


SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

# The Legon School of International Relations

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(Received 14 March 2020; revised 4 June 2021; accepted 9 June 2021; first published online 13 July 2021)

## Abstract

The article explores the Legon School of International Relations (LSIR) which is the research, teaching, and academic programming of International Relations (IR) at the University of Ghana, Legon. The LSIR came out of attempts to decolonise knowledge production, dissemination, and academic programming in Ghana in early 1960s. The article shows that the LSIR is decolonial in theoretical perspective, grounded in southern epistemologies, relational in ontology, qualitative in methodology, practice-based, and it is equity-oriented. Although the LSIR scholarship as a package is distinctive, some of its ideas overlap with the work of several contemporary IR communities in the West. The article highlights implications of the LSIR story for the IR communities in the West and the value of paying close attention to the works of IR centres of scholarship in Africa.

**Keywords:** International Relations; IR theory; Postcolonial IR; Decoloniality; Legon School of IR; Global IR; Global South; African IR; Epistemology; Relationality; Ontology; Methodology; Non-Western IR

## Introduction

Africa has vibrant International Relations (IR) epistemic communities.<sup>1</sup> Major anglophone, Arabic, and francophone universities in Africa have two IR programmes, one within departments of political science, and standalone centres dedicated to graduate education and professional training in international affairs. The origins of these IR communities, their contributions to international relations knowledge, and implications of African-based international politics scholarship for the rest of the IR field, are rarely explored. To address this gap, the article discusses how and why the IR community in Ghana emerged and its implications for the broader field of IR.<sup>2</sup> The article shows that the Ghanaian IR community came out of the early 1960s research, teaching, and academic programming designed at the University of Ghana, Legon (hereafter Legon) for Africans<sup>3</sup> to decolonise knowledge and to shift the focus of international politics scholarship from 'the study of Eurocentric political subjects to Ghanaian and African subjects'.<sup>4</sup>

The IR intellectual hub at Legon (hereafter the Legon School of International Relations or LSIR) is decolonial in theoretical perspective, grounded in southern epistemologies, relational in ontology, qualitative in methodology, practice-based, Global South in orientation, and it

<sup>1</sup>Akinbode Fasakin, 'Africa and the historiography of International Relations', *Brazilian Journal of African Studies*, 3:5 (2018), pp. 9–30.

<sup>2</sup>The Ghanaian IR community was selected in part because it embodies key features of African IR communities and in part because it is one of the oldest and most vibrant IR epistemic groups in Africa today. Most of the research was conducted in Ghana between June and September 2019, but follow up work took place throughout 2020.

<sup>3</sup>Note that it was not just for Ghanaians but everyone in continental Africa and Africans in the diaspora.

<sup>4</sup>Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, 'Research and teaching of political science at the University of Ghana: The search for relevance', in Emmanuel Debrah, Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, A Essuman-Johnson, and Kwame Ninsin (eds), *Ghana: Essays in the Study of Political Science* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2014), p. xi.

seeks to promote equitable distribution of power, as well as privilege, in the international system. Although the LSIR scholarship as a package is distinctive, some of its ideas overlap with the work of several contemporary IR movements in the West, including that of the African IR (AIR),<sup>5</sup> Global IR (GIR),<sup>6</sup> and Postcolonial/decolonial IR (PIR).<sup>7</sup> Similar to the scholarship of AIR, GIR, and PIR, the LSIR scholars advocate for and use diverse experiences as the foundation of IR theorising. Like the AIR, the GIR, and the PIR movements, the LSIR scholars centre marginalised voices, critique great power politics, and ensure that IR teaching, research, and academic programming are not mere imitation of problem-solving IR.<sup>8</sup>

The story of the LSIR has enormous implications for the broader IR field. Besides bringing foresight issues and ideas such as decoloniality, inclusivity, diversity, and southern epistemologies to the discipline long before they became mainstream IR<sup>9</sup> ideas, the LSIR offers an interesting equity-oriented answer to the central question of who is IR scholarship for, and what greater purpose does it serve in society? LSIR scholars turn Kenneth Waltz's view that 'it would be ridiculous to construct a theory on international politics based on Malaysia and Costa Rica'<sup>10</sup> on its head by arguing that the focus of IR scholarship should be on the less powerful actors in the international system. From the LSIR perspective, IR scholars should neither theorise for theorising sake nor theorise just for great powers. Rather, IR scholars should theorise with a view to creating a

<sup>5</sup>A group of scholars who work in Western universities but draw insights from continental Africa to critique and advance mainstream IR. For sample of this scholarship, see Kevin Dunn and Timothy Shaw (eds), *Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory* (New York, NY: Springer, 2001); Thomas Kwasi Tiekou, *Governing Africa: 3D Analysis of the African Union's Performance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Karen Smith, 'Has Africa got anything to say? African contributions to the theoretical development of International Relations', *The Round Table*, 98:402 (2009), pp. 269–84; Rita Abrahamsen, 'Africa and International Relations: Assembling Africa, studying the world', *African Affairs* (London), 116:462 (2017), pp. 125–39; Sophie Harma and William Brown, 'In from the margins? The changing place of Africa in International Relations', *International Affairs London*, 89:1 (2013), pp. 69–87; Densua Mumford, 'How regional norms shape regional organizations: The Pan-African rhetorical trap and the empowerment of the ECOWAS parliament', *African Affairs*, 120:478 (2021), pp. 1–25.

<sup>6</sup>An intellectual movement that traces its origins to the writings of Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan in the 2000s. It critiques Western-centrism in IR scholarship, seeks to reimagine IR as a global discipline, and works to promote greater inclusiveness, and diversity in the IR discipline. For examples of this scholarship, see Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations: Origins and Evolution of IR at its Centenary* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Scarlett Cornelissen, Fantu Cheru, and Timothy M. Shaw (eds), *Africa and International Relations in the 21st Century* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Antje Wiener, *Contestation and Constitution of Norms in Global International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>7</sup>An intellectual tradition whose genealogies are often traced to the IR 'third debate' or the positivist and postpositivist debate of the 1990s and to the works of scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, among others. It challenges Eurocentric conception of international relations, epistemological and ontological assumptions of American-style of IR, and seeks to decolonise IR knowledge. For a sample of this scholarship, see Branwen Gruffydd Jones (ed.), *Decolonizing International Relations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006); Karen Tucker, 'Unraveling coloniality in international relations: Knowledge, relationality, and strategies for engagement', *International Political Sociology*, 12:3 (2018), pp. 215–32; Anibal Jan Wilkens, 'Postcolonialism in International Relations', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies* (2017), available at: {<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.101>} accessed 1 June 2021; Eun Yong-Soo, 'Global IR through dialogue', *The Pacific Review*, 32:2 (2019), pp. 131–49.

<sup>8</sup>The IR that Robert Cox called problem solving or what both Steve Smith and Stanley Hoffman call 'an American social science' is produced in support and maintenance of the current global political order. It is heavily biased in favour of capitalism and often produced in defence of Western civilisation. For details, see Robert W. Cox, 'Social forces, states and world orders: Beyond International Relations theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 10:2 (1981), pp. 126–55; Stanley Hoffman, 'An American social science: IR', *Daedalus*, 106:3 (1987), pp. 3–24; Steve Smith, 'The discipline of International Relations: Still an American social science?', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 2:3 (2000), pp. 374–402.

<sup>9</sup>This is the IR that come under the umbrella of the International Studies Association (ISA). Membership goes beyond problem-solving scholars to include IR schools such as the Copenhagen, the English School, among others.

<sup>10</sup>Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1979), p. 72.

more equitable global order. Thus, in many ways, the LSIR story provides interesting lessons for mainstream IR communities.

The rest of the article is organised into five sections. The section following the introduction provides a succinct historical background of the LSIR. This is followed by an outline of the pillars of the LSIR in terms of epistemology, ontology, methodology, theoretical approaches to International Relations, and its normative claims. The next section explores the factors that led to the decaying pillars of the Legon School in the 1980s. The penultimate section examines the rebuilding of the LSIR through the creation of the Legon Centre for International Affairs (LECIA) in 1989, renamed the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD) in 2010. It shows the similarities and differences between the international politics scholarship in the 1960s and 1970s and the teaching, research, curriculum programming, and publications of LECIAD. Finally, the conclusion provides a summary and its implications for the broader IR community.

### Historical context

The LSIR emerged in the 1950s and early 1960s as part of a broader effort to decolonise higher education and knowledge production in Ghana.<sup>11</sup> As part of the decolonisation process, the post-independent government of Ghana, led by the Pan-African and anti-colonial scholar and politician Kwame Nkrumah, initiated a series of reforms to address the ills of university education in Ghana. According to Agbodeka, there were primarily five major limitations of university education in Ghana prior to the reforms. First, university education was widely seen as too elitist. It was designed for few people (mostly men) and for those who will support the colonial administration. Second, university education was perceived as the main vehicle for the production and reproduction of colonial mentality in Ghana. Third, the only university in Ghana at the time, called the University College of the Gold Coast (UCGC), was widely perceived as a hotbed of conservatism and neocolonialism. Fourth, the teaching, research, and policy direction of the UCGC were seen to be dictated in London and by the 80 per cent non-African faculty members. Finally, the knowledge produced at the UCGC was considered too abstract, fluffy, theorising for theory's sake, and was disconnected from the developmental needs of Ghana, the African continent, and the Global South. To address the five problems of university education in Ghana, the reforms tried to dismantle the foothold that the University of London, the University of Oxford<sup>12</sup> and the University of Cambridge<sup>13</sup> (hereafter Loxbridge) had established over university education in Ghana during the colonial period<sup>14</sup> by turning the UCGC, which was an affiliate college of the University of London, into the University of Ghana, Legon in 1961.

The move to decolonise knowledge production in Ghana led to the creation of the Department of Political Science (DPS) as an independent disciplinary unit out of the politics, philosophy, and economics (PPE) programme of the UCGC in 1962.<sup>15</sup> The study of international politics (IP), as it was then called, emerged as a major subfield of the DPS, becoming one of the public faces of the new decolonial approach to scholarship in Ghana.<sup>16</sup> Anti-colonial scholars such as Jitendra Mohan, whose 'life was characterised by his unwavering commitment, both intellectual and

<sup>11</sup>For a detailed discussion of the decolonisation of higher education in Ghana, see Francis Agbodeka, *A History of University of Ghana: Half a Century of Higher Education* (Ghana: Woeli Publishing Services, 1998).

<sup>12</sup>The Hall system and the departmental set up of UCGC was modelled in the image of University of Oxford.

<sup>13</sup>The by-laws of the University College of Gold Coast were drawn from the 1926 University of Cambridge Statutes.

<sup>14</sup>For an account of the fight between the academic leadership at Legon and the government over control of university education, see Agbodeka, *A History of University of Ghana*.

<sup>15</sup>Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, 'Research and teaching of political science at the University of Ghana: The search for relevance', in Debrah et al. (eds), *Ghana*, pp. x-xy.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph R. A. Ayee and Maame A. A. Gyekye-Jandoh, 'The vicissitudes of political science in Ghana', in Samuel Agyegyi-Mensah, Joseph Atsu Ayee, and Abena D. Oduro (eds), *Changing Perspectives on the Social Sciences in Ghana* (New York, NY: Springer, 2014).

political, to the struggles of the peoples of the Third World against colonialism', ensured that the teaching and research of IP at Legon reflected the perspective of the Global South rather than that of Loxbridge.<sup>17</sup> Further, Pan-Africanists like Yaw Manu and Emmanuel Hassen, whose 'book on the social and political thought of Frantz Fanon was influential within radical circles in Ghanaian universities' centred African and decolonial issues in academic programming and research at DPS.<sup>18</sup>

Several factors, including a backlash from the Loxbridge scholars, the rise of comparative politics in the DPS, as well as Ghanaian politics, interrupted the influence of the LSIR in the late 1960s. However, the return to Legon from abroad (primarily from Canada and the United States of America) of a new cadre of anti-colonial scholars in the early 1970s<sup>19</sup> strengthened the position of LSIR until the chilling impacts on scholarship in Ghana of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) military regime led by Jerry Rawlings in the 1980s. The Rawlings factor, as Kevin Shillington put it, was a double-edged sword for the LSIR.<sup>20</sup> The neo-liberal policies of the Rawlings government and the poaching of key critical scholars from Legon by the PNDC regime undermined IP scholarship.<sup>21</sup> Yet, it was the critical voices within the PNDC that made Legon create the LECIAD at the request of Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to resurrect the best tradition of the LSIR.<sup>22</sup> The next section explores the main ideational building blocks of the LSIR.

### Pillars of the Legon School

Pillars of the LSIR include, but are not limited to, decolonial theoretical perspectives, relational ontology, southern epistemologies, a focus on current affairs, preference for qualitative research, centring of Global South agency in scholarship, and demand for equitable distribution of global power. These ideas and concerns, which go beyond 'demand for more diversity and better representation of hitherto marginalised voices and experience', to question 'the deep-seated power relations that have shaped IR's ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations', are at the heart of the AIR, the GIR, and the PIR scholarship.<sup>23</sup>

### Decolonial IR

LSIR scholars sought to shift IR teaching, research, and academic programming from Eurocentrism while simultaneously advocating for a just global order.<sup>24</sup> Jitendra Mohan, who taught the first introduction to IR course in the DPS, led the way by exposing students to various ways that international relations can be understood and explained from the decolonial perspective, as well as showing them how the international order at the time worked against interests of people in the Global South. As '[h]ostile as he was to the machinations of the US, [ ... and] even more hostile to what he saw as Soviet pressure on Third World governments', Mohan's teaching critiqued the activities of the Soviet Union and the US as much as he bashed the negative imprints

<sup>17</sup>Lionel Cliffe and Peter Lawrence, 'Jitendra Mohan', *Review of African Political Economy*, 32 (1985), p. 14.

<sup>18</sup>Chris Atim, 'A tribute to Dr. Emmanuel Hansen', *Review of African Political Economy*, 41 (1988), p. 114; Yaw Manu, 'Mainstays of the African Revolution', *The Pan-Africanist Review*, 1:2 (1964), pp. 17–31.

<sup>19</sup>They included Ebo Hutchful, Emmanuel Hassen, and Chris Hesse.

<sup>20</sup>Kevin Shillington, *Ghana and the Rawlings Factor* (London, UK: Macmillian Education, 1992).

<sup>21</sup>Ayee and Gyekye-Jandoh, 'The vicissitudes of political science in Ghana'.

<sup>22</sup>Linda Darkwa and Philip Attuquayefio, 'Changing perspectives in the didactics of international affairs in Ghana', in Agyei-Mensah, Atsu Ayee, and Oduro (eds), *The Changing Perspectives on the Social Sciences in Ghana*; Obed Yao Asamoah, *The Political History of Ghana (1950–2013): The Experience of a Non-Conformist* (Accra: Author House, 2014).

<sup>23</sup>Felix Anderl and Antonia Witt, 'Problematizing the global in Global IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (2020), pp. 33–57; Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'The entrapment of Africa within the global colonial matrices of power: Eurocentrism, coloniality, and deimperialization in the twenty-first century', *Journal of Developing Societies*, 29:4 (2013), pp. 331–53; Olivia Umurerwa Rutazibwa, 'From the everyday to IR: In defence of the strategic use of the R-word', *Postcolonial Studies*, 19:2 (2016), pp. 191–200.

<sup>24</sup>Gyimah-Boadi, 'Research and teaching of political science at the University of Ghana'.

of colonialism in newly independent states.<sup>25</sup> Like the writings of AIR, GIR and PIR scholars, Mohan's publications were equally critical of the global powers and interestingly challenged European interpretation of the world.<sup>26</sup>

Similar to DIR and PIR entry-level courses, Mohan used the introductory class to set the stage for decolonising political science knowledge in reading materials students were assigned and for the teaching of topics, such as the search for a new international order, South-South cooperation, the non-aligned movement, Western imperialism, and superpower machination of the Global South.<sup>27</sup> Yaw Manu, who taught the upper-level IR courses at the undergraduate level, grounded students in Pan-Africanism, regionalism (what Amitav Acharya calls regional worlds), and structuralist perspectives to international politics.<sup>28</sup> Influenced by Pan-African scholarship and the works of structuralists, Manu and colleagues directed the attention of students to the unequal international political and economic relations as well as the contribution of neocolonialism to the underdevelopment of the African continent.<sup>29</sup> Although scholars of the LSIR are united by their dedication to decolonial scholarship, they self-identify their theoretical perspectives differently.<sup>30</sup> Some self-identify their perspectives as Pan-African/Nkrumah/neo-colonial/non-conformist perspectives,<sup>31</sup> while others see themselves as gender theorists,<sup>32</sup> subaltern realist thinkers,<sup>33</sup> and African socialists.<sup>34</sup> Of course, there are those whose works cut across the various theoretical positions or do not write from one analytical position.<sup>35</sup>

### **Regional and relational ontology**

Scholars of the LSIR look at the world through the prism of regions defined as 'social constructions that make references to territorial location and geographical or normative contiguity'.<sup>36</sup> First, the teaching and research programme of the LSIR reflects in many ways the call made by Amitav Acharya in his ASA Presidential Address in 2014.<sup>37</sup> As a unit of analysis, LSIR

<sup>25</sup>Cliffe and Lawrence, 'Jitendra Mohan', p. 14.

<sup>26</sup>Jitendra Mohan, 'Varieties of African socialism in: Socialist register', in Jitendra Mohan, *The Socialist Register 1966: A Survey of Movements and Ideas*, 3 (1966), pp. 220–66.

<sup>27</sup>Author's interview with Professor Kwame Ninsin, 28 August 2019.

<sup>28</sup>Amitav Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds: A new agenda for international studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, 58:4 (2014). Manu's teaching drew extensively on not just the works of region-wide thinkers like Kwame Nkrumah who were born in Africa but on the writing of diasporic regional worlds scholars or Pan-Africanists such as George Padmore and Du Bois, hinting at a connection between LSIR and the Howard School of IR. For the Howard School, see Errol A. Henderson, 'The revolution will not be theorised: Du Bois, Locke, and the Howard School's challenge to white supremacist IR theory', *Millennium*, 45:3 (2017), pp. 492–510; Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>29</sup>Manu, 'Mainstays of the African Revolution'.

<sup>30</sup>This is fundamentally no different from the divisions within the AIR, GIR and the PIR.

<sup>31</sup>Manu, 'Mainstays of the African Revolution'; Kumi Ansah-Koi, 'The Pan-Africanist thought of Kwame Nkrumah', *Institute of African Studies*, 5 (University of Ghana, 1985), pp. 1–27; Juliana Appiah, 'Towards a people friendly Pan-African Parliament: Lessons from the European Parliament', *Journal of African Union Studies*, 5:2 (2016), pp. 5–22.

<sup>32</sup>Peace A. Medie, *Global Norms and Local Action: The Campaigns to End Violence Against Women in Africa* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>33</sup>Mohammed Ayoob, 'Inequality and theorizing in International Relations: The case for subaltern realism', *International Studies Review*, 4:3 (2002), pp. 27–48.

<sup>34</sup>Mohan, 'Varieties of African socialism', pp. 220–66.

<sup>35</sup>Abeku Essuman Johnson, 'Going back home: The politics of the repatriation of the Liberian and Togolese refugees in Ghana', *Legon Journal of International Affairs*, 2:1 (2005), pp. 1–25; Ken Ahorse, 'Managing maritime security threats in the Gulf of Guinea and its implications for West Africa', *Legon Journal of International Affairs*, 8:1 (2015), pp. 79–110; Kwame Bofo-Arthur, 'Trends in Ghana's foreign policy after Nkrumah', in E. Hansen and K. A. Ninsin (eds), *State, Development and Politics in Ghana* (Dakar: Codesria, 1989), pp. 137–64.

<sup>36</sup>S. K. B. Asante, *Regionalism and Africa's Development: Expectations, Reality and Challenges* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997). For the quotation, see Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse (eds), 'Introduction: framework of the Handbook and Conceptual Clarifications', *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism* (2016), p. 5.

<sup>37</sup>Acharya, 'Global International Relations (IR) and regional worlds'.

scholars centre the continent of Africa as much as they provincialise the region of the West.<sup>38</sup> They do not see any part of the world, including the West, as the centre of the universe or elevate one region over the other. Although the LSIR scholars recognise Anglo-American power and influence on the world, they do not treat European experiences as universal, as some mainstream Anglo-American IR scholars tend to do.

Second, some of the scholars of the LSIR follow the structuralist tradition of economic development of postcolonial societies pioneered by Raúl Prebisch, Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, Gunnar Myrdal, and Arthur Lewis, who see the world in material terms.<sup>39</sup> As a result, several LSIR scholars emphasise the role of material forces and influences on Global Southern states. The emphasis on material properties leads some scholars of LSIR to elevate things such as regional integration, economic development, foreign aid, and Western and African relations in both research and teaching.<sup>40</sup>

Third, LSIR scholars think about the world in relational terms.<sup>41</sup> They tend to think about actors in interdependent terms, contrary to some of the versions of IR scholarship that conceptualise actors, such as the state as an independent and atomistic entity.<sup>42</sup> They reject the statist script in favour of the region, extra-region, or continent.<sup>43</sup> The main units of analysis for most scholars of LSIR are global, continental, regional, extra-regional, and subnational actors.<sup>44</sup> When they invoke the state, it is often done in relation to other entities. For them, the state is embedded in entities, including society, subregional/regional/extra-regional/continental, and global structures. Thus, state actions cannot be understood without references to regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), extra-regional bodies such as the G5 Sahel, continental entities such as the African Union, and global structures such as international financial institutions.<sup>45</sup> At a minimum, these entities help African states construct their interests and allow them to exercise agency on the world stage. IR in Legon is therefore taught and studied not from a state-centric orientation, but more from regional and extra-regional perspectives.

In the same spirit that the GIR calls on IR scholars to ensure congruence between IR theory and international political realities,<sup>46</sup> LSIR teaching, and research are driven by current affairs, international practices, and policy issues. Doctors Darkwa and Attuquayefio of LECIAD captured the policy-oriented and current affairs approach to International Relations scholarship at Legon aptly when they said:

A significant part of post-graduate training in international affairs relates to being alive to current events. Thus, the post-graduate student of international affairs must be an avid consumer of news – both local and foreign. S/he must be able to engage in objective discourse(s)

<sup>38</sup>Boniface Yao Gebe, 'International Relations and historical evidence: The African system', *The African Review*, 24:1–2 (2017), pp. 146–56.

<sup>39</sup>Kwame Boafo-Arthur, 'The political economy of Ghana's foreign policy: Past, present and the future', *Legon Social Science Journal* (1999).

<sup>40</sup>Asante, *Regionalism and Africa's Development*.

<sup>41</sup>For the importance of relationality in African IR, see Thomas Kwasi Tiekou, 'Stirring the pot: The African Union and the international order', in Katharina P. Coleman, Markus Kornprobst, and Annette Seegers (eds), *Diplomacy and Borderlands: African Agency at the Intersections of Orders* (London, UK: Routledge, 2019), pp. 212–34.

<sup>42</sup>Thomas Kwasi Tiekou, 'Collectivist worldview: Its challenge to International Relations', in Cornelissen, Cheru, and Shaw (eds), *Africa and International Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

<sup>43</sup>Gebe, 'International Relations and historical evidence'.

<sup>44</sup>Eboe Hutchful, 'Why regimes adjust: The World Bank ponders its "star pupil"', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 29:2 (1995), pp. 303–17.

<sup>45</sup>Juliana Abena Appiah, 'Africa peace and security architecture: Reflections on over a decade of promoting peace and security in Africa', *Africa Insight*, 47:4 (2018), pp. 29–39.

<sup>46</sup>Acharya and Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations*.

on both domestic issues, as well as international relations. Above all, s/he must carry herself/himself at all times as a distinguished member of the public.<sup>47</sup>

For the LSIR group, there is no debate about the importance of doing policy-relevant research or making IR research relevant for policymakers. Members of the LSIR regularly participate in policy discussions organised by governments and practitioners who often teach in the IP programs in DPS and LECIAD. Some LSIR scholars even go a step further, providing advice to policymakers, sitting on boards created by governments, doing policy work for international organisations, or even joining governments.<sup>48</sup> There is a revolving door between the LSIR Ivory Tower and the policy world. This revolving door has often raised tension between LSIR's broad commitment to critical scholarship and the pragmatism required to be effective in policy circles. As Emmanuel Hassen found out during the brief stint with the PNDC, the need to be pragmatic while doing critical scholarship can even be dangerous.<sup>49</sup>

### **Epistemology and methodology**

Scholars of the LSIR study, teach, and research international relations from epistemologies of the South. Boaventura de Sousa Santos defines epistemologies of the South as scholarship that 'enables oppressed social groups to represent the world in their own terms, as part of struggles of resistance against oppression and the knowledge that legitimates it'.<sup>50</sup> Consistent with epistemologies of the South and criticism of Western parochialism in sections of the IR discipline, LSIR scholars attempt to retrieve silenced and marginalised thoughts in IR, and to show how people of the Global South, especially Africans, can resist oppressive global discourses. Drawing on Nkrumah's neocolonialism arguments, some LSIR scholars seek to show how discourses are part of indirect mechanisms to control, exploit, abuse, and oppress people in the Global South.<sup>51</sup>

The LSIR scholars' focus on retrieving voices of the marginalised in IR<sup>52</sup> often leads them to adopt an empiricist approach to knowledge production. The empiricist impulses are based 'on the cliché that "seeing is believing"', particularly, on the notion that good scholarship depends primarily on visits to research sites to see things with your 'own eyes' and describing them in glorious detail.<sup>53</sup> Thus, even though they see the value of postmodernist approaches, most LSIR scholars see truth as simply 'out there' to be discovered.<sup>54</sup> They, therefore, reject any notion that knowledge produced from detailed description with a view to providing policy recommendations and academic implications is less analytical or of second-class value. For most of them, precision in the description of the knowledge of the oppressed, and drawing inferences from that knowledge for the weak to resist powerful forces in the international system, is the pinnacle of good scholarship.

The attraction of careful and detailed examination of empirical materials is such that although the LSIR curriculum has always given equal weight to the training of quantitative and qualitative research techniques, most LSIR writings employ qualitative research methods.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, like the

<sup>47</sup>Darkwa and Attuquayefio, 'Changing perspectives in the didactics of international affairs in Ghana', p. 200.

<sup>48</sup>As of the time of writing Darkwa had just returned to LECIAD after taking two years of leave of absence from Legon to focus on policy work. This move echoes the decision by Emmanuel Hassen to become the PNDC secretary in early 1980s.

<sup>49</sup>He fell out with the government over the PNDC's decision to implement neoliberal structural adjustment policies in exchange for loans from the international financial institution. He went into exile in Tanzania where he died in a car accident.

<sup>50</sup>Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>51</sup>Manu, 'Mainstays of the African Revolution'.

<sup>52</sup>This has been the main driving force of GIR and PIR scholarship.

<sup>53</sup>Ayee and Gyekye-Jandoh, 'The vicissitudes of political science in Ghana', p. 173.

<sup>54</sup>Roy Doiron and Marlene Asselin, 'Ethical dilemmas for researchers working in international contexts', *School Libraries Worldwide*, 21:2 (2015), p. 5.

<sup>55</sup>With the exception of Essuman Johnson and Peace Medie, no one in the LSIR group has employed quantitative research technique in any systematic way and over a long period.

AIR, the GIR, and the PIR scholarship, LSIR scholars are biased in favour of qualitative research.<sup>56</sup> The most common qualitative research methods employed by the LSIR are case studies, comparative methods, archival research, historical narratives, discourse analysis, content analysis, and interviews.<sup>57</sup> The case study often involves the use of process tracing, participant observation, and careful description of events. The qualitative orientation of LSIR is similar if not identical to approaches used by AIR and GIR scholars to produce knowledge. Even though the LSIR group and their GIR and PIR counterparts have a preference for qualitative scholarship, many members of the PIR do not share the empiricist-impulses of the former group.<sup>58</sup>

The belief in the idea of truth as correspondence is so strong to the extent that most LSIR scholars have come to see abstraction as a distraction or theorising for theory's sake.<sup>59</sup> The belief among LSIR scholars that abstract-oriented scholarship is often a diversionary tactic is shaped by the colonial experience. The LSIR group does not want to fall into the trap of the colonial educational logic, which often encouraged many educated Africans to focus on abstract ideas that are far removed from conditions that ordinary Africans live, or conditioned some of the most educated Africans to remain silent on the ills of colonialism and slavery.<sup>60</sup> This experience has taught the LSIR not only to be wary of knowledge production that privileges too much abstraction but to view the elevation of abstract and theoretical discussions over careful empirical analysis in some sections of the Anglo-American IR community as a continuation of the colonial tactic of distraction.<sup>61</sup> The influence of the idea (that is, that the preference for abstract discussions/works within the Anglo-American IR community is a diversionary tactic) meant that the LSIR scholars never participated in the great IR debates. The neo-neo debate, the debate between positivism versus post-positivism, and that between rationalism versus constructivism, had no traction among LSIR scholars as they saw them as diversions of attention away from discussions of real-world problems, including intellectual oppression and marginalisation of Global South in IR scholarship.<sup>62</sup>

LSIR scholars' suspicion of abstract scholarship as a colonial tactic of distraction highlights another difference between them and PIR counterparts. Unlike the LSIR, many of the influential works of PIR works have been very abstract.<sup>63</sup> The differences notwithstanding, there is no doubt that LSIR scholars and their GIR and PIR counterparts converge on decolonial scholarship, relational ontology, southern epistemologies, and commitment to qualitative research methodology. The similarities become even more apparent when the normative underpinning of the AIR, the GIR, the PIR scholarship, and LSIR are compared.

### **Shared normative position**

Like AIR, GIR, and PIR scholars, the normative goal of the first generation of LSIR scholars was to centre the Global South in general and Africa in particular in IR scholarship. This was reflected

<sup>56</sup>Over 90 per cent of AIR, GIR, PIR, and LSIR works encountered while doing research for this article and almost all works cited in this study are based on qualitative research technique.

<sup>57</sup>See Darkwa and Attuquefio, 'Changing perspectives in the didactics of international affairs in Ghana'; Ayele and Gyekye-Jandoh, 'The vicissitudes of political science in Ghana'.

<sup>58</sup>The empiricist orientations separate the LSIR and many GIR and PIR scholars. And most LSIR scholars do not self-identify as postpositivists or critique positivist scholarship in the same way that several GIR, and PIR writers do. Indeed, several influential GIR, and PIR scholars are anti-empiricists or postpositivists.

<sup>59</sup>Author's interview with Mr Stevens K. M. Ahiawordor, 30 August 2019.

<sup>60</sup>Agbodeka, *A History of University of Ghana*.

<sup>61</sup>Author's interviews with: Mr Stevens K. M. Ahiawordor, 30 August 2019; Professor Kwame Danso-Boafo, 5 February 2020.

<sup>62</sup>Author's interview with Mr Stevens K. M. Ahiawordor, 30 August 2019.

<sup>63</sup>See for instance, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1963); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1979); Jean-François Bayart and Stephen Ellis, 'Africa in the world: A history of extraversion', *African Affairs*, 99:395 (2000), pp. 217–67.



in the teaching and academic programming at the Legon in the 1960s. The former head of DPS, Professor Kwame Ninsin, who studied international politics as part of his undergraduate degree in the 1960s, remembered the way IP was taught fondly.<sup>64</sup> He recounted how their instructors openly encouraged them to take Global South perspectives to examine international politics, and how the topics discussed in class focused on promoting the agenda of the Global South at the time. Describing Mohan as a phenomenal teacher who could lecture for hours without notes, Professor Ninsin pointed out that the teaching of IP reflected the search for a more equitable economic, social, and political international order for the Global South as a whole. This is similar to current efforts by GIR and PIR scholars to centre the Global South in IR scholarship.<sup>65</sup>

In line with the AIR, the GIR, and the PIR scholarship, the first generation of IP scholars also rejected the kind of IR designed as objective science.<sup>66</sup> The IP scholars neither hid the fact that they sought to change the world order to give a meaningful voice and seat on the world stage to people of the Global South, nor did they conceal their goal of challenging hegemonic knowledge that often legitimatises oppression, inequality, colonialism, and suppresses voices of people of the Global South. Likewise, the AIR, the GIR, and the PIR movements do not conceal their demands for greater diversity and voice for the non-West in IR scholarship.<sup>67</sup>

Consistent with AIR, GIR, and PIR works, the first generation of IP scholars also rejected the idea that the dominant liberalism and realism analytical frameworks were the best lenses for studying international relations. They even rejected the Marxist label even though some of the ideas intersected with the Marxist school of IR.<sup>68</sup> Mohan, who is widely credited as ‘one of the first to introduce socialist ideas to Legon students’, and Manu, who disliked the way Western Marxists examined Africa, created a distance between their ideas and Western socialism.<sup>69</sup> They did so by emphasising issues, such as: equitable distribution of power and wealth between former colonial powers and newly independent states; Western and Soviet machination and racism in Africa; the search for a new international order; social justice; full independence from colonialism and neocolonialism; and other issues Western Marxists do not like to give analytical weight to, oftentimes conveniently preferring to look the other way.<sup>70</sup> The distance that the IP scholars wanted to see between their scholarship and that of Western realists, liberals, Marxists, or socialists in part explains why the former preferred to call themselves Pan-Africanists or Nkrumahists/revolutionary academics, or non-conformist scholars.<sup>71</sup> The conscious efforts that the first generation made to theorise and discuss issues that many Western realists, liberals, Marxists, or socialists ignore or feel uncomfortable talking about are similar to the decisions made by the AIR, GIR and PIR scholars to focus on issues such as racism and oppression that many IR realists, liberals, Marxists, or socialists often find uncomfortable to talk about.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Author’s interview with Professor Kwame Ninsin, 28 August 2019.

<sup>65</sup> Katharina Pichler Coleman and Thomas Kwasi Tiekou (eds), *African Actors in International Security: Shaping Contemporary Norms* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2018); Zeynep Gulsah Capan, ‘Decolonising international relations?’, *Third World Quarterly*, 38:1 (2017), pp. 1–15; Melisa Deciancio, ‘International Relations from the South: A regional research agenda for global IR’, *International Studies Review*, 18:1 (2016), pp. 106–19.

<sup>66</sup> Gyimah-Boadi, ‘Research and teaching of political science at the University of Ghana’.

<sup>67</sup> Yong-Soo Eun (ed.), *Going beyond Parochialism and Fragmentation in the Study of International Relations* (London, UK: Routledge, 2020); Pinar Bilgin, ‘Looking for “the international” beyond the West’, *Third World Quarterly*, 31:5 (2010), pp. 817–28; Odoom and Andrews, ‘What/who is still missing in International Relations scholarship?’

<sup>68</sup> Atim, ‘A tribute to Dr. Emmanuel Hansen’.

<sup>69</sup> Cliffe and Lawrence, ‘Jitendra Mohan’. p. 15.

<sup>70</sup> Mohan, ‘Varieties of African socialism’; Yaw Manu, ‘Reflection on nationalism in the Cold Coast (Ghana) 1994–1995’, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 8:1 (1975), pp. 117–31.

<sup>71</sup> Asamoah, *The Political History of Ghana (1950–2013)*.

<sup>72</sup> See, for instance, Errol A. Henderson, ‘Hidden in plain sight: Racism in International Relations theory’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 20:1 (2013), pp. 71–92; Robbie Shilliam, ‘Race and racism in International Relations: Retrieving a scholarly inheritance’, *International Politics Reviews*, 8 (2020), pp. 1–44; Meera Sabaratnam, ‘Is IR theory white? Racialised subject-positioning in three canonical texts’, *Millennium* (2020), pp. 1–27.

## The decaying pillars of the Legon School (1980–9)

The LSIR began to decline in the early 1980s as a result of political, economic, and ideational factors. First, the emergence of the populist military governments, led by Jerry John Rawlings in 1979, created conditions that contributed to the decline of decolonial scholarship. The PNDC turned strained relations between DPS and the first military government of Rawlings, Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), into open hostilities.<sup>73</sup> While PNDC members saw the department as dominated by opinionated and elitist scholars who are only good at critiquing, several DPS faculty members saw the PNDC as made of a bunch of thugs unfit to rule Ghana.<sup>74</sup> The PNDC's hostility towards the DPS made several of its faculty members leave Ghana in the 1980s.<sup>75</sup> The PNDC's perceived or real threat to the DPS encouraged the faculty to focus on the PNDC's activities, politics, and policies.<sup>76</sup> The faculty became so obsessed with the PNDC that even the most internationalist of the IP members spent most of their energies on Ghanaian politics.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, several decolonial scholars at Legon who had sympathy for the PNDC government, including Emmanuel Hansen, joined the regime.<sup>78</sup>

Second, the PNDC's introduction of the neoliberal structural adjustment programmes in Ghana in 1983 had several negative impacts on the Ghanaian academy in general, especially on decolonial scholarship. The removal of government subsidies as part of the reforms cut significant funding to the University of Ghana and the DPS. This made highly trained Ghanaians, including some DPS members leave Ghana 'for better-paid employment, resulting in a massive brain drain'.<sup>79</sup> The DPS faculty who remained had to do other work, especially consultancy services and extra teaching, to supplement their income.<sup>80</sup> This developed patchy and strained research efforts as the faculty members had little time to do basic research and engage in critical scholarship.<sup>81</sup> Some of the DPS faculty members created their own think tanks, while others joined existing or newly formed consultancy organisations and research centres.<sup>82</sup>

The higher monetary reward provided by consultancy services changed the focus of research of several DPS faculty members.<sup>83</sup> Instead of studying critical and Global South-relevant research topics, the focus of research shifted towards issues of concern to Western governments and international donors. Topics such as structural adjustments, liberal democracy, decentralisation,

<sup>73</sup>Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi (ed.), *Ghana Under PNDC Rule* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1993).

<sup>74</sup>Author's interview with Professor Kwame Danso-Boafo, 5 February 2020. Also see Ayee and Gyekye-Jandoh, 'The vicissitudes of political science in Ghana'.

<sup>75</sup>Ayee and Gyekye-Jandoh, 'The vicissitudes of political science in Ghana'; Alison Girdwood, *Tertiary Education Policy in Ghana: An Assessment 1988–1998* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1999).

<sup>76</sup>Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi and Donald Rothchild, 'Rawlings, populism, and civil liberties tradition in Ghana', *A Journal of Opinion*, 12:3–4 (1982), pp. 64–9.

<sup>77</sup>Kumi Ansah-Koi had turned his attention from Pan-Africanism and Global South politics to the study of domestic Ghanaian issues. See, for instance, Kumi Ansah-Koi, 'Beyond the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Promoting child rights in Ghana', *Legon Journal of International Affairs*, 2:1 (2005), pp. 26–41; Hagar Bampoh-Addo and Kumi Ansah-Koi, 'Conflict resolution in higher education institutions: The case of Ghanaian public universities', *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research Methods*, 2:1 (2015), pp. 53–70; Kwame Boafo-Arthur, who became the most senior IP person in the department in the 1990s, concentrated on Ghana's economic relations. For a sample of his work, see Kwame Boafo-Arthur, 'Ghana's politics of international economic relations under the PNDC, 1982–1992', *African Study Monographs*, 20:2 (1999), pp. 73–98.

<sup>78</sup>Decolonial scholars including Dr Obed Asamoah and Tsatsu Tsikata at the faculty of law, who often came to support the IP during the heated seminar discussions at DPS, joined the government as PNDC secretaries.

<sup>79</sup>Takyiwaa Manuh, Sulley Gariba, and Joseph Budu, *Change and Transformation in Ghana's Publicly Funded Universities: A Study of Experiences, Lessons and Opportunities* (Accra: Woei Publishing Services, 2007), p. 14.

<sup>80</sup>Girdwood, *Tertiary Education Policy in Ghana*, p. 32.

<sup>81</sup>Author's interview with Professor SKB Asante, 27 August 2019.

<sup>82</sup>For instance, Professor Gyimah-Boadi established the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) to champion democratic development in Ghana. Others became fellows of the Institute of Economic Affairs Ghana. Those who were not affiliated to any institutions outside of the DPS became freelance consultants.

<sup>83</sup>Manuh, Gariba, and Budu, *Change and Transformation in Ghana's Publicly Funded Universities*, p. 69.

human rights, and civil society organisations where external funding was available became the focus of research while African and Global South-inspired topics like the search for a new international order, African unity, and indigenous ways of knowing were neglected. The critical scholarship that started in the 1960s was pushed aside from the 1980s onwards in favour of mainstream or problem-solving scholarship. The few faculty members who did not follow the consultancy money and the self-censorship that went with it, or did not find the mimicry type of scholarship appealing, were often demoralised or had no research money to do any sustained decolonial scholarship.<sup>84</sup>

Third, ideational struggle in the DPS contributed to the decline of decolonial scholarship. A major ideational battle started as soon as DPS was created in 1962. The DPS faculty members in the subfields of comparative politics and political theory, most of whom schooled in Loxbridge traditions, did not fully embrace the anti-colonial approach to scholarship.<sup>85</sup> Led by Kweku Forson, they joined hands with the Loxbridge educated counterparts in other departments at Legon to oppose the decolonial turn at the University of Ghana.<sup>86</sup> The strong opposition by the comparativists and the theorists on the one hand, and the stand of IP scholars, on the other hand, divided the DPS into Nkrumahists (that is, decolonial scholars) and anti-Nkrumahists (that is, conformist/mainstream academics) camp.<sup>87</sup> Against the background of the Cold War politics at the time, the division set off intense internal battles in the DPS over the teaching and research of political science in Ghana. Senior management of the University led by Conor Cruise O'Brien, an Irishman, sided with the Loxbridge group by appointing Forson instead of Manu as the head of DPS against the Nkrumah Government's wish.<sup>88</sup> This together with the departure of Mohan to Sheffield University in the late 1960s led to the first decline of decolonial and IP scholarship in the DPS.<sup>89</sup> As Professor Ninsin pointed out, Yaw Manu became the lonely Nkrumahist/decolonial voice in the department in the late 1960s.<sup>90</sup>

A new generation of anti-colonial scholars joined Manu in the early 1970s and together they recentred critical scholarship. Joined by other critical scholars in sister departments, such as law, the new scholars picked up from where Mohan left off. The appointment of Manu as the head of DPS in 1973 encouraged the new crop of scholars to take the decolonial scholarship back to the centre of the DPS. The fierce struggle between the conformists and the decolonial scholars for the soul of the political science split the DPS. The 'division, however, promoted scholarship', turning the political science programme into one of the most revered academic units in Ghana.<sup>91</sup> The outstanding image the department acquired in the 1970s was such that its weekly seminars, which often pit conformists against decolonial academics, were not only heavily packed by leading scholars at Legon, but the presentations shaped national conversations and often appeared in Ghana's national newspapers.<sup>92</sup> The influence of the IP group was such that by the mid-1970s,

<sup>84</sup> Author's interview with Professor SKB Asante, 27 August 2019.

<sup>85</sup> Mr. F. K. Drah, Cambridge trained political theorist, taught the DPS' theory courses which were basically discussions of ancient and modern Western political philosophy. For his views, see F. K. Drah, 'Nkrumah and constitutional democracy: 1949–1966 revisited', *Research Review*, 8:1–2 (1992), pp. 1–27.

<sup>86</sup> A rejoinder published in the observer signed by Forson, Drah, and Peasah (three of the seven DPS faculty members at the time), and 17 other Legon scholars (primarily Loxbridge graduates) supporting the overthrow of the Nkrumah Government, is indicative of the position they took on the government reforms of higher education in Ghana and the broader project of decolonisation of knowledge in Ghana. For details, see B. D. G. Forson et al., 'Ghana's turn: A reply to Thomas Hodgkin', *The Legon Observer* (1966), pp. 4–5.

<sup>87</sup> The division has persisted until today.

<sup>88</sup> The Nkrumah government tried unsuccessfully to pressure the Legon administration to make Manu the head of DPS. For information on the pressure Nkrumah government put on Legon administrators, especially Vice-Chancellor Conor Cruise O'Brien to make Manu the head of department; see Donald H. Akenson, *Conor: A Biography of Conor Cruise O'Brien* (Montréal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 265–6.

<sup>89</sup> He moved to Sheffield University where he taught until he passed away in 1985.

<sup>90</sup> Author's interview with Professor Kwame Ninsin, 28 August 2019.

<sup>91</sup> Aye and Gyekye-Jandoh, 'The vicissitudes of political science in Ghana', p. 160.

<sup>92</sup> Author's interview with Professor SKB Asante, 27 August 2019.

the centring of European (mainly British) political history in the study of politics in Ghana had been replaced by an analysis of African and global subjects.<sup>93</sup>

However, the emergence of the PNDC, which contributed to the departure of leading decolonial scholars, neoliberalisation of knowledge production, prioritisation of the study of PNDC policies, the mainstream/conformist nature of the promotion system at Legon and the rise of comparativists such as Kwame Ninsin, Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, Joseph Ayee, and Mike Quaye as the most senior members of DPS from 1985 onwards led to the decentering of decolonial scholarship in DPS. With the support of Forson and Drah, the comparativists turned the attention of the DPS to domestic Ghanaian politics. The dominance of comparative scholarship was such that by the end of the 1990s, the DPS had become largely a department for the study of Ghanaian and comparative political issues.<sup>94</sup> Although the IP group continued to be a collection of critical scholars, decolonial scholarship was pushed to the margins of DPS in the 1980s and remained firmly rooted on the margins up to today.<sup>95</sup>

The control of the DPS by comparativists together with widespread concern by the PNDC government that the department is producing mainly conservative and neocolonial thinkers many of whom were 'not fit-for-purpose' made the critical voices within the PNDC develop a plan to strengthen the main pillars of the LSIR at Legon.<sup>96</sup> Led by the anti-colonial PNDC members who were lecturers at Legon during the heydays of the decolonial scholarship, the PNDC government proposed to Legon administrators the idea of creating a centre for postgraduate teaching and research of international affairs.<sup>97</sup> In 1989, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ghana (MFA) led by the anti-imperialist Dr Obed Asamoah and the University of Ghana administration signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to create LECIAD within the DPS to train the next generation of critical International Relations thinkers who will take up public service positions in Ghana and other African countries.<sup>98</sup>

### The strengthening of the LSIR pillars (1990s–present)

The creation of LECIAD was supposed to rekindle the best tradition of LSIR at the postgraduate level. Similar to the first generation of IP scholarship, LECIAD programming is designed for both Ghanaians and citizens of other African countries. As a result, the LECIAD is 'expected to allocate one-third of its intake to students from other African countries'.<sup>99</sup> The choice of 'international affairs' as the Centre's title rather than international relations is also instructive. It is meant to signal that the Centre will: first, contribute to building the human capacity of the MFA and other public institutions in Ghana and other African states; second, produce policy-

<sup>93</sup>Gyimah-Boadi and Rothchild, 'Rawlings, populism, and civil liberties tradition in Ghana', p. xi.

<sup>94</sup>Gyimah-Boadi, 'Research and teaching of political science at the University of Ghana', p. viii.

<sup>95</sup>Author's interview with Professor SKB Asante, 27 August 2019. Attempts were made in the early 2000s to revive the theory side of IP scholarship when Professor Kwame Bofo-Arthur became a senior faculty member. But the IP group, made up primarily of Professor Kwame Bofo-Arthur, Mr Stevens K. M. Ahiawordor, and Dr Kumi Ansah-Koi, could not get the decolonial scholarship back on its feet in any significant way.

<sup>96</sup>The argument was that majority of the department graduates were either not adequately trained for African public service or socialised to care less about the African agenda and the fight for global justice. Author's interview with Professor Kwame Danso-Bofo, 5 February 2020.

<sup>97</sup>Tsatsu Tsikata and Obed Asamoah, with strong support from Kojo Tsikata led the campaign. The Tsikatas' anti-colonial views were shaped by Nkrumah and their friendship with Franz Fanon when he stayed in Ghana during the Algerian struggle for independence, while Obed Asamoah claimed in his book that his anti-imperial attitudes were influenced by racism that he faced as a student in UK and US.

<sup>98</sup>The strain relationship between the DPS and the PNDC government, together with demands by other sections of Legon for it to be made a university-wide centre, compelled Legon administration to make it a standalone centre. For details, see The Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy, 'About LECIAD', available at: <https://leciad.ug.edu.gh/about/>; Darkwa and Attuquayefio, 'Changing perspectives in the didactics of international affairs in Ghana'.

<sup>99</sup>Darkwa and Attuquayefio, 'Changing perspectives in the didactics of international affairs in Ghana', p. 196.

relevant research; third, serve as the bridge between Legon and public institutions in Ghana, Africa, and around the world; and finally, it is supposed to prevent the Centre from becoming a site for regurgitation of Anglo-American IR ideas and practices.<sup>100</sup> Although Anglo-American IR discourses and theories have infiltrated into the teaching of the Centre, as Linda Darkwa and Philip Attuquayefio indicated, the approach to scholarship at the LECIAD is distinct from the Western style of IR. According to them, the inability of Western-oriented theories to offer appropriate options for responding to the post-Cold War problems in Africa led scholars at the Centre to focus more on practitioners-led responses to international affairs, to revise the guiding philosophy, and to give volume to Africa's experiences and Southern voices.<sup>101</sup>

In addition, LECIAD's approach to IR does not follow the version of Western social sciences' tradition that Claude Ake argued is 'heavily biased in favour of capitalism'.<sup>102</sup> Rather reminiscent of the works of the 1960s and 1970s IP generation, the Centre is more focused on critical IR, social justice, and equity issues. This is evident in the teaching and research of the current crop of faculty at the Centre. For instance, while Peace Medie's work deconstructs Western feminism and exposes the gender inequities in the practices of IR, the plight of vulnerable groups in the international system such as refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons have pre-occupied the attention of Amanda Coffie.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Yao Gebe, who co-teaches the IR theory course with Coffie, mixes structuralism and critical realism in such a way that his writing and teaching resemble the work of the subaltern realists, although he does not use that label.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, Juliana Appiah's research and teaching seem not only to be a continuation of the regionalist and continentalist tradition of the 1960s; her work is best read as part of the IR scholarship that seeks to retrieve silences and marginalised pieces of knowledge in the international system.<sup>105</sup> Thus, although LECIAD fellows do not openly fly the critical IR school or decolonial banners, they are as anti-establishment as much as their 1960s and 1970s IP colleagues.

Another area where LECIAD and the 1960s Legon IP intersect is the critical way in which scholars of both eras see the liberal international order. Like their counterpart in the 1960s and 1970s, LECIAD fellows neither seeks to celebrate problem-solving IR<sup>106</sup> and Western civilisation, nor does the Centre's scholarship blindly defend and reify the current liberal international order as much as some mainstream Anglo-American IR scholars do.<sup>107</sup> LECIAD's approach is critical of the current international order, and the teaching and research at the Centre often draw attention to the inequities in the international system. In other words, while the new generation of IR scholars at Legon does not loudly call for a new international order, or have self-described themselves as revolutionary scholars, they are against some aspects of the liberal international order as much as their 1960s and 1970s IP colleagues.

Moreover, like the IP teaching and research in the 1960s and 1970s, the approach to IR at LECIAD is current affairs driven. The ease with which the IP group in the 1960s and 1970s

<sup>100</sup> Author's interview with Professor Emmanuel Debrah, Director of LECIAD, 6 February 2020.

<sup>101</sup> Darkwa and Attuquayefio, 'Changing perspectives in the didactics of international affairs in Ghana', p. 199.

<sup>102</sup> Claude Ake, 'Social sciences as imperialism', in Kofi Anyidoho and Helen Lauer (eds), *Reclaiming the Human Sciences and Humanities through African Perspectives* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2012), p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> Amanda Coffie, 'Tapping into resettlement for rebuilding: Lessons from peacebuilding engagement activities of resettled Liberian refugees in Canada', *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 8:2 (2018), pp. 38–62; Peace Medie and Alice Kang, 'Power, knowledge, and the politics of gender in the Global South', *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1 (2018), pp. 37–54.

<sup>104</sup> Boni Yao Gebe, 'Ideology at cross-roads: The normalization of United States-Cuba relations', *Legon Journal of International Affairs and Diplomacy*, 9:2 (2018), pp. 88–120; Bonafice Yao Gebe, 'The United States, International Relations, and world leadership in the twenty-first century', *Legon Journal of International Affairs*, 2:1 (2005), pp. 42–67.

<sup>105</sup> Appiah, 'Towards a people friendly Pan-African parliament'.

<sup>106</sup> Cox, 'Social forces, states and world orders'.

<sup>107</sup> Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2014).

moved into the policy world and back to the academy is indistinguishable from the way LECIAD fellows are embedded in policy communities. The works of Darkwa and Attuquayefio are illustrative of the kind of policy-oriented research and teaching that the LECIAD fellows do.<sup>108</sup> Both are enmeshed in the African policy communities. Their research often feeds into policies of the governments and IOs, especially those in Africa. To enhance the link between policy circles and LECIAD, the Centre provides platforms for policymakers and diplomats to share their thoughts, views, and ideas. Besides hosting regular biweekly seminars for practitioners to share their work, at least one of the faculty positions at LECIAD is reserved for former ambassadors.<sup>109</sup> The Centre's focus on policy-relevant research, African issues, and current affairs ensured that LECIAD's approaches dovetail with IP teaching and research at Legon in the 1960s and 1970s.

Even though LECIAD is supposed to take IP scholarship that started in the 1960s to the next level, it is important to note that the Centre has struggled to reproduce the best tradition of the latter. The first generation of LECIAD fellows was unable to shape the intellectual conversation in Ghana and Africa the way the IP scholars did in the 1960s and 1970s. Many factors account for LECIAD's struggles. Poor funding of the Centre and the neoliberalisation of Ghana's public sector, including university education, are major contributors. The implementation of the structural adjustment programme in Ghana during the formative years of LECIAD meant that its fellows could not resist the temptations of the consultancy culture that engulfed Legon from the 1980s onwards. The penetration of the consultancy scholarship and money, which moved attention away from basic and public interest research, made it difficult for LECIAD to prosecute its research agenda consistently. The consultancy culture also made some fellows of LECIAD focus on topics of interest to the donor community rather than those of concerns to Ghana, creating a wedge between LECIAD and the MFA. The negative effect of the wedge is being felt deeply by LECIAD today. The leadership of Legon has attempted to address the situation by recruiting a new generation of socially conscious, critically minded, research-oriented, and predominantly female identifiable scholars in the last few years. Only time will tell if the new crop of scholars will be able to revive the best tradition of the LSIR.

## Conclusion

The article sought to show that a vibrant IR intellectual tradition has existed in Ghana since the 1960s. At its core, the Legon IR programme, which the manuscript called the LSIR, coalescence around a critique of Eurocentrism in IR, relational ontology, southern epistemologies, decoloniality, preference for qualitative research methodology, interdisciplinarity, policy-oriented scholarship, promotion of African agency, and a pursuit for equitable distribution of power among states. This equity-oriented IR scholarship came out of a struggle between colonial education reflected in the research and curriculum of the University College of the Gold Coast, and the process to decolonise knowledge in Ghana in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The decolonisation of knowledge, which entailed dismantling the foothold that the University of Cambridge, the University of London, and the University of Oxford had established over higher education in Ghana, led to the creation of the University of Ghana, Legon out of the UCGC in 1961. The Department of Political Science, under which international relations was studied, was established in 1962 to help prosecute the new mandate of Legon. The LSIR emerged from this decolonial project.

The article showed that core ideas of the Legon IR intellectual tradition intersect with many ongoing IR debates. First, efforts by the LSIR to shift IR teaching and research from Eurocentric subjects to Global South issues, especially those that resonate with resident Africans, overlap with the ongoing discussion of African agency, centring of Global South voices in IR, as well as the

<sup>108</sup>As of the time of writing, Attuquayefio had taken a leave of absence to focus on regional security policy work.

<sup>109</sup>The Ambassador in Residence programme allows the Centre to appoint retired African diplomats at the Associate Professor level to teach at Legon for at least five years. The appointment was for ten years until recently, when it was reduced as part of Ghanaian government reform of the public sector.

current campaign to add non-Western perspectives and experiences to mainstream IR. In other words, LSIR scholars brought diversity of thoughts, multiplicity of experiences, and equity-related issues to the IR table from the 1960s onwards. The LSIR story raises the question regarding other knowledge that mainstream IR scholars may be losing by not moving beyond the current 'add and stir'<sup>110</sup> engagement to seriously bring on the mainstream IR board works, and ideas produced by African-based IR scholars and centres of scholarship. Who knows the other IR knowledge we could gain from careful study of writings of African scholars, including the extensive manuscripts in Timbuktu and other centres of scholarship in pre/postcolonial Africa?

Second, the insistence by scholars of the LSIR that deconstruction of colonial knowledge and excavation of colonial exploitation should be at the heart of IR scholarship dovetails with the push in some IR quarters to centre impacts of imperialism, colonial exploitation, and the colonial experience in IR scholarship.<sup>111</sup> Yet, the LSIR story provides a cautionary tale of how not to do decolonial IR. The LSIR cautioned against too much abstraction. The LSIR scholars do not only see too much abstraction as part of a distraction tactic by those seeking to maintain status quo knowledge, power, and privilege, but its elitist and exclusive nature is antithetical to the LSIR approach to knowledge production. For them, the best way to dismantle colonial episteme and to create equity-oriented IR knowledge is through careful empirical analysis. Thus, the LSIR provides food for thought for the anti-empirical impulses in sections of the decolonial movements in European and North American IR communities.

Third, the LSIR's focus on relationality and entities other than the state as the main units of analysis is in line with the work of Western-based IR scholars who place analytical premium on informal actors and processes. But the LSIR scholarship suggests that the discipline in the West would benefit from a move beyond individual non-state actors and processes to a situation where intersections between these informal actors and processes become the central focus of analysis. Also, by explicitly placing individuals/communities rather than governments at the centre of the concentric circle with states and international institutions radiating around them, the LSIR scholars provide the IR communities in North America and Europe, where this concentric circle logic is not prevalent, something to ponder and possibly incorporate into their analysis.

Fourth, the effort by the LSIR to ensure that IR scholarship feeds into policies and their commitment to the idea that IR works should lead to policy recommendations raise an interesting question about the best ways to disseminate IR knowledge. Although this has its pitfalls and can be a source of frustration for those who like to do scholarship for its own sake, the move could make the discipline more relevant to policymakers and other communities outside the field of IR. Also, the LSIR scholars' preference for policy recommendation opens a space for an interesting conversation between the current LSIR group and Western-based colleagues who operate in both policy circles and the academic world. Moreover, the commitment by LSIR group to equitable distribution of power and privilege in the international system creates an opening for collaboration between LSIR scholars and Western IR scholars interested in justice and fairness issues.

Finally, the LSIR story illustrates in a profound way the challenge of creating decolonial IR knowledge and equity-oriented scholarship in a neoliberal world. The article showed the resistance from scholars who wanted to maintain the status quo and how neoliberal forces impacted the scholarship of the LSIR. Those seeking to establish a more progressive IR programmes and research agendas elsewhere in the world may have to find a way to overcome the pushback from both conservative and neoliberal forces. Thus, the LSIR story is told not only to show

<sup>110</sup>This is the practice of giving some opportunities to few model equity-deserving people while maintaining the status quo. In IR, this often entails adding few African-based IR scholars, who do traditional IR or say what mainstream IR scholars like to hear, to panels and editorial boards without addressing the deeper underlying equity issues.

<sup>111</sup>See, for instance, John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760–2010* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

that a lively decolonial and equity-seeking IR community had persisted in Ghana since 1960s but to demonstrate what the current generation of mainstream IR scholars can gain from paying close attention to the works of IR communities in Africa.

**Acknowledgements.** I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding the Informal IR Lab at King's University College where this manuscript was produced, and to the 2020/21 Lab members, namely Jessica Afara, Zainab Al-Jaiashi, Jackson Tadeusz Van Bakel, David Carson, Benjamin Douglas Drummond, Victoria Hinkson, Elizabeth Kozak, Nordiah Newell, Eunice Oladejo, and Nathalie Playford for research assistance. Also, I thank anonymous reviewers and the *Review of International Studies* team for helpful comments on earlier versions of this article. The views expressed here and any remaining errors in the article are mine.

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