

“WESTERN-CENTRISM” AS “PARTICULARISM” IN NEOREALIST THEORY

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Abstract:

The field of International Relations which utterly became an academic discipline at the beginning of the 20th century has always been subjected to a matter of debate whether it has scientific and universal theoretical principles in explaining international politics. Neorealism that was first introduced in 1979 by Kenneth N. Waltz has been one of the most leading theories offering law making, positivist and universal accounts for the field of IR among all other theories. However, Neorealism is essentially challenged by one of the particularistic traits of social theory, in this study, that is Western-centrism. This article aims at scrutinizing the Western-centric grounds of Neorealism, through an analysis of ontological and epistemological levels of its making. The Western-centric background will be analyzed at three levels of arguments in Neorealist theory: anarchy and hierarchy; rationalism and empiricism; and normativism.

Keywords: Neorealism, Western-centrism, Particularism, Universalism

JEL Codes: F50, F59, N40

YENİ GERÇEKÇİLİK TEORİSİNDE “ÖZGÜLLÜK” OLARAK “BATI-MERKEZCİLİK”

Özet:

20. yüzyılın başlarında önemli bir akademik disiplin haline gelen Uluslararası İlişkiler alanı, uluslararası politikanın açıklanmasında yeterli derecede bilimsel ve evrensel teorik ilkelere sahip olup olmadığına dair bir çok tartışmaya konu olmuştur. Bu çerçevede, 1979 yılında ilk kez Kenneth N. Waltz tarafından ortaya atılan Yeni Gerçekçilik teorisi, diğer teoriler arasında Uluslararası İlişkiler alanı için, yasa yapıcı, pozitivist ve evrensel açıklamalar öneren bir teoridir. Ancak Yeni Gerçekçilik, bu çalışmada Batı merkezilik üzerine inşa edilen sosyal teori bakış açısının özgül karakteristiğiyle çelişmektedir. Bu makale, Yeni Gerçekçilik teorisinin oluşumundaki Batı merkezci kökenlerini ontolojik ve epistemolojik açıklamalar yoluyla incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Batı merkezci arka planı teorisinin üç tartışma düzeyinde ele alınacaktır: anarşi ve hiyerarşi; rasyonalizm ve ampirizm; ve normativizm.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Gerçekçilik, Batı-Merkezcilik, Evrensellik, Özgüllük

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1. Introduction

Social theory basically depicts an interrelated system of ideas that helps us to systematically understand and explain the social world. After the field of International Relations as an academic discipline had first appeared in 1919, the main debate was developed over the essential constituents and role of the theories of International Relations (IR). In terms of the logic in philosophy of science, the primary problematic in methodology of International Relations Theory is whether the principle of “universality” and thus “positivism” should be taken as a ground within the great debate between traditionalism and behaviorism. Thus, the discipline has prompted an everlasting debate on whether traditional historical-narrative or behaviorist-observable method mostly stands out in contemplating the cooperative and/or conflictual levels of world politics. However, more seemingly, the main problem in devising the explanatory capacity of the theories of International Relations is to undervalue the “particularity” of the nature of the social sciences. Put it another way, the nature of the theories in IR, if serving for the whole world in elucidating the world politics and interstate relations, becomes central at epistemological and ontological interpretations. In this context, Neorealism that was first introduced in 1979 by Kenneth N. Waltz claims to be scientific and universal among other theories of the IR. However, the theory is in fact challenged by the particularistic grounds of social theory that is Western-centrism in this study. In the article, the principle of “universality” of neorealism which has played an important role in almost a period of a century in the discipline of International Relations will be critically assessed. The principle of particularism, on the other hand, that is the consideration of social phenomena within the limitations of certain time and space, is here specified as “Western-centrism” comprising “Euro-centrism” and precisely “Euro-American centrism”. Accordingly, this study consists of a set of arguments: The first one is that the attempts to attach the principle of “universality” to the neorealist theory largely remains futile. In regard with this assumption, Cox (1981: 128) notes that “... any theory can not be divorced from any politico-cultural context of theory-making and particular time and places”. The second one is that the notion of “particularism” well fits into “Western-centrism” in the field of International Relations even if the term ‘West/Western’ seems to provide a holistic approach at the intellectual level, in terms of certain period of times, actors involved and patterns of relationships in the Western world. The concept relatively offers particular political, historical and cultural contexts and references in the theory. The Western-centric background will be analyzed at three levels of arguments in Neorealist theory making: anarchy and hierarchy; rationalism and empiricism; and normativism.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Definitions

As a concept, Western-centrism has a variety of definitions provided by historical and geographical contexts. It is also deemed as a mental product of a specific time and place mainly displayed by the Western world itself. As a study field in 100 year -IR literature an idea for contemplating the very essence of the theories of IR has been brought up very recently. In 2007, Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan co-edited a special issue questioning “Why is there no non-Western International Relations Theory?” where they inspired from the basic question of Martin Wight (1966), “Why is there no international theory?” (Acharya and Buzan, 2007:87-312; Wright and Butterfield, 1966). Likewise, many other IR scholars such as Chris Brown (2001), Robert Crawford and Daryl Jarvis (2001), Erik Knud Jorgensen (2000), Robert Cox (1981), Robert Keohane (1986) and Ching Chang Chen (2011) then endeavored to inquiry the roots of the IR theories. The discussion also taken up by John Hobson in his work of “The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics” published in 2012 and debated at the Millennium Conference of London School of Economics in October of 2013. For him the main theories of International Relations –also classified as “Western International Theory”- have been conceptualized in a Western and Eurocentric sense in comprehending the world politics between 1760 and 2010, regarding that they are subliminal or manifest, and imperialist or non-imperialist. In this part, the term Western-centrism and the Neorealist theory in historical context will be outlined.

2.1. Western-centrism as Particularism

The concept of “Western-centrism” (including Euro-centrism or American/European-centrism) is originally derived from a Greek term “ethnocentric/ethno-centrism” (Neuliep, 2014:205).¹ The principle of “particularism” here is substituted by a certain kind of “perception for Western superiority” that is explicitly tied to a certain time and space. In this context, it would not be erroneous to say that the categorization of the Western superiority in geography, religion, culture, economy, security and civilization is predominantly manifested in the struggles of the Crusades in the Medieval Ages in Europe or between the Venetia and Byzantine, Venetian

¹ The term “ethnos” refers to “nation” and “center”.

and Ottomans. However, the “us/them” dichotomy in political, economic and social fields was developed in particular after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1898 and then in North Africa. In the 20th century, the notion of Western-centrism gained a growing importance in discourses and metanarratives intentionally constructed for explaining the relations between East and West, North and South, and more merely the relations with the countries in the Third World.

For Cox (1981: 128), “social knowledge is produced in line with the human affairs organized in particular time and places.” Therefore, the principle of “particularism” obviously underpins the philosophical grounds of Western-centrism including actors involved, and patterns of interactions and relations. These actors which are originally Western are furthermore believed to provide particular and superior characteristics when compared to outsiders. In this respect, it is imperative to underline that even if there exists a holistic approach towards the West both in material and ideational sense, the term West/Western creates a sense of particularism in political, historical and cultural contexts in theory-making.

The following perspectives also rightly accounts for the Western-centric conception towards the outsiders. For Said (2003), “the term ‘West’ is not merely a material reality but vague; and aptly identifies itself in terms of its relationships vis a vis the others”, mostly the Middle Eastern (Orient) with whom the West perceives to have dissimilar characteristics in culture and geography. Therefore, the “West” was first created by the Orient mainly at subliminal level to describe Europe with “contrasting image, idea, personality and experience.” On the mental level, the roots of “Western-centrism” as a term, highlighting the Western impact on the “other” are based on an ideological configuration of a “mythical East or Orient”. Said talks of a certain perception towards the East that is identified as “Orientalism” through which the West is dealing with the East in logic. Accordingly, both the West and East themselves have constant and opposite features. The West produces discourses; determines the power; makes statements on; and teaches the East. Accordingly, this idea greatly empowers the European-Atlantic axis; the West developed an idea of “collective consciousness of us” and superiority in its relations over the East (Said, 2003: 3-5). Said’s emphasis on Gramsci (1971 cited in Said, 2003: 6-7) is noteworthy here: “in any society certain cultural forms predominate over others; and certain ideas become more influential than the others, therefore that is cultural hegemony.” In Europe “cultural hegemony” is taken as “the idea of Europe as superior one over the non-Europeans”. This relationship in all areas of the social world as a rule manifests itself in both structural and behavioral levels. In this regard, in the words of Hobson (2012: 1-6), the European continent has thus been presented since the beginning of the history of civilizations, as progressive and rising under the influence of internal and external factors. Hobson (2012) considers Said's Orientalism or explanations for hereditary imperialism as “scientific racism”. According to his analysis, the West displays itself as “dynamic, rational, civilized and progressive ” compared to the East.

The “superiority of the West” is vindicated by a number of thinkers and scholars in similar ways through which the West is occasionally drawn to the “standards of civilization”. As Huntington (2013: 47) argues, the states of European society are assumed superior and more civilized than non-European civilizations. In his most celebrated work “Clash of Civilizations” published in 1993, Huntington (1993) draws up some sort of categorical definitions pertaining to the cultural differences as the main source of conflict.

Just as what Said (2003: 2) asserts, “Western-centrism” as a way of thinking is “based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between the Orient and Occident.” Therefore, the concept of “Western-centrism” has necessarily provided an ontological basis in many areas of the emerging social sciences since the 19th century when the contours of the Western identity were noticeably sketched out. For example, in the field of political science and international relations, theories, concepts and symbols are greatly scrutinized and universalized through a Eurocentric approach and progressive history of the world politics, and in this context, the East has been extensively disregarded by the IR Scholars. For Sardar (1999), Eurocentrism is also hereditary to the extent that we conceptualize and rearrange our knowledge. He claims that Eurocentrism is defined as the “influence of Europe or the generic form of Europe- the West.” Sardar (1999: 44-62) contends that Western-centrism in social sciences dates back to the period that Europeans formulated and organized its own view in consistent with the needs and demands of Western society and thus with the Enlightenment at intellectual dimension.

Here, the field of International Relations evidently portrays the moral roots alongside the Western civilization. More specifically, these theories find their origins in European history literally and specifically proceed from the ancient Greek, medieval feudal order, the expansion of trade in the Renaissance era, the Enlightenment, industrialization and the 20th century era of globalization. The theoretical categories of IR have been established throughout the processes evolving from the agricultural community to the emergence of sovereign states, from the feudal order to the trade-based capitalist system. The most prominent period of this historical progression is the Enlightenment era when the very seeds of the European originated nation states were born and which the Eurocentric metanarratives were built upon. In this context, Hobson (2012) addresses a more flexible and

multiple kind of conceptualization for his Eurocentrism thesis, implying an ontological infrastructure. For him, the theory of International Relations does not handle international politics through an objective, positivist and universal epistemological ground; instead, even at academic level the Western world is rigorously overrated as the highest, ideal, pro-active as a subject through normative reference. Thus, the common denominator of materialist and ideational theories in social field is constituted by the European geographical and historical contexts (Hobson, 2012:1).

1.2. The Development of Neorealism

The theory of neorealism in International Relations Theory has always been a remarkable apparatus and unique theory of all in the field of Political Theory. This is mainly because of the fact that neorealism claims to be “universal” which can be rightly applied to almost all cases regardless of time and place including history, culture and identity. Such an understanding also well coincides with what Wight (1966 cited in Brown, 2007:35) contends that the theory does not necessarily aim to be progressive; rather it claims to comprise a system of repetitions to be scientific.² In this section, the development of neorealist theory will take place with reference to classical realism that is definitely compatible with the main arguments of neorealism in International Relations.

Admitting that the Waltizian neorealism and classical realism have similarities and differences in ontological and epistemological terms, the roots of the former can be traced back to the latter’s appraisal for “relationship between states” that principally lay down the patterns of power politics. The historical references of realism for state behavior, power politics, anarchy, balance of power, security dilemma apparently stand out as the main explanatory constituents of neorealism.

For realist Carr, the birth of the field of International Relations dates back to Thucydides’s narrative describing the Greek-city states’ conflicts over power that emerged almost 2500 years ago. On the other hand, Kal Holsti argues that the discipline first appeared with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. However, in the early years of the second half of the 20th century the field has become almost an academic discipline encompassing a long-term debate between Realism and Liberalism. In the aftermath of the First World War, the Liberal philosophy primarily ignited the development of IR as a branch of Social Sciences in 1919 in Aberystwyth (Knutsen, 2006; Grieco, 1997: 163).

Unlike Liberalism, Realism was seeking to reveal the reality and the causes of conflicts rather than accounting for the question of “what ought to be” which is actually a matter of normative questioning. In this respect, the birth of the ancestor Realism falls behind the expansion and development of the International Relations Theory (Brown, 2007:35). In relation to that, Knutsen emphasizes that Liberalism/Idealism called as Utopianism by Carr largely signifies the superstructure of the Enlightenment project and its main standards (1964 cited in Knutsen, 2006: 299; Burchill, 1996:67-92). Carr (1964 cited in Knutsen: 299) also indicates in his *Twenty Years’ Crisis* that Utopianism constitutes an infrastructure for framing the reality and, thus it can be defined as a mental activity through which main principles formed to meet the practical and political demands in that period. Liberalism in international arena, though, did reflect some sort of insight of Realist thinking that was framed by the US President Woodrow Wilson as a political solution for the wars among the nations.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, a new level of analysis was required to explain the conflict which could not then prevented from breaking out: instead it spilled over all around the world. In this regard, Realism has become a dominant theory in the analyses of bipolar international system led by US-Soviet rivalry. Realism emerged out of rational values with respect to the concept of power and order: particularly in the 1950s, many scholars and American decision-makers utilized the theory in the context of Cold War for their policy choices and practices. This endeavor has been also perceived that the US was asserting itself as a hegemonic power in world politics and firmly exerting its own social and institutional standards into the rest of the world. Knutsen (considers that the main early pioneers of this theory, the former British Prime Minister Churchill and the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger deeply affected Niebuhr who then founded the theory together with Morgenthau. In “Politics among Nations” Morgenthau (1948 cited in Donnelly, 2000: 35; Hobson, 2000: 45) categorizes the main principles of Realism devising the concept of power and human nature and emphasizes that politics is “produced by objective laws that are found in human nature which is equivalent all over the world.” For him, conflict is inherent and inevitable in group relations, and the main actor in an anarchic

² Even though “progressiveness” means a change in a positive way in theory making, here the study goes further by offering a sense of “universality” and “scientific” that is also Western-centric in essence. This study itself does not necessarily provide a dualism between progressivism and universalism as a whole.

international environment is state (Terriff, Croft, James and Morgan, 1999: 30). In an anarchic environment, states are aiming at pursuing their national interests and thus maximizing their power acting truly and rationally in their foreign policies (Morgenthau, 2005).³

However, the theory of Realism itself was evolving and changing as more than an ideology in the 1960s. Meanwhile, positivist methodology had been now subjected to the main debate between Behavioralists and Classical Realists in International Relations. For the former, observing human behaviors (decision-makers' behaviors), concentrating on human rationality and impling national interest at state level were put at the very center of the nation-state analysis.

With the emergence of international, non-governmental organizations and non-state actors such as multinational organizations in 1970, the birth of new liberal movement prompted a new period of criticism towards Realism (Knutsen, 2006: 324). In this context, the concept of "interdependence" highlighted by Keohane and Nye (1977 cited in Knutsen, 2006: 326-27) and the diminishing importance of the role of state are reviewed through a new theoretical explanation for world system designed by Waltz in his work entitled "Theory of International Politics" in 1979. Waltz (1979: 39-103) unlike Morgenthau primarily laid great emphasis on the behavioral patterns of actors (states) within the limitations of the international system rather than associating human nature to power struggle among nations. He directly drew his attention to the "characteristics and interactions of behavioral units which are direct cause of political events". According to him, the state is the basic unit of the international system, and the state of nature among states is anarchy and war. Waltz (1979) accentuates the international system prioritizing its main characteristics: 1. There are ordering principles in the system, that may be either anarchic or hierarchic 2. The character of the unit, that is state, is similar to one another and states are constrained by the international system 3. States have different distribution of units and capacities (Burchill, 2001: 89). Inspired by the micro-economic analysis of the states in the international system and thus the competition in the domestic economy, Waltz (1979: 199) built up his theory of international politics by relating states to companies and emphasized "the survival of the objects". In the international system, a security dilemma among states shaped by perception of threat, affects state behavior or restricts the competitive environment at the system level analysis (Knutsen, 2006: 329). Thus, one can systematically scrutinize the interactions and understand the nature of international relations. Waltz (1979: 199-202) also affirms that the emergence of a leading state in system and bipolarity definitely enable the hegemonic stability and order like the US intentionally acting to keep the world order stable and pursuing its own national interest. In this regard, he argues that "the US is now maintaining and working within the system rather than shifting it in order to preserve the balance of power". Likewise, in the Cold War years, bipolarity eliminated the possibility of war when compared to the 18th and 19th century European politics extensively dominated by multipolarity. Other systems might leave more room for the great powers to fight within the "anarchic nature of European politics".

Here again, rationality and scientific methods are salient in understanding the dynamics of world politics. System has its own characteristics of rationality; states are members of a social system and each state is included in processes of interactions or games beyond their power and capacity to change the rules. The result of the game thus depends on the behavior and the interactions among the states; and therefore excites the continuity and universality of the system. The two threatening but logical players – the US and the SU- in the period of nuclear balance should have similar interests and be rational if they provide positive effects for the international political realm in the long term. In this sense, neorealism becomes dominant among the theories of IR offering a framework for a consistent empirical methodology (Knutsen, 2006).

As a fact, after the Cold War ended, state has still remained important, yet other units and levels of analysis were born out of the so-called "new world order." Therefore neorealism claims to hold the capacity of explaining the concept of power and contemporary international relations. In addition, during this period, neorealism was reidentified in different ways, for example, by the "Optimistic Realists" led by Charles Glaser and Barry Buzan who mentioned the transformation of the anarchic environment (Baylis, 2012: 153-166). In contemporary world politics, many theories such as Constructivism critically, or English School or Regional Security Complex Theory in essence refer to neorealism as it is still serving as a leading mainstream theory which postulating the power relations mainly in political and military fields.

2. Western-Centrism in Universalism/Particularism Dichotomy

³ Though, Knutsen argues that states are naturally concerned to agree on the minimum standards in conflicts. See: Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, <http://www3.nd.edu/~cpence/eewt/Morgenthau2005.pdf> (Retrieved on 23 August 2014).

In this study, it is appropriate to make a clear division between social and natural sciences and the likelihood of applicability of positivist methodology and epistemology in International Relations. In Social Sciences literature, main pioneers of social theory such as Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Durkheim, Max Weber, Thomas Kuhn and Karl Popper tried to ground their studies upon positivism. The positivist notion is here borrowed from Comte's "social physics" which was founded upon "positivist method" mainly serves for the political and social "natural order" (Scharff, 2002). The perception of modernization that subsequently produced the Industrialization period necessarily perpetuated the dominance of scientific and positivist thought largely compressed within the materialistic world. In this context, while the modernization is generating its own regime of truth, only one single modeling of societies that is based on a state-based system and the universalistic conception of science was intentionally born. However, "scientific knowledge" – that well corresponds to "social knowledge" in Cox's understanding- profoundly fixed in the center of the European history including cultural and religious beliefs which distinguish it from the rest of the world. In line with what Cox (1981: 128) contends, neorealism is known also as a problem solving theory in essence because it claims to make general statements and laws deducing from a particular problem and generalizing the patterns of relationships and institutions. However, theory in general is a particular concern that can not be separate from a particular time and place and more prominently from a definite purpose. The limitations in universalism/ particularism duality in characterizing the so called "universality" of Western-centrism are also rightly point out by Wallerstein (2013: 135-38) in his study "Unthinking Social Science": The description of "universality" is the "particular" account for a specific system that is widely known as the modern Western system. For Wallerstein (ibid.), there is no clear distinction between particularism and universalism as time and space are socially and historically invented in the modern world system.

The Western-centric particularism or universalism is also well reflected in the very argumentative elements of Neorealism. The anarchial and hierarchial structure of the world political system enormously which are equivalent to the Western political history and thought; the rational and empirical quality of neorealist theory that were also born out of Western Enlightenment era; and normative structure of Neorealist theory that is mainly challenged by the main assertions of the theory itself.

2.1. Anarchy and Hierarchy

At the ontological basis – the description of knowledge- of the theory, the "reality" can be recognized in the assessments of the "interstate relations in the anarchical system." According to Yalvaç (1996: 131-184), as pointed out by the positivist philosophy of social science- "interstate relations" constitute the very realities to be discovered.⁴ When viewed from this perspective, Hobson (2012: 192) sees that together with Hegemonic Stability Theory, Classical realism and neorealism almost become the "Euro-centric big bang of the world politics."

Classical realism has been developed as a means to accentuate the "principles of anarchy" in international relations as in intra-state level where there is essentially a state of nature. According to Hobbes (2014) who brought up Galileo's and Newton's mechanical idea to the field of political philosophy with his book *Leviathan* "people are born equal and insecurity stems from inequality; therefore once they become hostile to each other they attempt to destroy or rule over one another mainly for the purposes of protection or sometimes only for pleasure." The centralization of European state in terms of the birth of nation state and absolutism is thoroughly identified with the 17th century domestic turmoils and the circumstances of the English Civil War. This period points to the persistence of the anarchic nature of human beings, insecurity, honor and glory which engender the grounds of International Relations. Anarchic environment is natural and individuals delegate their right to govern themselves to a particular person or a council with the intention of "personality amalgamation". This single "Civitas" or "Leviathan"⁵ is obliged to provide peace and security, and end the conflict between the equals (ibid.). Here "human" within the state is compared to "state" in international relations as units of analysis and both units must illustrate a specific pattern of behavior in an anarchic order (Yurdusev, 1996: 43-50). As a fact, classical realism has a genuine meaning when Hobbes' social contract combined with Machiavelli's conception of power in international politics (Machiavelli, 1995; Machiavelli, 2003). In Renaissance humanism, Machiavelli's political philosophy proposing the concept of power as human capacity and the way through which state leaders use their power as capacity in the international arena are literally qualified as rationalism.

⁴ Positivist philosophy is also called as empirical realism which explains that the units can be directly observable.

⁵ Leviathan is a symbolic creature that is made up of people or citizens or subjects of a society, state where the source of power is not divine but human.

The most indispensable strand of realism that is inextricably linked to neorealism is the principle of anarchy through which states are essentially derived to shape their behaviors in international politics. Waltz (1979) framed the theory of neorealism on microeconomic model of economics, upon a mechanical nature, that is called as social realism. The international system is now a field of rivalry where conflict is inevitable and states are inherently rational to sustain their presence. To sum up, the organizing principle of the international system according to Hobbes is the anarchy where international change is structurally not possible, and is presented as practically a law and universal reality. For Hobson (2012: 207-2013) Waltz in his analysis of great power behavior while addressing the European -centered imperial power, can not describe the emerging patterns and power of the Mongol Empire or the Ottoman Empire in the East. For example, in the 12nd and 19th centuries, an analysis of the rise of China and the imperial power at the system level is not given in this theory. In regard with the notion that the rise of American power has now become as a tool of analysis in neorealism, the theory of American hegemony places in the very center of the theory in particular in Hegemonic Stability Theory. Thus, this theory is mainly considered as a theory of Cold War that oversees the US foreign policy in this era.⁶

It is worth mentioning that neorealism has been developed specifically to delineate the level of analysis, and persistently prioritizes the ontological concerns when compared to the other theories. For Waltz (1979) there is no world government as an authority in international system, and hierarchy and anarchy can exist together both in pre-Westphalia and post-Westphalian period. In the same way, the theory rather portrays a Euro-American centered approach pointing to stability and peace of the Cold War era. For Hobson (2012: 207-213) the theory specifically underlining the nuclear capacity completely except for Euro-American world (along with the Soviet Union) has disregarded the conflicts in North Korea, India - Pakistan border, Congo etc. Going further, in IR literature, these areas of conflict are also known as the confrontation areas of the two nuclear powers, the US and the SU.

The above-described Western or more specifically the Euro-American-centered perspective on both ontological and epistemological levels highlight identity based approaches affirming its problem-solving purposes (Cox, 1981).

2.2. Rationalism to Empiricism

As a fact, theory of knowledge aspires to account for the questions of “what do we know”, “whether the sources of knowledge can be found out through mind or senses?” The responses to this inquiry oscillate between rationalism and empiricism, and respectively a priori and a posteriori sources which are considered as opposite each other. However, both types of sources are commonly preferred to be reduced into a single one. For example, the rationalists such as Descartes and Kant, see the fundamentals of empiricism in rationalism as a rule. On the other hand, the empiricists based the rational knowledge and senses on empiricism (Özlem, 2003: 38-47). In neorealism, state is considered as a "rational unit" at ontological level and epistemologically through "rational" way, we understand states behaviors defined on rational basis (Also see Ülman, Balta-Paker and A. Ağcan, 2011:15-41). In particular during the 1950s and 1960s, main concerns for empiricism dominated the field of IR as well as the other branches of social sciences. In coincide with the 19th century invention positivism, Waltz (1979) argues that social phenomena can also be explained through universal laws. In this regard, at epistemological level, neorealism based on both rationalist and positivist ideas is at the same time supposed to be normative.

The immutable characteristics in realism are the existence of interest, power, and anarchic system whereas the balance of power or stable tendency of any hegemonic power and power distribution are the main essential indications of neorealism. Invariance in an anarchic system or the anarchic order is also much referred to city-states, kingdoms and among sovereign states in different systems. Hobbes accounts for the anarchic order and human nature through an analogy with anarchic nature of state along with rationalist thinking of Cartesian epistemology. Hobbes on his own age, as he wrote in “Elements of Philosophy” of 1665, conveys that reality and the nature of man –that is mechanical- are completely explored through mind as deductive and metaphysical inquiry (1991,1990 and 2008 cited in Ryan, 2012: 411-52).

In this regard, reality is a mental process and a priori and reductionist rationalism might be applied to the social science theories. Likewise, Durkheim's positivist understanding of science or absolutism in his thoughts claimed to be scientific, yet fundamentally determined by the social structure. Durkheim's concept of

⁶ However, ontologically, there is obviously a distinction between “what is” and “what ought to” and discursive elements are mostly emphasized. Hobson underlines that the international system is equated with the US foreign policy and the attempts to legitimization of the American hegemony in international system.

the origin of nature that is found in religious image is pertinently portrayed that the religious or cultural identifications overlap the scientific description. In these circumstances, the epistemological foundations of the theory albeit the constraints well coincide with the European values, and thus relativism prevails rationalist thinking in social sciences (Gieyrm, 2010: 452-92). Here, “power” is the most testable concept in social sciences considering what Russell (2004: 4) thinks about power:

“... the fundamental concept in social sciences is power in the same sense that energy in fundamental in physics. ... The laws of social dynamics are laws which can only be stated in terms of power.”⁷

Relevant to that, for example, it is surely thought-provoking that the concept of power has religious origins prior to its political foundation in terms of scientism. Therefore when Nierbuhr is seeking the traits of human nature in the philosophy of the Medieval Ages, he identifies it as a synthesis of the ideas of both Aristotles who sees “man as a rational animal” and of Augustine who puts the Catholic faith in the very center of Western philosophy (Harries and Platten, 2010). The term “power” rooted in Aristotle’s philosophy in terms of the “relationships between ruler and ruled” is then replicated in the tenets of Thomas Aquinas “divine origin of power” (Bigongiari, 1953). Machiavelli’s humanistic interpretations on power where he deems power as the potentials of human beings are also assigned to Aquinas’ scholastic teachings. Hobbes who goes along the same path with Descartes – who also takes up the epistemology of Aristotle- portrays that the power of Leviathan is not divine in nature this time but a product of a social contract made up of citizens in society. However, the main problematic can be seen when metaphysics passes through religious dimension to rationalist dimension (Gieyrm, 2010: 452-92).

The adaptation of positivism to the discipline of International Relations began when behaviouralism at a revolutionary level opened up a new methodological debate in the social sciences in the 1940s. In the field of International Relations, behavioralism appeared considerably relatively later than the other disciplines of the social sciences. For the traditional view (utilizing other areas of history, philosophy, law, diplomacy) the first response came to terms with Kuhn's work of “Structure of Scientific Revolutions” (1962) in which he argues that “beliefs, values, and research techniques” can be adapted to social sciences just as in natural sciences. Here, the evolution from rational to positivist approach could be possible with the generalization made on the behavior of states in the international arena. Additionally, the system analysts who are concerned with positivism at epistemological level can not dispose of the deductive approach (Tanrısever, 1996: 89-130).

Waltz (1979: 13) predominantly claims to draw up an all-inclusive and scientific framework to explore the interrelations of states in his work of *Man, State and War* (1959) and *Theory of International Politics*. In ontological sense, he shifted the theoretical understanding in neorealism from human nature based realism to the structure (system) based neorealism (signifying the role of system in influencing the behavior of states against each other) with an emphasis on the universal law making characteristics of the theory. Waltz's approach on empiricism is based on methodological, quantitative/mathematical models and the rational choice theory including game theory which examines decision-making processes of states (Jackson and Sorensen, 2003: 79-81). After the Second World War, the Eurocentric approach can be reidentified as Euro-American centrism considering that the US arose as the most powerful state in international system. Waltz (1999: 693-700) offering a systemic analysis comparatively evaluates the great power rivalries within the context of the bipolar system extensively focusing on the US foreign policy.

For the theory of classical realism, states like humans are competing units are in pursuit of safeguarding the distribution of power in the international system in particular in response to the context of the nuclear horror of the Cold War era. In regard with positivist ontology, the theory privileges “ahistorical (tempocentric) and materialist” approach that also embodies in Morgenthau's anarchic and state-centered international order (Hobson, 2012: 190-91). However, Hobson (ibid.) refers to Morgenthau’s Eurocentric inclinations:

“... a more peaceful and cooperative structure in 1648 is named as “aristocratic international” and a confrontational structure emerged between two world wars in the 20th century is labeled as “nationalist universalism”, states try to survive in the competition.”

Here, the relatively newly centralized European states and then the European capitalist system were institutionalized and evolved into the contemporary European system of states. Such a “unique” civilization including imperialism or hegemony has also then extorted to the outside world just as Morgenthau replaces

⁷ For him, power like energy passes through different forms and the laws of such transformations should be investigated.

European state system with international system. Put differently, the political dynamics inside Europe under the name of the international system are transferred to a global level. Waltz also gives the examples of power politics with reference to the 18th and 19th century conflictual and multipolar interstate relations in Europe while praising the bipolar system of the Cold War era and examining the post-Cold War era (ibid.: 188-93; Waltz, 2000: 5-41). Therefore in spite of the fact that the theorists such as Morgenthau and Waltz tried to transform the theory into a problem solving theory, they stayed in “mode of historical thought.” Thus for them history is provided to “illustrate the recurrent themes” in European political life (Cox, 1981: 131).

2.3. Normativism

The main argument is that there is a normative approach activating the values, principles and norms in the neorealist studies mainly targeting the American foreign policy. Waltz underlines the power politics of the Cold War; lists the main principles that the states should pursue in international system and specifies that the Cold War system is the most stable system ever. He also offers a normative tradition to highlight the great power behaviors (Jackson and Sorensen, 2003: 79-81). For example for Mearscheimer (n.d.) Waltz criticized U.S foreign policy in the Vietnam War and Iraqi war in 2003 arguing that “states should possess more power rather than less, however they should not seek to maximize their power.” He also asserts that bipolar system is the more stable and peaceful system when compared to multipolar system.(Mearscheimer, 2014)

Cox (1981: 132) contends that: “There is a latent normative elements which derives from the assumptions of neorealist theory: security within the postulated interstate system depends upon each of the major actors understanding this system in the same way ... adopting neorealist rationality as a guide to actions.”

Therefore neorealism provides a sense of rationality to the foreign policies – mainly the US Foreign Policy- as a guideline in the Cold War era. In other words, it would not be wrong to say that neorealism like classical realism has a blurry goal of pursuing law making and objective rules and normative set of rules.

Conclusion

Neorealism as one of the leading theories of the field of IR, also claims to be universal and scientific. In this study the neorealist theory that was also constructed upon the classical realism was selected for cotemplating the Western-centric essentials of the IR theory. The principle of “universality” of neorealism has been opened as a discussion and it was concluded that the universality is also defined as a particularism that is also known as Western-centrism offering certain limitations of time and space. Western-centrism is also known as “Euro-centrism” and specifically “Euro-American centrism”. In this context, the notion of “particularism” well fits into “Western-centrism” in the field of International Relations in terms of certain period of times, actors involved and patterns of relationships in the Western world. Western-centrism is progressively built up in a particular political, historical and cultural contexts. Accordingly, neorealism has an apparent Western-centric background more than providing a universal theory of IR: anarchy and hierarchy; rationalism and empiricism; and normativism. The principle of anarchy has roots in the early times of Western state system that can be found after 1648. Hobbes’ term combined with Machiavelli’s concept of power gives the theory a Western-centric ontological justification found in Western historical and philosophical background. Likewise, anarchial structure that becomes a “universal law” also depends on a Cartesian thinking which would then be transformed into a more empiricist form of epistemology. However, the principle of universality in epistemological levels remains at more particularistic and metaphysical levels of Western-centric realm. Finally, even though the theory claims to be scientific and empirical, it inevitably offers a set of normative set of rules based upon the Western state system world, and utilized particularly for the US Foreign policy in the 20th century.

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