



**CHAPTER 1**

**IMAGINARIES OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY:  
CROSS-ROADS FROM 'ROME',  
'SERENDIPPO', AND 'YALTA'**

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**Siba N'Zatioula GROVOGUI**

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**Siba N'Zatioula GROVOGUI**

*Cornell University*

## **Abstract**

To the extent that it infers 'society', international society is understood as the institutionalization of shared interests and norms. It arises as a result of phenomena, dynamics, and processes, across time and space. These are misunderstood partly because disciplinary science has occulted many. One of the factors leading to amnesia is the commonsense status currently held by Western canons in which the modern state and exclusive civilizational norms are identified as central identity and desire (or aspiration) of international society. This is particularly the case with the so-called English School. The problem is not merely that this school is perennially bound up in a post-imperial fantasy of inherent goodness of the West. It is also that it elides the fact that post-World War II imaginaries of power, interest, legality, legitimacy, and their terms and articulations are medieval in origin. My hunch is that even the received images of the Middle Ages are distorted in disciplinary canons. The paradox is that it would be impossible for the collective 'us' to properly project ourselves in the future without correcting the errors of disciplinary canons and their archives.

## **Keywords**

*International Society, Disciplinary Canons, Imaginaries of Power,  
Postcolonial Critique, Medieval Origins*

## **Introduction**

There is no escaping today that the promises of human progress, international peace, and global justice are greatly imperiled. This is happening when the weapons and ideologies of war seem to outstrip by the day the institutional capacity to control their use by those who own them. The same may be said of our collective moral capacity to manage the threats that these weapons and the ideologies of their use pose to all of us. There are political questions associated with this final observation, but I did not come this far to lecture about politics. I came to discuss with you how the collective 'we' may reclaim the 'commons': the resources that belong to all of us (as) humans, beginning with language and extending to morals, law, institutions, and the like. We need to know these facts of life before we reclaim them.

Science is the means by which the collective 'we' has come to related understandings. It is the means by which we know what we know. In this sense, science is an instrument. It is a set of processes and techniques that must be transparent to lead us to truth and to reveal to us the essence of being human. I am sure that you detect here that I am talking about moral sciences: a shorthand for all branches of the social sciences and humanities tasked with finding ways to better human existence. The relevancy of the moral sciences thus construed to human existence are as significant if not more than they are for natural sciences. It is after all in the province of moral sciences that we tell ourselves how to use instruments derived by us from scientific progress. Put differently, artificial intelligence, their algorithms, and other mechanisms are but secondary sciences: technologies. The latter do not onto themselves tell us much about life and its requirements. We forget the related distinctions at our peril.

It is moral science that leads me today to postulate that international society needs to reclaim its stake in science, or the practices of knowledge generally, in order to protect itself against the misapplications or instrumentalization of technology to harmful ends. The latter constitutes an inherent threat as a byproduct of science. Relatedly, it is my contention that there is a necessity today to return to the quest of truth through science and, in the process, defend society everywhere as it comes under attack politically, economically, morally, and militarily. My arguments are as referenced as they are evidentiary.

The society of which I speak today is international society. International society is understood as aggregates of entities across the globe that, over time, developed shared principles and norms around activities and/or interests common to them. Unlike a political society that are subject to the same political authority, international society arose as a result of a host of organic and undirected phenomena, dynamics, and processes, across the globe. These evolved unevenly across space but, over time, converged in their essences. As a result, there are indications today and throughout the world that progress, justice, and peace would come from both understanding historical developments associated with international society; and strict adherence to consensus within international society about the terms of international existences as these derive from the formative events that have historically given shape to international society.

The assumed convergent understandings seem distant from us today because imperial, imperious, and hegemonic politics, and the sciences employed in their services – political science and international relations – have robbed us of the ability to understand ourselves as humans, more specifically the human trajectory.

Politically, all rulers of past dynasties, empires, as well as today's hegemonic states have only ambiguously embraced international society and its predicates of justice, peace, solidarity, cooperation, and hospitality. They have alternated between lauding (praising) the idea of international society, when seeking to advance their own agendas, and loathing (disliking) it when other political entities have sought to underscore its assumed principles of equality, legitimacy, responsibility, and accountability. Correspondingly, the dimensions of international law that imperial dynasties and modern hegemony admire and often claim to adhere to are law, legality, and normativity because they can be deployed to support all manners of ends, including their own.

Then as now, hegemonic powers have resented the fact and inconvenience that the processes of generation of law, legitimacy, and normativity impose some exigencies. The first among these are a turn away from authoritarianism, autocracy, imperiousness, and capriciousness. It is against this background that all empires, but particularly those emanating from Europe, or what is now termed the West, have assiduously labored to supplant the desired languages of law, diplomacy, and legitimacy. In their stead, empires have deployed registers of imperative rule, order, and compliance with their own moral and ethical designs as necessary predicates of progress, peace and justice.

There is evidence today that the accompanying conducts and their outcomes have not led to peace, justice, and necessary solidarity and hospitality. Rather, the conduct has been just as arbitrary as the results or consequences have been catastrophic. The results are the multiple crises of the intellect, morals, institutions, and ecology that we face today. In this context, the central question to be asked today by all, including the Turkish Academy of Sciences, is: is there an alignment between the realities or conditions of the world and the practices and institutions of knowledge?

The impression that one gets from the sciences of politics, particularly the discipline of international relations, is that there is neither such an alignment nor an acknowledgment of the exigency to bring it about. In fact, the institutional memory of the discipline is deliberately and purposefully rife with amnesia about successful human experimentations outside of the so-called West. The discipline is also averse to logic and hermeneutical consistency. This disposition is called *misology*. Finally, disciplinary traditions of realism and its pragmatisms have ensured that it remains encrusted in *misoneism*: a hatred, fear, or intolerance of novelty, prospectives, and change. The related dispositions and practices are embedded in disciplinary canons, particularly in the references that the latter foster and the manners in which it organizes archives and authorizes their use.

All divisions in Western practices of the discipline exhibit the above characteristics. They extend from realism, idealism, and constructivism in the US to different positions within the so-called English School of International Relations, and beyond. They all rely on historiographies, hermeneutics, and ethnographies that foster parochial civilizational discourses rife with misrepresentations of the human trajectory, mischaracterizations of the human condition, and unjustified hierarchies among human societies. As a result, the discipline of international relations overall remains perennially bound up in a fantasy of inherent goodness of the West, moral suspicions of the other, and corresponding imaginaries of power, interest, legality, legitimacy that justify rule by the West and, therefore, cast challenges or alternatives to such as suspect, illegitimate, or worse.

My hunch is that it would be impossible for the collective 'us' to properly project ourselves into the future without correcting the errors of disciplinary canons, archives, and references. By making the link between science and empire, it is not my intention to dispute the idea that science, or the production of knowledge, is an essential function of human faculties and that the collective capacity to progress depends on good science. Quite the contrary. It is to suggest that social scientific disciplines and the humanities generally have erred in embedding scientific and knowledge practices in imperial endeavors. The result has been that up until now scientific progress has been instrumentalized to the advantage of empires and empires themselves have been incorporated into imperial schemes for mastery not only of dominions – nature and its resources – but also other societies – considered in the event as either inferior or subordinate. It must matter too that, beginning with the mid-1940s *trifecta* meeting of Yalta-San Francisco-Potsdam, the prevailing doctrines of order manifestly conscripted a secular God and a related version of Grace – appearing as the West and Occidentalism – on behalf of a political theological hierarchy and unilateralism that facilitated alliances destined to rule by injunctions and not law. This requires localized translation since I am Türkiye. What I mean is that today international order and stability are predicated upon whimsical edicts or injunctions detached from the spirit of the law, morality, and the purpose of life. This translation becomes relevant later. It suffices to say for now that the current language of rules-based international system is not accidental. It reflects a move away from a (collectively derived) law-based international system to one in which the injunction or rule becomes the point of order.

The initiates in this room will recognize by my statement that we are in the face of a Schmittian world on steroids in which right and wrong are determined by the affective and sentimental distances between the emperor and the involved subject. This distance determines life and death on putative doctrines of necessity and inherence that may be invoked only by and on behalf of some: for instance, the right of Israel to defend itself and not the right of Palestine to defend itself against occupation and fight for self-determination. Right aligns on the Grace of the Emperor-adjudicator.

How self-proclaimed knowledgeable cosmopolitan elites came to accept this state of affair as indispensable requires explanation.

## **Empire, Science, and Disciplinary Fabulations**

Science is a function of human faculties. It is the means by which humans try to gain access to the secrets of the mind, body, and environment, including earth, air, space, and the oceans. Each society organizes the practice of science according to criteria that are particular to space and time. Science abides method, epistemology, and ontology. It is easy to view these matters as uncontroversial and incontrovertible. But the organization of science and the institutions through which knowledge is acquired is a different matter. The latter abide politics, cultures, morality, and ethics.

In modern times, there have been three separate layers to the practice of science that require attention. The initial predicates of scientific practice are steeped in individual autonomy, methodological rigor, and the injunction to seek truth, no matter its inconveniences. The second layer is composed of the institutions in which individuals assemble to collaboratively produce science. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, disciplines have emerged as the organizing principles of knowledge. They are the clusters around which scientists come together as aggregates to inquire about special topics. In this sense, disciplines were intended to give both focus and coherence to knowledge. To this end, practitioners relied on common archives, or references and indices, toward generating canons. Hence, disciplines produce canonical truths, which already infringes upon the total autonomy and independence of research. Finally, universities have given home to disciplines with the aim of preparing adepts toward the attainment of social ends, some more universal while other remain parochial. In our highly neoliberal worlds, other private entities – institutes, centers, academies, and the like – have joined universities in the latter regards.

These three layers – of practice (of science), disciplines, and universities may seem co-determinants in principle, but they are not. The first, practice, hinges on epistemology, ontology, and methods that are universally applicable in any context, although their adoption and application to context may be adequate or not. Disciplines, on the other hand, are intended for socialization in both the practice and ethos of research, publication, and teaching. The latter depend on cultures, resources, and teleologies of knowledge whose dimensions are not altogether confined to the structure of universities, among others. The objective of universities, or kindred institutions, is to administer the practice of science as well as manage the production of canons toward use by others outside of the settings of learning. The last two layers – disciplines and universities – are sites of intersections between 1) research and ideology, 2) research and its applications as policy, and 3) its consumers: policymakers among others.

The second layer, which is discipline, is my primary preoccupation because it is the key to maintaining scientific probity as well as to the defense of our collective humanity. This is where we all reside in the quest for truth and the appropriate morality, and wisdom. This space excludes no individual and is not exclusive of any nationality. The only questions are practice, performance, and results. In this domain, we are not correct because we belong to disciplines or universities. Truth is truth, always truth enough, incomplete and necessitating further inquiries. In science, 'not true' is never good enough, unlike in the province of ideology, or disciplines. Disciplines are already attentive to teleology, or the end of knowledge. This is why disciplines are prescriptive of process and the permissible. Process is mentoring and the requirements of membership – tenure, in the case of universities. The permissible is bounded by the inner boundaries of the archives, canons, and their methods.

Mentors, tenured faculty, deans, and referees ensure that practitioners are sufficiently disciplined in the terms of existing disciplines. New disciplines on the other hand emerge upon demand by the requirements of life, industry, capital, society, or state. Eventually, however, they succumb to institutional practices. These are parts of what Thomas Kuhn calls normal science. They are at once efficient and limiting.

Universities house disciplines to specific ends. The first is institutional. University is what we call the structure that house disciplines. The other end of universities is to satisfy social, political, and cultural demands. They are the funnels through which resources are infused into research. Universities are also suited to orient knowledge toward larger programmatic ends: for instance, to expedite research toward specific goals: a research to go to the moon within particular time frame; to find vaccines for COVID19; to unlock the secrets of nature toward stemming ecological disasters; etc.

Looking at these three layers from the perspectives of socio-cultural ends or politics, there emerge three postures or ethos, with significant effects: 1) neutrality (for science); 2) instrumentality (for disciplines) and instrumentalism. The first is related to proficiency in knowledge-seeking as its own end. The other is implicated in the determination of the quality of knowledge, which is defined by not-so disinterested professional guilds. In contemporary United States, for instance, faculty are often professional guild members and, at times, policy advisors. To these and others, knowledge-seeking cannot be separated from larger ends, beyond the university. The last layer, the university, produces instrumentalism as an ethos of education: to shape good citizens with appropriate responses to the needs of society understood in national terms.

In a hierarchical international order, the discipline of international relations has become a key actor in producing systems of knowledge that buttress the positions of the West. This effort is evident in the manners in which they have conjured up and defined sovereign rights, the national interest, national security and related values and norms. The science, or processes of knowledge-making that produces these categories and their justifications – be it realism, idealism, pragmatism, constructivism or else – depend on the deployment of ultimately dubious historical and anthropological observations on nature (as in the state of nature) and humans. The latter is typified presumptively by something called human nature which presumably reveals itself as selfishness, ruthlessness, and violence against others but only at the inter-state and non-alliance levels.

The articulated theories may have force as Ideology, but in themselves they are groundless. The proof that the related arguments are specious is in evidence in the manners in which humans, as citizens, are supposed to behave within the domestic realm of the state. Here, constitutionalism and constitutional jurisprudence presume that the hazards of nature and flaws of human relations can be reversed through legislation and codes of conduct destined to foster collaboration, responsibility, and responsiveness to the general interest.

To be exact, the discipline of international relations is a product of the late Cold War era. The advent of the term 'international relations' as metonym for a discipline occurred in the 1970s to coincide with a burst of energy and activism from formerly colonial provinces united under the rubric of the Non-Aligned Movement. Long in the making, this energy burst into a full agenda after the 1973 summit. The Non-aligned agenda at the United Nations included the democratization of the international system; the New International Economic Order (1974); the end of Portuguese colonialism in Africa (1975), the New Information and Communication Order (1980); the Law of the Sea (1982); the end of South Africa's rule in South West Africa (1990) and Apartheid (1994). These do not exhaust what was perceived then as Third World activism. It was this activism that led to Western politicization at the United Nations, particularly after the 1975 US-USSR Helsinki Accords. Thereafter, the West lost interest in international law and diplomacy in favor of politics by means of instrumentalizing international institutions and the imposition of the language of implementation of rules of democracy and human rights, among others.

The academic response in the West was to adopt the metonym of international relations for all disciplines related to the facts of them. These were filed under rubrics that extended from diplomacy to international law, international affairs and/or international development. From then onward, the



postwar pretense of consensual development of international law and morality gave way to a struggle to expand Western hegemony. The collapse of the Soviet Union added much momentum to this new posture.

The adoption of the metonym of international relations for 'our', my, discipline was not so much a gift of language as it was a linguistic masquerade. It gave birth to a sui generis discipline committed to disguising a parochial agenda under the pretense of science, reason, and the universal good. As I show below, the agenda was to counter mobilization and movements from without the West by occulting all moral and ethical horizons that exceeded Western orientations toward the world. It also dissuaded any retrospectives that did not take as its starting point ancient Rome and Greece and proceeded in a straight line to vindications of modern imperial geopolitics. The underlying Plato to NATO trajectory dispensed with knowledges and events outside Europe.

It is my contention that the sanctioned canons of the discipline of international relations have generated a total but incoherent corpus of discourses about the nature and structure of the real: of facts, events, rationalities, and analyses that are presented as evidence and proof of the inevitability and inescapability of the present international order and its regimes of laws, norms, and values. The underlying image of the real brings to the fore prescriptions on both the admissible language of politics and its uses or applicability to life events. The impression left by the totalizing disciplinary discourses appears to be that the present character of international relations is permanent; that its organizing principles are the product of rational and deliberative processes; and that the collective of international actors must accept the related modes of legislation, execution, and adjudication of values, interests, and norms.

## **The Commons and International Society**

As Richard J. Bernstein (1978) showed, social theory in particular has not always been sufficiently empirical, adequately interpretive, and necessarily critical. Bernstein (2002) spent a career wondering about the deepening gap between our understanding of the world and the actual world before us. This interrogation was not merely practical, although it is. It was also moral. It concerns the paucity of the intellectual resources made available to us which seem to disarm us rather than reinforce our capacities to come to grip with the looming crises surrounding us: of the mind, of the human, of governance, and of nature.

It goes without saying that Bernstein believes that intellectuals today have a responsibility to themselves and to others, as a matter of professional duties and citizenship, to aim for a better understanding of both the physical and moral worlds. Bernstein's contribution is to turn to Immanuel Kant, GWF Hegel, F.W.J. Schelling, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche, Immanuel Levinas, Hans Jonas, and Hannah Arendt for deeper exploration of the human condition. The names that appear here are part of a canon about the relationship between the actuality of evil and our responsibility to fend it off. This is why Bernstein calls for vigilance.

It does not appear that we have been or that we are vigilant. It is not evident that the codes of conduct and techniques and technologies of knowledge that epistemic communities put in place under liberalism protected them from the inhibiting effects of external and internal pressures. The external pressures are manifest in the inescapable relations between state, capital, and society, on the one hand, and, on the other, their support to intellectual activities: grants, research collaboration, and the like. Pierre Bourdieu (1984), Michel Foucault (1980), Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) and others have eloquently delved into related questions and problems. It is not my aim to either replicate or engage their questions as I am primarily interested in the internal dynamics of the production of knowledge.

The essential problem of the paucity of knowledge today is that related tools and instruments have all come from our discipline, a place that looks suspiciously on those who do not belong, specifically those who are outside, beyond, and without it. Our discipline seems to revert back to ancient prejudices as signposts. One of them was enunciated earlier by Maimonides that there existed 'human beings [with] no religious belief whatsoever, be it of a speculative or of a traditional nature' (ULR 1, 2011;

URL 2, n.d.; URL 3, n.d.). This contrast of us versus them affirms my belief that the genealogy of key sensibilities in the discipline rests in theology, not philosophy, morals, and/or ethics. The West of Yalta-San Francisco-Potsdam evokes in me both Thomas Aquinas' City of God (Augustine, 1958) and the US 'City Upon A Hill'.<sup>1</sup> As tropes, both evoke an exceptional mythical place of lights – to George Bush, Ten Thousand Points of Lights (Bush, 1989) – inhabited by an exceptional peoples. These people are 'blessed' with theological Grace and therefore called upon to save the others who have varying degree of relations to the Light, the Truth: infidels, heathens, savages, uncivilized, innocent or not. In short, The City belongs to the elect or chosen, no matter where the chosen live, when they self-constitute, and for what purpose.

The West is therefore not a fixed geographical space. Rather, it is symbolic in its inception and topological in its inferences. It is a psychic space from which some human entities imagine themselves in hierarchical relationships with others. In these hierarchies, the West sits at the top and on top. Specifically in the modern era, it has been a residence for self-imbued entities that claimed reason, science, and wisdom for themselves and imagined others to lack them – or at least to possess them in lesser degrees and forms than the ideal. This imagined order of things has bred habits of mind, gestures, and dispositions that are central to our intellectual and institutional practices at the university, the Academy. I have made related arguments with regards to the inception, organization, and aesthetics of the modern disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. I will not repeat those today.

Today, I just want to talk about the effects on knowledge, and our ability to move with certainty toward epistemic security, of beliefs in notions emanating from the West: of civilized and non-civilized, trustees and their beneficiaries, etc., and their justification in theology (salvation), philosophy (instruction), history (historicism), and anthropology (diffusionism). These have become fixtures of thought that provide structure to modern disciplinary epistemes, orientation to our methods, and direction to our lines of inquiry. The result is a particular form of allodoxia that inheres in modern social sciences and humanities: a misrecognition of the world, leading to false beliefs about the world, that have stunt judgment. The key characteristics of this allodoxia are an historic misapprehension of the complexities and interrelatedness of the moral universes of the world; a subsequent misinterpretation of life as it is actually lived; and a misidentification of the predicaments of postcolonial existences, which relate to the most significant imperatives of life after empire, enslavement, colonialism, and the havoc wrought on nature by a dubious aesthetics of progress.

Looking at it from Africa, the image of the world appears in our disciplines and their instruments – methods, canons, and archives – as they do in a concave mirror, mistaken for a convex mirror. The property of a convex mirror is to produce a virtual image of its object (the world in our case) that is smaller in size (to us, in significance) than the size of the actual object: the constellations of, as well as dynamics among, myriad regions, cultures, spiritual orders and their material, symbolic, moral economies of humans, things, and the relationships of the former to the latter. This would be troublesome enough but in cognitive models dependent upon comparison and contrast the quandaries of the convex mirror are inescapable. This is not, however, how the concave mirror works. A concave mirror has an inward curve, much like Eurocentrism. It shows different image types depending on the distance between the mirror and the object. Because of the way that the light hits the mirror and bounces back from it, a concave mirror will simply create an inverted real image when the object is beyond the focal point. The image is real and so are its properties. It simply looks upside down.

This is what happens to the image of the human outside, beyond, and without the city in disciplinary commonsense. The construction and views of modern Europe have as their focal points ancient Greece (for democracy, philosophy, and associated wisdoms) and Rome (for law, statecraft, and warfare). Beyond Greece and Rome, on the side of the Mediterranean, are the Barbary Coast, the Sahara, Sahel, and the Sudanese and Forest Regions of Africa. Throughout the entire modern era, including even

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1 See, for instance, "I have spoken of a thousand points of light, of all the community organizations that are spread like stars throughout the Nation, doing good. We will work hand in hand, encouraging, sometimes leading, sometimes being led, rewarding. We will work on this in the White House, in the Cabinet agencies. I will go to the people and the programs that are the brighter points of light, and I will ask every member of my government to become involved. The old ideas are new again because they are not old, they are timeless: duty, sacrifice, commitment, and a patriotism that finds its expression in taking part and pitching in" (Bush, 1989).



today, disciplinary and authoritative or official Europe could not countenance the idea that the human on the outer banks of the Mediterranean functioned in the same manners as the Greeks and Romans. In the Eurocentric lens, Greek and Roman thought, cultures, social practices, and associated modes of thought and science run like a river away from Africa northward to as far away places as Scandinavia.

To justify this imagined natural state of affairs, Europe, pace Valentin Mudimbe (1988), invented a fictive but symbolically significant Africa to contrast with everything European. This included the mental and moral faculties of Africans, as well as their cognitive and affective capacities, which were attributed to culture and the environment. In this scheme, Barbary produced 'barbarians'; the people below the Sahara became heathens; and further in the forest, there emerged the primitive pigmy. It was left to historians, anthropologists, sociologists, adventurers, and others to specify the relations of these entities to reason, science, and civilization. The slave trade amplified the so-called characters and characteristics of African-descended peoples in what would become the Americas. These peoples, Europeans imagined, 'deserved' to be administered differently under unique regimes of administrative laws (for instance the 1685 and 1724 *Code Noirs*); police codes of discipline (1850 fugitive slave laws); and legal jurisprudence (1857 *Dred Scott*). All of these amounted to a fixed and precise commonsense that permeated society: that black thought, felt, behaved, and responded to stimuli and incentives differently. They were thus different. Even when science had disproven racial differences, culture and identity emerged as justifications for global hierarchies that substituted regions to race while leaving the prior underlying mental, moral, and normative cartographies untouched.

## **The Sciences and Institutions of Relations**

I do not mean to engage in an ad hominem attack on disciplines and practitioners when I postulate that disciplines, canons, and archives operate like convex and concave mirrors cast upon the world. I mean simply to point to the structure of the gaze and the fact that it both distorts image and leaves out much of the background to fully represent its objects. Put differently, it is my claim that there are no good epistemological and ontological reasons to accept the present image of the worlds of peoples, ideas, and the resulting imaginaries of the future. This is conjoined to the idea that all knowledge-seekers should be open to the possibility of errors. Since the only constant in knowledge is that commonsense is prone to change, commonsense must be open to contestations.

My central proposition is that the lenses through which disciplines have looked at the world – or the practices of science, disciplines, canons, and archives – have themselves become practices of evasion of the requisite responsibility and vigilance needed to ensure epistemic security – to lead us to truth, one revisable falsehood at a time.

Specifically, International Society is not a product of the West, or Western expansion. The processes leading to its emergence began long before European hegemony and near-simultaneously from every region of the world. This includes the Ottomans who contributed to diplomatic and consular practices, together with their structures of hospitality, that are current today. Likewise, travelers, explorers, and merchants from all horizons, including the Wangara of West Africa, contributed material cultures associated today with commercial societies. The Muslims of the Indian Ocean, with their dhows also connected vast expanses of spaces and their peoples.

Even modern republicanism and human rights are not exclusively Western. Quilombos in Palmares instituted the first republic of the so-called New World. Haiti contributed to advancing the idea that humans ought be endowed with inalienable rights as a central requirement of life. Ida B. Wells was defending the sanctity of life concurrently with the brother Dunant who gave us the Red Cross. Before Italian nurses popularized the phrase *Tuti Fratelli* to imply unbreakable human bonds, Quilombos and Haitians had disposed of racial categories in favor of universals. All of this is to suggest that facts are on the side of those who claim equal human dignity.

It is not simply fact. There is a plethora of evidence in the organization of life across time and space that the terms of social life and relations have abided the exigencies of social life and the conditions of existence. The related exigencies have exceeded the whims of any single sovereign, ideology, and/

or theology. The evidence suggests that it had been a mistake of modern social, moral, and human sciences to depend on stylized references, archives, and canons originating from one geographic space. This space has been defined arbitrarily as Europe, based on a contrived cartography, that omits 'Europe's' own connections and debts to the rest of the world. The result is that the practices of the social sciences and humanities have belied the modern scientific mandate to truth but dispensing with other, equally compelling, epistemes, ontologies, and corresponding regimes of truth. It is therefore undeniable that, despite claims to the contrary, the modern era opened with imperial, communal, ideological, and material pressures that led public intellectuals to abdicate their responsibility to the world at large and, correspondingly, to relinquish their obligations to open inquiries, freedom of thought, and epistemological and ontological openness. The related enclosures and foreclosures partly explain the collective inability to envisage new imaginaries, and therefore solutions, to the present crises of governance, morals, institutions, and ecology.

Since the times of the Ottomans, Türkiye had been involved in institutional experiments profoundly grounded in both an Islamic and secular thematic of the human and of living together. Its actions in fostering peace and coexistence, for instance, were mirrored elsewhere in the Muslim world of social and moral experiments in Andalusia and replicated on the east coast of Africa. There emerged ideas in these spaces of the commons, of living together, and the end of social existence that fostered practices, institutions, and social forms that deserve our attention today, if only because the ones promoted and imposed through Western domination have exhausted themselves.

I do not aim for a full and exhaustive exploration of related experimentations. Nor is it my goal to enunciate their full applications to our circumstances today. I merely wish to show how they might relate to the sorts of thought experiments needed today in the quest for new imaginaries of the future. In this latter regard, I must insist that it is not my intention to suggest that the traditions to which I refer are not themselves problematic in some respects or that they are exclusively apt to our possible futures.

The international order, which is now in tatters, originated in a set of conversations between then US President F.D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. These conversations resulted in the so-called Atlantic Charter (1941), which is itself the foundation of the United Nations Charter. The Atlantic Charter could easily be divided in three parts. The first, which spans articles 1 through 3, expresses the desire or understanding of the need to relinquish imperial habits and/or proclivities. Hence, the determination of their authors to 'seek no territorial aggrandizement' and 'no territorial changes that do not accord with the expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.' These 'commitments' are followed by a purported inclination to 'respect the right of all people to live under the form of government under which they choose to live'. The second part of the Atlantic Charter pertains to treaty obligations, or 'respect for existing obligations, to further...on equal terms' access to the material and moral resources necessary to ensure the existence of all states, no matter their size or political/ideological orientation, so long as they remain peaceful. The third and last part of this Charter stipulate a set of conditions for peace and coexistence: for instance, 'to bring about the fullest collaboration of all nations'; to establish 'a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries'; and the need 'for realistic as well as spiritual reasons [to abandon] the use of force' as prime recourse in international affairs.

The novelty of the Atlantic Charter was not in its aspiration to meet the material and spiritual needs of the many. It was that former Western hegemony was willing to confront themselves after two self-destructive wars over the span of thirty years and to acknowledge that imperialism, racism, and nationalism, as well as their underlying parochial ideologies, had led humanity to darker horizons. All other dispositions had antecedents around the world across time. For millennia, from Africa to Asia, Europe, and beyond, socio-political entities had stipulated and lived by one of the core truisms of the Atlantic and, later, United Nations Charters: to relinquish the use of force for realistic as well as spiritual reasons in order to give themselves the instruments and institutions by which to live peacefully. To these ends, they invited diplomacy, developed languages, and instituted moral codes or norms in laws as predicates of relations, exchanges, negotiations, and adjudications of values and interests in times of peace and conflicts. Consistently, there emerged in various regions historical articulations of the above as foundations for institutional experiments, some more successful than others.

## **Geopolitics of Muslim Spaces**

The Muslim world, loosely-speaking, actively participated in the making of international systems of laws, norms, institutions, and practices that are miscast in disciplinary traditions. They often appear in the discipline either as incommensurable, incidental, or even irrelevant to disciplinary speculations. The reasons are many. One is that many of the practices and institutions originating from around the world prior to European hegemony are relegated to a pre-history of the international, as an international order of the medieval. This is contrasted to practices emanating from Europe, which are considered modern. The distinction modern-medieval, which at times is blended into one of the West and the Rest, is simply mistaken in many regards.

Take the concepts of the commons (or the idea of spaces, and symbolic and material resources available to all); the universal (that certain principles appear or are manifest in moral and metaphysical debates across the world); cosmopolitanism (the idea that citizenship, hospitality, solidarity, and moral solicitation transcend parochial identities, particularly territorial ones); and more contentiously, globalization (that ideas, knowledge, and technologies emanating from particular locales may spread across the globe to other regions as pertinent to the exigencies of life). Squabbles over their exact definitions aside, the conditions of possibility of the phenomena to which they pertain are available in significant forms without the West, particularly in the Muslim world, in ways that are relevant to moral and ethical quandaries resulting from the multiple crises afflicting all of us today around the world. These include stylized articulations of thought containing concepts, references, and other vectors of communication accessible to one's interlocutors. These appear as languages pertinent to particular objects, activities, or spheres of life. They also appear in natural languages of semantics, grammar, idioms, words, verbs, etc., that are used by specific populations or groups.

In this regard, one of the tools of cosmopolitanism, globalization, and other forms of communication and relatedness across space is what linguists call *lingua franca*: a language, natural or otherwise, that emerges as principal means of communication among speakers whose native languages are different. A *lingua franca* thus understood established a linguistic bridge as an auxiliary language that serves to convey ideas pertinent to a set of human activities, particularly among traders, seafarers, members of religious communities, and the like. For its function as a vehicle of communication, *lingua franca* is also referred to as a vehicular language. *Lingua franca* comes about in two ways. The first is that one natural language comes to dominate because it is imposed by an imperial power or emerge necessarily as commensurate to the exigencies of life. For instance, Latin, Classic Arabic, French, and now English emerged from their discreet historical contexts as language spoken either by the elites or the many across the world.

*Lingua franca* can also be invented *de novo*. The Sabir, once prevalent in the Mediterranean is one of them. The Sabir has been referred to, rightly, as a French-based pidgin language of North Africa. Linguists abstract that the name Sabir itself has lineage to 'saber' (to Spanish for 'to know') of which it is visibly a cognate. However, linguistics alone cannot convey why the Sabir was adopted in the Mediterranean basin as vehicular language among traders, Crusaders, and others, from the 11th to the 19th century, spanning multiple empires from Byzantium to Moorish rule in the Iberian Peninsula, and Ottoman control of the then Barbary Coast. The reason is not in the inherent resilience of the language itself but the fact that populations across the shores of the Mediterranean found it useful in maintaining their connections with one another.

On the east coast of Africa, a similar phenomenon developed with Swahili. Swahili is often described as a Bantu language widely used in East Africa that has gained the status of *lingua franca* for its accessibility to non-Bantu speakers, specifically Arab-speaking populations. The descendants of the latter are now admittedly Swahili-speaking –principally, that is. The linguistic root of Swahili is undoubtedly important in its mixing of multiple languages as well as the mapping of the infused language on an in-land Bantu grammar, away from the coast where the encounters first occurred. Significantly, the emergence of Swahili also demonstrates the inventiveness of human populations desiring communication. The implied communication did not pertain merely to commerce, as it did. It also involved the nature of intimacies brought

about by the rhythms of activities imposed by nature (monsoons) and limits imposed on mobility in this environment by the means of transportation (dhow). These compelled travelers to long residencies in ports of call, which resulted in families requiring places of worship, burials, etc.

The fact that the underlying process should lead to the institution of Dar es Salaam only underscores an oft overlooked fact: that the 'Above of Peace' was not merely metaphorical. Dar es Salaam in what is now Tanzania is not the only symbol of coexistence, however cantankerous at times, that had emerged as a key theme in Muslim provinces of the world. It is the case that throughout the Muslim world, from today's Brunei in East Asia to Tanzania in Southern Africa, travelers, seafarers, religious and otherwise non-religious scholars, and others found hospitable 'homes' in places away from home. Not only that, Dar es Salaam and other aphorisms or precepts emerged as organizing principles of certain orientations toward cohabitation. As a result, whether it was in the Strait of Malacca or the Indian Ocean, Muslims approached their non-Muslim hosts with a certain understanding of coexistence encrusted in traditions that combined idealism with realism. The idealism was at once ideological – in the theological sort of way – and aspirational in the secular sense: denoting mutual respect and the desire to live across faith or spiritual regimes.

Even the artefact of the Archives of Timbuktu offers an insight into coexistence, or the ability of previously mutually unintelligible people to set for themselves compelling rules of engagement, terms of hospitality or admission, and standards of reciprocity as the foundation of exchanges. Specifically, the emergence of Timbuktu as cultural center for Muslims and non-Muslims alike had deep lineages going back to social relations, commercial practices, and ethical norms attributed to the Abbasids. This is not the place to trace that lineage as the space would not suffice. It bears repeating however that scientific inquiries and philosophical qua theological debates from the Abbasid era provided some key foundations to the cultural institutions and ethos of knowledge of Andalusia. There is also no disputing that debates and reflections from Timbuktu benefitted from the infusions into the discursive streams of ideas attributable to philosophical inquiries and moral thought in Andalusia. After all, the Moors who engineered the Andalusian experiment moved back to the Sahel upon expulsion from Spain.

Significantly, the practices, norms, principles, and values that emerged in these contexts as signposts of human interactions and coexistence emerged organically with no specific sovereign injunctions, except as the case might have been, and like instruction to godly or humane conduct. In turn, the above set the context for historically detectable patterns of life, entreaties, and adjudication that shaped lives from the Mediterranean Coast to the Sahel, and Sudan: the land of the Blacks below.

In sum, there is much to life in Africa, from the Mediterranean Coast to the so-called Swahili Coast that deserves attention. For instance, it might come as a surprise today that an Islamist group would call itself Boko Haram – literally 'books are forbidden'. In the West, the moniker 'Boko Haram' has been taken to mean that the group that conceive it is opposed to Western education. In actuality, to the concerned Islamic group, Sufis, Sufi traditions, and, according to them, other non-orthodox Islamic practices are the enemies of the faith. Hence, their attempt to burn scholarly archives attributed to Sufis. The groups that tried to burn the archives of Timbuktu took inspiration from underlying theology cum ideological claims and attributions.

### **Cosmopolitanism Avant La Lettre**

The effects of the crises of the intellect, morality, governance, legitimacy, and the environment look familiar to all. But the perceptions and expressions of this familiarity varies across regions and constituencies of the international order. There is therefore a need for deliberations across all the concerned entities to ascertain sentiments, perspectives, and prospects. This means that solutions to the crises cannot be found within the strictures of a single set of archives, canons, and related philosophical or ideational systems. As an illustration, for instance, take the extant disciplinary considerations of cosmopolitanism. They begin with European Enlightenment, particularly the ideas of the likes of Immanuel Kant. A simple exercise of the mind would suggest that this opening to the world of cosmopolitanism may be mistaken. Kant has a contemporary in Timbuktu named Mukhtar al-Kunti whose ideas on the subjects of coexistence, hospitality, diplomacy, and pragmatism might serve both as counterpoint and complement to Kant's own.

A Sahelian, al Kunti hailed from a region situated between the legacies of the Romans (Carthage), Christians (St. Augustine), and the Almoravids. Al Kunti would have been aware of the existence of Christian enclaves on the Coast of Barbary – from la Boulette in Tunisia to the Kabyle region of Algeria and the Rif region of Morocco, where Berbers and other non-Arabs have historically fought to preserve their religious distinctiveness but also non-Arab or African traditions.

Besides the Romans, European imperial powers were preceded in this region by the Ottomans who abided different norms. A simple example suffices to make this point. While under Ottoman rule, different political entities on the Coast of Barbary were first to recognize the new American republic established in North America under the rubric of United States of America. The related treaties, or Barbary Treaties (URL 4, n.d.), are the first significant forays of the new republic. The treaties themselves suggest variance from disciplinary readings of the treaty that stress sovereignty, statehood, and national autonomy as conditions for consent and therefore validity of treaties.

Political life in Barbary before and after the Ottomans put to test disciplinary reliance or insistence on concepts and ontologies that are new and may even be fictive. This should not distress us. It should be welcome as all that is familiar to us today appears to be shaky and no longer dependable: viz, sovereignty, states, rule of law, Western exceptionalism, and the long-assumed superiority of Western institutions, norms, and values. International existence preceded these ontological categories and underlying epistemes. This truism suggests that new forms of international existence, global governance, collective self-stylization, and commensurate notions of solidarity, hospitality and coexistence are not unreachable even in the absence of our ontological and epistemological givens.

Oblivious to the implied pluralism of the human experiment, few in the West see the urgency of revisiting the structure and orientations of the disciplines. The trend is toward self-referential critiques predicated on the assumptions of self-sufficiency and moral superiority. There are also trends without the West that need caution. One is the tendency in the West for instance to think that the solution to the present crises is simply to supplant discredited values, norms, and institutions with those from other regions of the world. Neither of these approaches are sufficiently empirical, adequately interpretive, and/or necessarily critical of its object and pattern of thought, actions, and related omissions leading to today's crises.

There is in fact no way out of the crises of today unless we collectively return to scientific rigor and skepticism of commonsense through standard criteria, and modes of verification of observations, analyses, and conclusions. This is where TUBA can be more effective. In the first instance, it can help restore to our own disciplinary accounts needed references and archives toward novel canonical understandings of the world, past and present. In the second instance, TUBA can also positively contribute to the quest for methodological and institutional resources with which to restructure the edifices of knowledge, including but not limited to universities and their disciplines. These are some of the ways to ensure that our regimes of truth and commonsense more adequately incorporate differing or different epistemes, ontologies, methods, and their material, moral, and spiritual horizons. These can be achieved within the remits of TUBA of 'fostering scientific endeavors' through the 'strict application of scientific principles.' TUBA is correct that none of these would lead us to better futures unless we are guided by commensurate 'social strategies and codes of conduct whose aims are to orient the use and application of scientific and technological data (TÜBA, 2024) toward sustainable life or existence. In this latter regard, there is much to the past and present of Türkiye that are reassuring in these regards. The ultimate challenge is how to adapt that which has served us best in the past with our present predicaments and their exigencies in all their complexities.



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## **About Author**

**Prof. Dr. Siba N'Zatioula GROVOGUI | Cornell University | [Sng52\[at\]cornell.edu](mailto:Sng52[at]cornell.edu)**

Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui is originally from Guinea, where he attended Law School before serving as law clerk, judge, and legal counsel for the National Commission on Trade, Agreements, and Protocols. He received a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1988. Prior to joining Cornell University's Africana Studies, Grovogui was professor of international relations theory and law at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *Sovereigns, Quasi-Sovereigns, and Africans: Race and Self-determination in International Law* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and *Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy: Memories of International Institutions and Order* (Palgrave, April 2006). Grovogui has recently completed and submitted a book manuscript titled *The Gaze of Copernicus: Postcolonialism, Serendipity, and International Relations* (University of Manchester Press). He is working to complete the companion book, tentatively titled 'Quilombo's Horizon: Moral Orders and the Law of the Commons.' Prof. Siba has received a number of awards including but not limited to 2019 Distinguished Scholar from the THEORY Section of the International Studies Association and the 2018 Distinguished Scholar from the Global South Caucus of the International Studies Association. He has given distinguished and named lectures including the 2019 Imber Lecture of the University of St. Andrew (Scotland, UK), the Nelson Mandela Lecture (Rhodes University, 2021) and the 2023 Africa Day Lecture of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation. He has been awarded several research grants, including by the United States National Science Foundation for research on the rule of law. He frequently intervenes on international events including most recently in *Foreign Policy Magazine* on Western intervention in Libya and the German *Die Zeit* on the War in Ukraine. He enjoys teaching and the company of the curious and inquiring. He was recently elected President of the International Studies Association for 2025-26.