congressional action, with support of international human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch , to acknowledge the fact that American wealth was built on the backs of slaves. There's been state-to-state litigation against companies to own up to their slaveholder policies which has encouraged this acknowledgement and

media exposure as well. In that same vein, according to Lu, these actors (within the colonial structure) must ensure historical responsibility and accountability as it becomes a political duty of sorts. In consideration of colonialism's destructive role in IR and the remnants of it today, it is in the colonial social structure, rather than the individual colonizer, that the state and international society of states facilitates this systemic racism. As such, this structure must integrate an overall responsibility and duty to implement reparations in a robust manner in order to ensure the economic human rights of African American people. This reparations movement has become increasingly widespread and certain states have even begun that work demonstrating that theory can become practice. This form of decolonized development has the potential to redefine ethics in the international realm.

The standard of ethics on the African continent can be deemed good or bad depending on who you ask and if you are the colonized or the colonizer. We must look at the colonial liberal framework of ethics versus current ethical norms in African countries. Yves Chouala provides a critique of liberal democracy and its limits in ethics which parallel Biondi's arguments, which, rather centre on economics. The ethical dynamics of African international politics focuses on its sources on the one hand, and on the strong normative trends that are being implemented on the other. It is also representative of the shift in governance in Africa to liberalism, as witnessed in IR, as opposed to the normative authoritarian approaches. People living in poverty and those suffering under the weight of

economic pressure in these African countries by the ruling elite have created several uprisings (freedom riots) to pressure this move to liberalism through policy reforms. The UN's electoral assistance and Accra Agenda helped push the liberal agenda via assistance. Many declarations have been adopted to ensure the respecting of those rights as well as human rights that provide civil security. Constitutional reforms that dismantle authoritarian regimes, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, shift in language around democracy, and pressure from the international community has also encouraged African countries to adhere to (western modelled) democracy. In terms of the African-based approaches, new heads of state were appointed by the African Union and sanctions by the economic communities (ECOWAS for example) in Africa have occurred in order to ensure the ethics of a country. Another approach that has been long implemented has been leveraging shame as a tool "to humiliate states that deviate from democratic principles as norms of organization and functioning of political institutions." (Chouala, 2007, 204). This direct and transparent approach can be seen as contentious or be criticized in the international realm which would rather approach the topic in a diplomatic manner. This of course is not the first time ethical norms on the continent and Africa Intellectualism has been up for debate by western powers, hence the White Saviour Complex and the subsequent great scramble for Africa. Despite the colonial backlash on these emerging ethical norms this has not prevented:

African heads of state [whom] no longer refrain from publicly criticizing each -

other. A kind of public debate among heads of state has gradually developed in Africa, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels. (Chouala, 198, 2007)

These are examples of how ethics has progressed. Even the United States administration (ironically) publishes a list of African countries that have gained strong enough liberalization worthy of trading with them, which basically distinguishes the haves and have nots of liberal democracy according to their standards. This is done in complete ignorance to the fact that neo-colonialism still runs rampant in the continent that is then expected to live up to "Westphalian commonsense and its model of statehood [which] are not attuned to the circumstances upon which they are made to bear. And neither are the ethical commonplaces." (46, 2016, Grovogui) There's also the ethics surrounding transparency and accountability legitimized and measured via the "African Mechanism for the Evaluation of Public Policies," which analyses the economic behaviour of states.

Ethics, evidently equates civil order in the African context which, undeniably, is still violated in many countries. Yves Alexandre Chouala asserts that "African states - like all others - only resort to ethical values when their interest in obeying them outweighs their interest in violating them." (2007, 186). The new Africa and its leadership is celebrated by western powers and the symbolic shift in the international scene has also given confidence in western powers to shift their approach towards Africa. This trend towards democratic and moral civility transcends borders and can set the stage for IR norms rooted in the 21st century

ideals of ethics within the African continent if validated by the Global North. The collective of African thinkers and heads of states reconfiguring the international “no longer assume the model of a world of sovereign states, but many have begun to recognize the importance of international regimes and to appreciate the practical consequences of their contrasting ethos.” (46, Grovogui, 2016). This allows room for African optimism and ethical norms that surpasses the expected or common standard but rather re-examines the notion “that some region or groups of states are better positioned than the rest to enact the norms to which all must conform.” (46, Grovogui, 2016).

**"AS WESTERN IR AND ID
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International ethics and the Global African community will continue to be in contention and contradiction as long as colonialism and neo-colonialism goes unaddressed and is therefore upheld. The emerging ethical norms and approaches from the continent and the African diaspora highlight an afro-futurism ripe with decolonized approaches while exposing white supremacist tools of development. Reparations present a securing of economic human rights for the African American community and African International politics presents a new understanding of ethics that has great potential. What western powers fail to see that colonialism is still the problem and not the answer to any of these ethical

questions and the importance this holds for providing sustainable development for the Global African community. As western IR and ID scholars, we must ask ourselves ‘who’s ethics can be validated and at what standard?’. If other colonial states, such as (what is presently called) Canada takes accountability of their hand in the exploitation of Black folks historically and presently, then perhaps reparations and other decolonized approaches to development could be a discussion.



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