



Research Article

© 2019 Joseph N. Bayeh and Georgios C. Baltos.
This is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

From a Culture of Borders to Borders of Cultures: Nationalism and the “Clash of Civilizations” in International Relations Theory¹

Joseph N. Bayeh

Chairperson of UOB,
Department on Political Science and International Affairs,
Balamand University, Beirut, Lebanon

Georgios C. Baltos

Ph.D.(c) of Business School,
University of the Aegean,
Chios, Greece

Doi: 10.2478/jesr-2019-0001

Abstract

The Peace of Westphalia signed in 1648 signaled the beginning of the modern international system of states. International relations (IR) theory identifies this treaty as the founder of the principle of political sovereignty whereby each nation-state has full control over its territory and domestic affairs, thus it is the beginning of an international system of states. The latter is based on the sanctity and inviolability of interstate borders as its main defining feature. This paper investigates the recent developments in international relations and their significance to the concept of borders in IR theory; on the one hand, a “clash of civilizations” thesis assumes that new “fault lines” borders among civilizations of, mainly, different religions are taking precedence over traditional territorial borders of nation-states, while, on the other hand, a rise in conservative nationalism and, possibly, protectionism, over the traditionally liberal West reasserts the primacy of territorial borders in IR. In particular, this study examines whether such developments signal a paradigm shift in IR theory that may necessitate revisiting certain fundamentals of mainstream respective theories.

Keywords: International Relations; Globalization; Borders; Clash of Civilizations

1. Introduction: The Emergence of Mainstream International Relations (IR) Theory

The discipline of International Relations (IR) evolved as a field of academic study after World War I and was dedicated to addressing, in a systematic and sustained manner, the causes of war as well as the prerequisites for peace (Nye & Welch, 2014). Debates about theory and method are closely related to the question of what constitutes “knowledge”, how can we acquire it, how much we can assure that governors, analysts and researchers justifiably claim knowledge or how possible it may be for the notion of objectivity to be materialized through the quest for knowledge or toward the achievement of the so called “absolute truth”. In short, what are the constraints on and limits to knowledge with regard to the societies world-wide (Peterson, 1992)?

Over the last century the realist theory drove the knowledge and research related with IR highlighting the importance of borders, mainly from a military perspective, by assuming that the security along with the survival of state is dependent on the role of the borders in deterring military activities favoring other competing states and entities (Andreas, 2003). On the other hand, over the

¹ This paper was based on a participation at the Conference: “The Question of Borders among the Residents, the Passing-by and the Intermediary” at the University of Balamand, 23-25 November, 2017.

last decades, the globalist theory in IR assumed that “globalization” – interdependence and cross-border interactions – has blurred the importance of physical borders as barriers and military lines. Borders, in this respect, have become bridges for commercial transactions. Globalization, however, did not assume a “borderless world”; policing cross-border clandestine activities have only expanded due to globalization, while territorial borders still remain a defining feature of the international nation-state system (Elden, 2005).

2. The Historical and Methodological Background

Given the tremendous debate around the IR knowledge and research, it is methodologically effective to attempt a correlation between the theories in dialogue and the philosophical and epistemological concepts underlying the international socio-political action and decision-making. In this line, epistemology literally studies the phenomenon of knowledge. Hence, we say that those who subscribe to a positivist epistemology will claim that objective, value-free, positive knowledge is possible in both the natural and social sciences. Of course, this applies only under the condition that a scientific method is pursued. In contrast, we have those who claim that only the natural sciences can produce such knowledge, and that a “unity of method” is neither possible nor desirable (Marsh & Furlong, 2002). Still others may insist that objective knowledge is simply unattainable in any sphere and those holding this position are called “post-positivists”. This label, however, covers a range of approaches from mild to quite radical ones like feminism, critical theory, post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, etc. (Lawson, 2015).

From the point of view that is called ontology, which is a branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature of existence or being, realities do not simply exist as sets of objects or things that have a material form and can therefore be seen or touched. Numbers for example do not exist as material objects. They are complete abstracts. “Reality” in this instance must be seen as having an ideational rather than a material existence. For example, the political world itself does not exist in a material sense. We certainly see material manifestations of political systems, usually reflected even in the architecture of the governments’ buildings and state monuments, but in principle the political world exists as a set of relations within a social system, shaped by individual and collective entities of the respective society, which is fueled by ideas running the minds and actions of the people-agents, whose decisions influence institutions and numerable stakeholders (Guizzardi & Halpin, 2008; Lawson, 2015).

IR theory was early developed in a context of “idealism” or “utopianism” during the post-WW I years, taking into account the extraordinary expectations entrusted by the followers of liberal institutionalism upon the League of Nations. They were immediately opposed by a very different approach that promised to describe IR as they “really” and actually are rather than how they wishfully and ideally should have been. Consequently, the IR theory of realism gained significant ground initially in the form of the “classical realism”, then soon after by what is now the dominant form of neorealism or structural realism (Buzan, Jones, Little, & Richard, 1993). Classical Realism operates on assumptions about human nature and the drive for power. Structural realism, however, highlights that it is the design of the international system itself, according to J. Mearsheimer, along with its specific ratios in power distribution, which circumstantially regulates the dynamics of power (Mearsheimer, 2003). The main characteristic of that system and the principal driver determining its structure is anarchy – a status marked by the absence of a “government above the state governments” capable of enforcing international laws and rules (Milner, 1991).

Neorealism or structural realism – a revised version of realism considering the systemic parameters of any given socio-political status – is also based on the doctrine that the international affairs are “anarchical” and thus, due to the absence of central ruling authorities, the countries-states primarily pursue their own security and survival (Powell, 1994). They must maximize their powers, especially their military ones. In particular, states care about their relative gains and power; that is, their place in the context of power hierarchy among competing states. The struggle for control and empowerment is assumed to be an endemic characteristic of IR, whereas competition prevails over cooperation, while fear and conflicts drive decision making.

Criticism to neorealism came from the neoliberal-institutionalist theory; although neoliberals also accept that states serve their interests in a context of anarchy, nevertheless the anarchy in terms of

international affairs is not the only factor having impact on the initiation and implementation of international cooperation (Keohane, 2011). Neorealists are usually right in case of low interdependence among states, i.e. when politico-economic interaction among states is minimal rendering fewer common interests to encourage cooperation. However, neoliberals argue that whenever interdependence increases, as it happened in the aftermath of WW II, the states are stimulated to share multiple and multi-level interests, ranging from international trade to universal human rights and environment protection. The mutual nature of these interests remains a precondition for sustainable international cooperation, although neoliberals highlight that this alone does not cover the wide scope and core characteristics of international cooperation. Even when the common interests are highly recognized and respected, the “anarchy” in international affairs, perceived as the absence of centralized world-wide authorities, frequently undermines the commitment needed in taking over reciprocal obligations demanded in a cooperation context. The lack of a central authority implies the worry that any opposite side, given an opportunity to better off, will break the international agreements. Central hierarchies and institutions may play the role of guaranteeing and safeguarding the respect of the international rules agreed upon (Keohane & Martin, 1995).

According to neoliberals, the states establish international institutions in order to overcome the difficulties on the way to achieve cooperation. The international organizations set rules, processes and procedures to whom the member states are committed under the expectation that they all converge in a certain and focused area of international relations. The international agreements and arrangements decrease the transaction costs of economic operations, bolster the information exchanges and provide penalties for those breaking the rules, therefore, facilitating the international cooperation levels.

The debate between neorealists and neoliberals is mostly interpreted as a difference in the priorities of those who emphasize on the states pursuing relative gains versus those who think of the states mainly aiming toward absolute gains: Neorealists are skeptical of international cooperation because they measure their power against other states in an anarchic system and they keep on perpetually monitoring whether their status in the context of an international power hierarchy is stable, constantly fearing decline above all else (Snidal, 1991). States that are oriented toward relative gains will refrain from cooperation as long as they worry that their gains will be less than those that others accrue. Thus, the imperative of absolute gains is not adequate to motivate states to cooperate. Neoliberals argue that states which are confident with their survival are not actually as preoccupied in favor of relative gains as neo-realists think; actors will cooperate so long as it renders absolute gains in favor of their interests.

Both neorealist and neoliberal are rationalist theories, where the rational-choice theory assumptions turns the actors involved into “utility maximizers”, thus, the three following working hypotheses further stimulate the debate among analysts (Schimmelfennig, 1998):

- Political actors, both individuals and states, are atomistic and egoistic, pursuing self-interests in any possible and rational way.
- Their interests are considered to be external to any social interactions. Individuals and states have pre-configured interests before they enter into social interactions; the latter cannot ever critically affect the interests.
- Society is perceived as the field where actors face each other deploying strategies and favoring their pre-defined interests. These actors decide independently since they are not by-products of their social or political environment.

Neoliberals made one step beyond the neo-realists accepting that the international society exists, the states may cooperate and function international organizations, however, this happens at a social interaction level while at the same time they keep a separate decision making agenda, which is instructed by a core of identities and/or interests concretely influencing leadership's plans and actions (Garcia-Contreras, 2008). Therefore, both theories are devoted to the understanding of an international system made of territorial states based on the Westphalian sovereignty and legitimacy. The only actor for neo-realists is the state, but for neoliberals several other actors affect international relations while the state remains the main one. Both theories dominated cold war era but the neorealist/structural-realist theory took precedence in its explanatory power of cold war politics (Waltz, 2000).

3. Critical Theory

Critical Theory challenged the foundations of the rational theories (neorealist and neoliberal). R. Garcia-Contreras (Garcia-Contreras, 2008) place this challenge in the context of an ontological discussion, questioning the rationalistic approach that any political and/or social leadership is motivated by atomistic and egoistic motives, resulting in systematically served and strategically set up interests, prevailing over social responsibility and interaction. The supporters of the critical theory argue instead that the leading actors in politics are products of the society, other word, their identities, attitudes and interests have been processed through their all life-long integration to specific social structures, usually pre-existing and transferred from previous generations to the next ones. They question positivism in social science and call for alternative, interpretive and qualitative, modules of explaining with regard to the not quantifiable and not measurable nature of human studies and politics.

They also refused the method of “value-neutral theorizing”, suggesting instead that knowledge and experience are not absolutely and deterministically attached to interests; on the contrary, researchers, decision makers, theorists and practitioners should be committed, at least to try hard, to free the knowledge from any bias that may serve domination and oppression purposes (Eckersley, 2004). In this line, the so called “radical interpretivism”, supported among others by Foucault and Deirda, opposed all efforts to evaluate, by using validity criteria, any empirical and ethical opinions because this would allegedly marginalize alternative approaches and moral aspects, creating consequently new, powerful and dominant, hierarchies (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Habermas-modern critical theory the “critical interpretivism”, recognized contingencies as a by default characteristic over any piece of knowledge, i.e. all claims are inherently and inevitably subjective alike with the relations among knowledge and power as well as thoughts and actions; however, it was accepted that several criteria are needed in order to determine the borders between plausible and implausible knowledge and consequent decision making, in acceptance of a level of “minimal foundationalism” (Lehman, 2017).

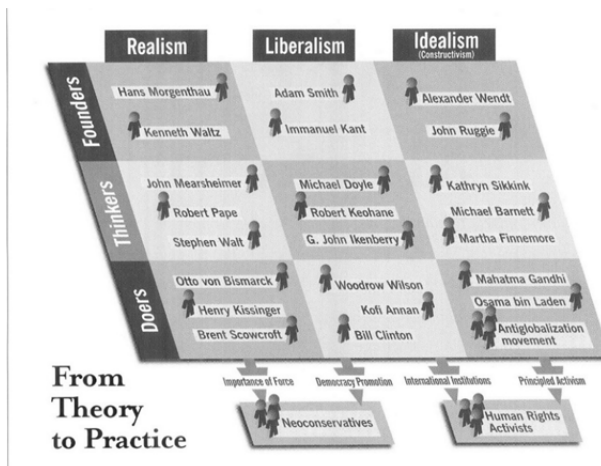


Fig. 1 The theoretical framework of IR and its representatives (Snyder, 2004)

4. The End of the Cold War and the Rise of Constructivism in IR Theories: From a Culture of Borders to the Borders of the Cultures

During the Cold War, the main concern of western governments and IR theorists (see Fig. 1 above) had been to deter a nuclear war and any conventional conflict that could escalate to the nuclear level. Analysts developed coherent theories and engaged in debates about realism versus idealism, mutual deterrence and arms control, stability and instability, national interests and international

security, crisis management, regional integration and the viability of alliances under strain, etc. (Dillon, 1989). Most analysts in the field shared a common conceptual paradigm that enabled them to carry discussions about power, strategy, and foreign policy under conditions of bipolarity or multi-polarity (Hopf, 1991). There were many disagreements, but they fitted into the comprehensive framework based on the international system of a bipolar world.

In the post-Cold War years, a paradigm shift occurred in our thinking of world politics. Paradigms provide the essential basis for theory; that is, a comprehensive framework for the identification of the variables around which the theory is to be developed. As the first phase of “theory building”, the paradigm, noted as a framework for theoretical analysis, describes the phenomena to be investigated (Hoffman, 1989). In IR, these phenomena originally refer to the numbers and types of actors involved. The paradigm is essentially a means of selecting what would be the object of theory as well as a definition of the relationships to be examined among the paradigm’s components. To what extent should IR theory focus on other actors, state-related or not, rather than the states? What are the defining characteristics of such entities? In this line we could for example consider as a paradigm shift the transformation, as it was described by J. Mearsheimer (Mearsheimer, 2003), of a bipolar system of states in a world of two superpowers, along with their allies and “neutrals”, to one that has a multiplicity or multi-polarity of several types of powerful actors (Rosecrance, 1966).

The end of the cold war triggered many descriptions of the transformed global setting; Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the triumph of the democratic and free market system as “the end of history”; during the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991, President Bush emphatically mentioned “a new world order” of cooperation among nations driving to a peaceful settlement of several disputes, a new era in which the allied the nations over the world might be able to live up to the original expectations of their founding fathers, although he was criticized for secretly following a balance of power policy, while employing in public the rhetoric of empowering democracy, human rights, and international law (Dougherty, 1997). Zbigniew Brzezinski (Brzezinski, 1990) wrote that: “war has become a luxury which only poor nations can afford”. Samuel Huntington (Huntington, 2007) offered his own vision in his “Clash of Civilizations” thesis: “... the great divisions among mankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation-states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principle conflicts in global politics will occur between nations and groups of civilizations. The clash of civilization will dominate global politics.” The shifting political scene after the Cold War brought with it multiple challenges to the territorial sovereignty of the states, undermining traditional political borders:

- The triumph of the so called western-type parliamentary democracy encouraged a US-led liberal economic order characterized by globalization and international capital flow tendencies (Van der Pijl & Overbeek, 2002). At the heart of this order were the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank as well as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which in 1995 was renamed to World Trade Organization (WTO). The motive behind the establishment of such institutions was the aspiration that open markets would lead to “open” societies, while less government intervention would boost world-wide economic growth. Respective analysts and think tanks were demonstrating strong belief that in the aftermath of Soviet Union’s disruption a massive democratization of the world could not be anything else but inevitable (Robinson, 1996).
- Later on, the liberal ideas were further developed including the concept that governments that mistreat their people and/or aggressively trouble their neighbors should not enjoy full sovereignty and ruling rights. A reflection of this newly-born concept, also known as the “Washington Consensus”, was the International Criminal Court (ICC) itself, whose role since 1998 was to judge which value prevails, the need for justice versus the need for self-determination and sovereignty (Williamson, 1990). It is remarkable though that two decades later, the current United States (US) government severely criticizes the role of ICC, especially since the latter launched investigations against American citizens.
- Back into the first decade of the new millennium, the doctrine of liberal interventionism dynamically emerged; that is, given the “butterfly effects” of a world broken down into interdependent pieces, where one sneezing in China may cause an earthquake in South

America, the principle of non-interference was restrained under some particular, primarily humanitarian respects. In 2005, the UN General Assembly declared a “responsibility to protect,” the notion that when atrocities happen, they cannot be disregarded by any citizen, organization or government; otherwise all these distant and not intervening international actors and neighbors share the responsibility over the wrong-doings and the suffering victims (Öberg, 2005). The liberal international order restricts the liberties enjoyed by the fundamental Westphalian sovereignty principles, national affairs may be a need to be externalized and scrutinized, international law precedes over national one, while there is no doubt that the West has the know-how of the human rights, and thus should spread in a missionary way the word of peace and stability in respect of the universal values adhering to the western standards of thinking and living (Niblett, 2017).

- The Clash of Civilization thesis materialized on several occasions; from the cultural, ethnic and religious conflicts during the post-cold war era to the 9/11 attacks and the recent emergence of ISIS and its related global terrorism (Chaliand & Bliin, 2016).
- Others challenges to the “sanctity” of state borders came from the creation of the EU and the pooling of sovereignties of its member states.
- Moreover, technological advances in telecommunication, internet and cyberspace somehow violate state sovereignties and compromise their borders as well.

According to Stephen M. Walt (Walt, 1998), realism and neorealism dominated IR theory when the need to explain the characteristics of the Cold War appeared. Their main limitations were their failure to predict the end of the Cold War. Liberalism then declared and voted for democracy against authoritarianism, peace against conflict, interdependence, collaborative interoperability and institutional cooperation as well as free trade against protectionism towards wide and sound world peace, stability and prosperity (Burchill et al., 2013). Although they recognized the growing role of transnational actors, most liberals considered the state as the central player, but they failed to evaluate the significance of power, while they also did not foresee the end of the Cold War. Marxist and neo-Marxist theories as well failed over the end of the cold war when free market systems proved clearly more successful than their socialist competitors (Hart & Spero, 2013).

5. The Constructivist Approach

These changes, stemming out of numerable national attempts to fill up the vacuum of power created after the dissolution of the Soviet Union or the Arab Spring unrests, promoted a new approach to IR theory, the constructivism, a group of theories that put the emphasis on the influence the ideas, as represented by cultures and literatures, exert on the ways the states along with their elites define: “their interests and identities as a highly malleable product of specific historical processes” (Little & Smith, 2005). It also highlights the significance of normative and material structures, the role of leading personalities and collective identities with regard to the decision making and action, driven by a constitutive interaction between agents and structures (Reus-Smit & Snidal, 2010). It used the critical assumption that humans are socially embedded and culturally stimulated to interpret the surrounding world politics, which had for long fallen outside the realm of neo-realism and neoliberalism.

Having mentioned the aftermath of both the Soviet Union fall and the latest Middle Eastern turmoil, we may refer to the characteristic example of Turkey’s revisionism over the last decades, the so called “neo-ottomanism”, as demonstrating the overwhelming impetus of a, lost a century ago, ottoman cultural entity to revive and expand toward neighboring troubled areas of the region. From a constructivist point of view, the generic cultural category of the “caliphate” is still alive as an ideational scheme in the hearts and the brains of many Turkish citizens or people sharing a Turkic cultural background, although in practice they live in a secular state, committed to international constraints and western-type institutions (Ikiz, 2018). It is then considered critical to evaluate the role of the leading personalities spearheading the cultural shifts and consequently the re-direction of the history along with the societies affected; the change for the constructivists could not take place without the idiosyncrasies of R.T. Erdogan, T. Ozal or M. Davutoglu driving the revolution and giving the pace of the cataclysmic reform in modern Turkey (Bayrakli, 2012).

In a more general approach, constructivists hold three core propositions. First, normative or other words ideational notions and structures are at least of the same importance with material structures. Neorealists stressed the material structure of the balancing adversary military powers; Marxists prioritized the material structure described as a capitalist economy; constructivists though state that shared ideas, values and beliefs function systemically with structural characteristics and thus powerfully influence any social and political universe. Material and tangible resources draw their significance from the utility they offer while they support human action, reaction and interaction in the fields of communication, dialogue and shared knowledge wherever they are actually integrated. Perceptions of the reality, the stream of ideologies as well as the prevailing mentality of friendship, empathy or enmity are features applying not only among persons but similarly cultivating common sense and balance of powers among the states (Burchill et al., 2013). The norms and ideational structures emphasized by the constructivists, according to their analyses, configure the social identities of the political protagonists; in this way, the sovereign states themselves are personified carrying a character along with the qualities referring to certain behavioral trends and patterns. For example, during the historical period called "age of Absolutism" (1555-1848) the European norms out looking the structure of an international society were promoting the Christian monarchies as the undoubtedly legitimate scheme of territorial sovereignty and respectable regime, fully enhanced by the public opinion, the community customs and practices, clearly though undermining alternatives related with diverse liberal, middle class or nationalist policies (Fell, 1983).

A second constructivist axis refers to the realization that the non-material structures influence the identities of the political actors, given the causal relation and interaction among identities, interests, actions, reactions and behaviors. It reminds the background investigation that psychiatrists perform in order to identify the pieces of information which explain their patients' decisions and actions taken. The retrospective examination of how both individual and collective interests were developed explains political initiatives that a rationalistic approach would not even consider as long as the latter emphasizes on the "epiphenomenon", i.e. facts and events on the surface, i.e. on the visible part of the iceberg of politics and geopolitics, ignoring the invisible one. Back to the respective example described above, R. Niblett (Niblett, 2017) examines in parallel the case of liberal democracy with the imperialism of a Christian monarchy three centuries ago, in the sense that in the end they both demonstrate absolutism, the former being intolerant against authoritarian regimes and/or imposing free market capitalism in societies that are not mature enough to appreciate it, while the latter was similarly controlling religion, diminishing any adversary political or national movement.

The third axis is based on the constructivists' suggestions that agents are mutually interacting with structures, therefore, they are constituted correlating each other. Normative and ideational structures formulate the identities and consequently the interests of the socio-political actors, while the structures themselves has been established under the norms and knowledgeable practices determined by agents and actors. The impact of intangible and non-material structures on identities/interests is being answered by institutional practices, which maintain and develop the structures. The institutionalized norms and ideas turn into a formal representation of the actors and their economic, political and cultural actions. The constructivists highlight the reciprocal interaction, given that social structures define national and international identities/interests and vice versa. According to Jack Snyder (Snyder, 2004) the liberal democratic statehood is being considered by the constructivists as the only place on earth where the international norms of democracy and human rights as well as free trade can flourish.

Thus, constructivism contributed a lot in the interpretation of the 9/11 multi-level consequences, since it deeply scans the underlying ideologies, identities, the way people are persuaded and motivated to take action in ways they subjectively consider legitimate. The formation of a European Union is another popular subject in the constructivist studies, indicating how the cultural commonalities facilitate crossing the borders, bonding and sharing among sovereign nations willing to give up a percentage of autonomy in view of following a political vision based on the power-multiplier of a unification prospective. With a tone of dramatization, the war between virtue and evil forces along with the commitment of the wise scholars and "intellectual entrepreneurs" may change the world to peace, stability and prosperity. That is the reason why constructivism has been perceived as an update of the idealism, compatible with and inclusive of institutions, activists and social movements

like the Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and many other non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

It has been criticized that the inclusiveness sometimes extends to multi-dimensional movements like radical Islamic institutions with transnational structures and networks provoking the traditional national interests of the states where they operate. The constructivist standards show tolerance to dubious ideas and values, respecting multiple ideational norms investing in the rewards of human creativity and freedom to move the world toward improvement. Thus, US think tanks for a long time were supporting moderate versions of political Islam, like the before-mentioned Turkish Islamic political parties which succeeded the previous secular kemalist ones, expecting the containment of the Middle Eastern fundamentalism from Islamic political powers friendly to the West standards of mutual respect among cultures and civilizations (Snyder, 2004). According to A Judge (Judge, 2011) it is clear that “with respect to security, the Westphalian age is coming to an end”, while J. Lapid (Lapid, 2001) adds that “the frontiers between inside and outside are under discussion ...”

Therefore, the “inter” part of the term: “international relations” seems to be thoroughly crisscrossed by the “sub,” the “trans,” the “intra,” and the “supra” in view of recent technological, social, geopolitical transformations that seem to have blurred the once distinct and relevant territorial contours (Lem & Barber, 2013). This development instills doubts in theories that adopt the territorial states as the main actors in international politics (see Fig. 2 below). Hence, constructivism usefully highlighted the shift in the balance of territorial, semi-territorial, and non-territorial determinants that shape contemporary world politics. The fact, however, that: “there is political life beyond territoriality,” does not mean that we are moving into a meaningless, borderless world (Lapid, 2001). Constructivist theories flourished in a post-cold war environment where culture, identity and norms seemed to be the defining feature of world politics. Territorial borders were marginalized and only remain meaningful as a function of hegemonic discourse and identity formation within traditionally established societies.

COMPETING PARADIGMS	REALISM	LIBERALISM	CONSTRUCTIVISM
Main Theoretical Proposition	Self-interested states compete constantly for power or security	Concern for power overridden by economic/political considerations (desire for prosperity, commitment to liberal values)	State behavior shaped by elite beliefs, collective norms, and social identities
Main Units of Analysis	States	States	Individuals (especially elites)
Main Instruments	Economic and especially military power	Various (international institutions, economic exchange, promotion of democracy)	Ideas and discourse
Modern Theorists	Hans Morganthau, Kenneth Waltz	Michael Doyle, Robert Keohane	Alexander Wendt, John Ruggie
Representative Modern Works	Waltz, <i>Theory of International Politics</i> Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Territoriality in Europe after the Cold War" (<i>International Security</i> , 1990)	Keohane, <i>After Hegemony</i> Fukuyama, "The End of History?" (<i>National Interest</i> , 1989)	Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It" (<i>International Organization</i> , 1992); Kosowksi & Kratochwil, "Understanding Changes in International Politics" (<i>International Organization</i> , 1994)
Post-Cold War Prediction	Resurgence of overt great power competition	Increased cooperation as liberal values, free markets, and international institutions spread	Agnostic because it cannot predict the content of ideas
Main Limitation	Does not account for international change	Tends to ignore the role of power	Better at describing the past than anticipating the future

Fig. 2 Constructivism challenges the foundations of rational IR theories (Walt, 1998)

6. Reaffirming the Territorial State with a Return to a Culture of Borders - The Current Policy Implications

In the past decade, the post-Cold War liberal order seems to be in trouble; severe economic problems, the expansion of populism along with the prevalence of authoritarianism in plenty of countries seem to have put the “triumph of democracy” to a halt. The political systems’ leading stakeholders are meeting multi-faceted criticism in a dynamically changing international environment, lacking control and certainty due to the globalization particularities along the reduced credibility and appeal of the politicians. The latest economic crises have cultivated a disbelief against governing elites and institutions, highlighted by mistrust against capital markets, exclusive privileges favoring the corporate world in combination with austerity policies for the middle class and the masses. People face difficulties to follow up the globalization trends, therefore, they tend to support political leaders like President Trump, vote against international conventions and alliances, like the Brexit followers did, or find comfort within populist far right or left parties, like it happened in Italy and Greece (Lounsbury & Hirsch, 2010).

Well-populated parts of the western world societies, as included in the euro-atlantic political and geopolitical context, resist the political schemes driving to regional and/or global integration. Although other European countries may not follow the UK outside the EU, it is plenty of political parties protesting against a quick pace of EU federalization or any further convergence toward common institutions decreasing the member states’ sovereignty. In a similar line, the EU requests for sharing the hospitality of refugees among the EU members according to specific quotas have been rejected by many EU countries. The national control usually delays and/or challenges the application of EU directives and acumen (Mead, 2014). China and Russia, meanwhile, have modernized their armed forces, strengthened their military capacity and asserted their geopolitical interests and aspirations. President Putin is calling for a re-assessment of the European order, highlighting the rhetoric and mobilization of political and social forces like the nationalist parties from the British Independence Party to the French National Front and the Hungarian Fidesz, whose common ground is highly stressing out the national and cultural differences rather than, as Samuel Huntington (Huntington, 2007) states, the commonalities among the Europeans. Both China and Russia frequently attempt to establish a new political order capable of challenging the prominent western values and lifestyle, defying emphatically the traditional privilege of the West regarding democratization and human rights safeguarding. In a few words, the “old-fashion spies” are back again, looking for intelligence and information that will provide national gains and advantages.

In contrast, the US is more inward-looking – a process that have started with President Obama who recalled US troops from the Middle East and encouraged his European and Middle Eastern allies to independently develop policies enhancing their security (Shapiro & Witney, 2009). President Trump advocates an “America First” policy; he renegotiates US trade agreements, declares appreciation for President Putin and exerts pressure toward his European allies, questioning his country’s commitment to NATO. Moreover, the ICC liberal attempt to critically update the perception of a sovereign nation-state, by creating space for external institutions to intervene in the internal politics and protect the citizens, is failing to be considered universally legitimate (Glasius, 2006).

Even more and with regard to the geopolitics of energy, if the US geological shales provide the top super-power of our world with the energy volumes analysts consider as expected, based on the amazing scientific evolution of fracking and other similar techniques (Zeihan, 2016), the next generations will be fortunate or unfortunate enough to realize a future without American geopolitical interventions in Middle East or wherever “geoenergeia”, in the sense of geo-energy interests, apply (Vidakis, 2016); therefore, a future deprived from the American network of energy security guarantees all over the oceans and seas will probably be extremely unpredictable as well as unstable. These future generations will experience re-engineered energy logistics, tanker wars, regional competitors and challengers, maybe not the “end of history” as it was expected in the 90’s, but the “end of the geopolitics” we are familiar with, as they have been established by the Bretton Woods security architecture. It is not yet clear which scenario could follow a complete US energy independence and consequently their isolation in IR terms (Vidakis & Baltos, 2015).

7. Conclusion

The omens are not optimistic, since, even the “good news” tend to result in trade-offs. For example, against all expectations, the internet and multimedia high technologies, although they were assumed to be the vehicle of a liberal movement capable of empowering the citizens against the abusive authoritarian regimes, like it was characteristically depicted during the Arab Spring, have been occasionally developed as tools that can enhance terrorist activities, fake news campaigns, controversial propagandas, usually run by succeeding political regimes which implement a new wave of extreme nationalism and/or fanatical religious fundamentalism, violating numerous human rights (Niblett, 2017).

In another paradox way, the misunderstandings around the concept of globalization, the confusion among several of its interpretations, from “big brother-type” global controls and extermination of ideological diversities to uncontrolled financial monopolies abusing people’s rights, contributed dramatically into a “new disorder”, where the patriotism is threatened by the nationalism and the idealism of international solidarity is strongly doubted by the evidences of an offensive realism for survival (Mearsheimer, 2003). Therefore, the recent changes in world politics, whether through the rise of an extreme nationalism, the diminishing appeal of a US-led liberal order or the growing challenge from great illiberal powers, they all promote a “conservative” return to a “rough” version of Westphalian sovereignty of the state and the sanctity of its borders. Plenty of historical events lately follow this pattern of reviving past religious and political conflicts, like for example two recent failed attempts for separation via referendum, the Catalanian in Spain and the Kurdistan in Iraq (Skidmore, 2012). This development reasserted the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq and Spain, despite the dubious cultural implications, and thus supports the tendency to preserve the existing Westphalian order. Another similar outcome comes from the Syrian civil war; that is, the preservation of the pre-war Syrian territory within one state, avoiding second thoughts for disintegration or division (Rotberg, 2004).

In order to sum it up, the borderlines offer the supreme, currently known, environment for “status quo” safety, security and societal conveniences for the citizens. At the same time the territorial borders do not always coincide with the cultural ones, as it is being discussed with regard to the Sykes-Picot arrangements in the Middle East (Alobeid, Vidakis, Baltos, & Balodis, 2018); and this is the point where the constructivist, collective and national memories conflict with the geographical maps’ distortions, as they have been powerfully enforced through multiple and dramatic wars. *A border cannot by default result in order.* It is the tool, like the single knife the use of which is determined by the holder’s acts and intentions. *The border may also bring disorder,* where the public opinions have somehow experienced and deeply registered events like crimes against human cultures, violent invasions, suppression, atrocities and bloody occupations.

History does not move backwards, but the Westphalian international order based on the sovereignty of the territorial state seems to be too resilient to allow for a paradigm shift that may weaken the explanatory power of traditional IR theories (Agnew, 2005). On the contrary, recent events on the international arena re-invigorated the traditional state-centric neorealist and neoliberal camps in IR theory. Apparently, the two opposing dynamics – territorial and non-territorial – cohabitate in current international relations and although the international order is still highly state-centric, the non-territorial cultural and religious dynamics proved to be major determinants of international politics (Bull, 2012). Thus, analyzing international relations necessitates the utilization of the rationalist territorial-state theories and the interpretive constructivist theories to be equally used for an adequate understanding of international stakeholders’ behaviors.

References

- Agnew, J. (2005). Sovereignty regimes: territoriality and state authority in contemporary world politics. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 95(2), 437-461.
- Alobeid, A., Vidakis, I., Baltos, G., & Balodis, J. (2018). The International Energy Strategies Ruling the Middle East for a Century Re-appear and Determine the Destiny of the Whole Eastern Mediterranean Region. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(4), 241-249.

- Andreas, P. (2003). Redrawing the line: borders and security in the twenty-first century. *International security*, 28(2), 78-111.
- Bayrakli, E. (2012). *Turkish foreign policy in transition*. University of Vienna (Uniwien),
- Brzezinski, Z. (1990). Selective global commitment. *Foreign Aff.*, 70, 1.
- Bull, H. (2012). *The anarchical society: a study of order in world politics*: Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Burchill, S., Linklater, A., Devetak, R., Donnelly, J., Nardin, T., Paterson, M., . . . True, J. (2013). *Theories of International Relations*: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Buzan, B., Jones, C. A., Little, R., & Richard, L. (1993). *The logic of anarchy: neorealism to structural realism*: Columbia University Press.
- Chaliand, G., & Blin, A. (2016). *The history of terrorism: From antiquity to ISIS*: Univ of California Press.
- Dillon, G. M. (1989). Modernity, discourse and deterrence. *Current Research on Peace and Violence*, 12(2), 90-104.
- Dougherty, J. E. (1997). *Contending theories of international relations: a comprehensive survey*: Addison Wesley Publishing Company.
- Eckersley, R. (2004). *The green state: rethinking democracy and sovereignty*: MIT Press.
- Elden, S. (2005). Missing the point: globalization, deterritorialization and the space of the world. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30(1), 8-19.
- Fell, A. L. (1983). *Origins of Legislative Sovereignty and the Legislative State: Volume Six American Traditions and Innovation with Contemporary Import and Foreground Book 1: Foundations (to Early 19th Century)* (Vol. 6): Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Garcia-Contreras, R. (2008). "I am you, you are me": Exploring the Concept of Mutual Constituency in International Relations Theory. *Southwestern journal of International Studies*, 3.
- Glasius, M. (2006). *The International Criminal Court: A global civil society achievement*: Routledge.
- Guizzardi, G., & Halpin, T. (2008). Ontological foundations for conceptual modelling. *Applied Ontology*, 3(1-2), 1-12.
- Hart, J. A., & Spero, J. E. (2013). *The politics of international economic relations*: Routledge.
- Hoffman, M. (1989). Critical theory and the inter-paradigm debate. In *The Study of International Relations* (pp. 60-86): Springer.
- Hopf, T. (1991). Polarity, the offense-defense balance, and war. *American Political Science Review*, 85(2), 475-493.
- Huntington, S. P. (2007). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*: Simon & Schuster.
- Ikiz, A. S. (2018). *Economic Dynamics of Global Energy Geopolitics*: Engineering Science Reference.
- Judge, A. (2011). Strategic Complexity--Attracting Consensus.
- Keohane, R. (2011). Neoliberal institutionalism. *Security Studies: A Reader*, 157-164.
- Keohane, R. O., & Martin, L. L. (1995). The promise of institutionalist theory. *International security*, 20(1), 39-51.
- Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2002). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. *Ethnography and schools: Qualitative approaches to the study of education*, 87-138.
- Lapid, Y. (2001). Rethinking the "International": IBO Clues for Post-Westphalian Mazes. *Identities, borders, orders*, 23-28.
- Lawson, S. (2015). *Theories of international relations: Contending approaches to world politics*: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lehman, G. (2017). Philosophical traditions. In *The Routledge Companion to Critical Accounting* (pp. 82-104): Routledge.
- Lem, W., & Barber, P. G. (2013). *Class, contention, and a world in motion* (Vol. 8): Berghahn Books.
- Little, R., & Smith, M. (2005). *Perspectives on World Politics*: Taylor & Francis.
- Lounsbury, M., & Hirsch, P. M. (2010). Markets on trial: Toward a policy-oriented economic sociology. In *Markets on Trial: The Economic Sociology of the US Financial Crisis: Part A* (pp. 5-26): Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Marsh, D., & Furlong, P. (2002). A skin not a sweater: Ontology and epistemology in political science. *Theory and methods in political science*, 2, 17-41.
- Mead, W. R. (2014). The return of geopolitics: The revenge of the revisionist powers. *Foreign Aff.*, 93, 69.
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2003). *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics (Updated Edition)*: W. W. Norton.
- Milner, H. (1991). The assumption of anarchy in international relations theory: a critique. *Review of International Studies*, 17(1), 67-85.
- Niblett, R. (2017). Liberalism in Retreat: the Demise of a Dream. *Foreign Aff.*, 96, 17.
- Nye, J. S., & Welch, D. A. (2014). *Understanding global conflict & cooperation: intro to theory & history*: Pearson Education.
- Öberg, M. D. (2005). The Legal Effects of Resolutions of the UN Security Council and General Assembly in the Jurisprudence of the ICJ. *European Journal of International Law*, 16(5), 879-906.

- Peterson, V. S. (1992). Transgressing boundaries: Theories of knowledge, gender and international relations. *Millennium*, 21(2), 183-206.
- Powell, R. (1994). Anarchy in international relations theory: the neorealist-neoliberal debate. *International Organization*, 48(2), 313-344.
- Reus-Smit, C., & Snidal, D. (2010). *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*: OUP Oxford.
- Robinson, W. I. (1996). Globalization, the world system, and "democracy promotion" in US foreign policy. *Theory and Society*, 25(5), 615-665.
- Rosecrance, R. N. (1966). Bipolarity, multipolarity, and the future. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 10(3), 314-327.
- Rotberg, R. I. (2004). *State failure and state weakness in a time of terror*: Brookings Institution Press.
- Schimmelfennig, F. (1998). NATO enlargement: A constructivist explanation. *Security Studies*, 8(2-3), 198-234.
- Shapiro, J., & Witney, N. (2009). *Towards a Post-American Europe: a power audit of EU-US Relations*: European Council on Foreign Relations Brussels.
- Skidmore, D. (2012). The Obama Presidency and US Foreign Policy: Where's the Multilateralism? *International Studies Perspectives*, 13(1), 43-64.
- Snidal, D. (1991). Relative gains and the pattern of international cooperation. *American Political Science Review*, 85(3), 701-726.
- Snyder, J. (2004, Nov/Dec 2004). One World, Rival Theories. *Foreign Policy*, 52-62.
- Van der Pijl, K., & Overbeek, H. (2002). Restructuring capital and restructuring hegemony: Neo-liberalism and the unmaking of the post-war order. In *Restructuring hegemony in the global political economy* (pp. 15-41): Routledge.
- Vidakis, I., & Baltos, G. (2015). Security aspects of "Geoenergeia" and the significance of energy resources management in international politics. *Geopolitics of energy*, 37, 2-16.
- Vidakis, I. G. (2016). *Energy network's security in Eastern Mediterranean Sea*. (Ph.D. Disseration), University of the Aegean, Chios, Greece.
- Walt, S. M. (1998). International relations: one world, many theories. *Foreign Policy*, 29-46.
- Waltz, K. N. (2000). Structural realism after the Cold War. *International security*, 25(1), 5-41.
- Williamson, J. (1990). *The Washington consensus*: Washington, DC.
- Zeihan, P. (2016). *The Absent Superpower: The Shale Revolution and a World Without America*: Zeihan on Geopolitics.