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Date: 11/12/09

Word Count: 4500

SUBJECT

Which international relations theoretical approach best explains the evolution of the international system in the early post-Cold War period?

"There are only two forces in the world, the sword and the spirit. In the long run, the sword will always be conquered by the spirit."¹ This quotation of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1806 reflects perfectly the actual antagonism between the modern international relations theories in their perception on the global structure of the world's organization in the post cold war period. While neorealism focuses on the eternal security dilemma (the sword) due to the anarchical nature of the inter estate system, constructivism and neoliberalism highlights the possibility of cooperation under the benevolent auspices of common institutions (the spirit), for the construction of the new international order. Yet, Napoleon had a clear idea on the hierarchy between the power of force and the strength of the mind, the pusillanimity forces the student to investigate more deeply the veracity of this assertion.

According to Hedley Bull, international order refers to a "pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states,"² defining the society of states as an international society linked by shared values, norms and institutions.³ After the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the decline of its ideology, it is judicious to question the nature of this international society and the influence of the American hegemonic power on the international order. Moreover, the emergence of new non-state actors inside the contemporaneous international system must be evaluated to understand its transformation. As Harrison pointed out, "each of the three theoretical frameworks under assessment is useful in explaining the dynamics of great power relations during the period under

¹ **Bramsted** Ernest Kohn *Dictatorship and Political Police: The Technique of Control by Fear*; Routledge, London, 1945, p.37

² **Bull** Hedley, *The anarchical society*, Palgrave, New York, 1977, p.8.

³ *Ibid*, p.13.

examination.”⁴ Nevertheless, maybe one of these theories, focusing on a particular dimension of international political system, facilitates better the understanding of the actual international relations’ global context.

The first part of this essay analyzes the structure of the international system through, first of all, a systemic approach, to examine its polarity and its power distribution, and secondly, a behavioral approach, to understand the balance of power inside of the post cold war order. The second part focuses on the influence the rise of the transnational dimension can exert for the stabilization or deterioration of the international order, considering its impact on Third world state conflicts and the response of international security mechanisms. Finally, we will conclude agreeing with Napoleon’s opinion and apologize for having been doubtful of his words’ wisdom.

⁴ **Harrison** Ewan, *The post-Cold war international system: strategies, institutions and reflexivity*; Routledge, London, 2004, p.121.

1. The evolution of the inter-national environment.

- **The power structure of the international system.**

After the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the removal of the Soviet Union, the United States of America (USA) remained the unique superpower in international politics. As Wohlforth sustains,⁵ thanks to its economic strength, its military capabilities, its technological and geopolitical preponderance, the USA succeeded to lead on what it is commonly called a “unipolar world.” This terminology is justified and accepted because whereas only several states possess as big as economic power (Japan and Germany) and others own great military power and critical mass (Russia and China), no one, except USA, can pretend hold all dimensions of power altogether.⁶ However, scholars diverge on the impact of this historical moment on the international system and its evolution.

The neorealist representation of the international system put the emphasis on the permanent anarchical nature of the international politics and the rationality of states.⁷ Even in a unipolar world, states continue to not recognize any central enforcer above themselves which could constrain their policies by considerations of law and morality.⁸ Scarce resources, the desire of extending political influence or at least to protect autonomy, as well as the security dilemma, are all factors that incite States to engage in internal and external

⁵ Wohlforth William C., *The Stability of a Unipolar World*, International Security, Vol. 24, No. 1, 1999, p.6.

⁶ Schweller Randall L., *Realism and the present great power system: growth and positional conflict over scarce resources*, in Kapstein E.B., Mastanduno M., *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State strategies after the Cold War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p.39.

⁷ Mearsheimer John J., *the false promise of International Institutions*, International Security, Vol. 19, n°3, 1994, p.10

⁸ Davis M. Jane, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.2.

balancing.⁹ As Waltz, the pioneer of structural realism, conceives it, “Unbalanced power, whoever wields it, is a potential danger to others.”¹⁰ There is then a tendency toward equilibrium between great powers. Potential counterbalancing powers, acting individually or collectively, will quickly transform the unipolarity of the international system into multipolarity.¹¹

However, another neoclassical realist, Wohlforth, highlights the overwhelming American concentration of capabilities (and of its allies) that forces other powers to bandwagon the USA.¹² In that perspective, Saull¹³ observed, during the 1990s, a reduction of US involvement in States that had previously been the main concern for American security, reducing its power and influence on political developments in all parts of the world.

The neoliberal approach, beside its anarchical conception of the international structure, emphasizes the possibility of cooperation.¹⁴ On the contrary of neorealists, institutionalists had forecast the post cold war stability of the international framework, a constancy made possible thanks to the alliances and international institutions developed previously by great powers.¹⁵ Supplying information, reducing incentives to cheat and cost of transaction, linking issues and providing a framework for cooperation, institutions have contributed to the peaceful transformation of the post cold war international order.¹⁶

⁹ **Kapstein** E.B., **Mastanduno** M., *Unipolar Politics*, *ibid*, p.11.

¹⁰ **Waltz** Kenneth N., *Evaluating Theories*, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (Dec., 1997), p.915.

¹¹ **Kapstein** E.B., **Mastanduno** M., *Unipolar Politics*, *ibid*, p.15.

¹² *ibid*, p.115.

¹³ **Saull** Richard, *The Cold War and after: capitalism, revolution and superpower politics*, Pluto Press, London, 2007, p.202.

¹⁴ **Wendt** Alexander, *Anarchy is what States make of it: the social construction of power politics*, *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, the MIT Press, 1992, p.392.

¹⁵ **Harrison** Ewan, *The post-Cold war international system*, *ibid*, p.8.

¹⁶ **Keohane** Robert O., **Martin** Lisa L., *The Promise of Institutional Theory*, *International Security* Vol.20, no. 1, The MIT Press, 1995, p.49.

This theory is in phase with Deudney and Ikenberry's analysis, for which the international system is stable, due to what they call "structural liberalism, or the institutionalization of a system of consensual and reciprocal relations among participating states."¹⁷ In other words, the American centered international order could perpetuate and extend its influence thanks to the cooperative and participative nature of its security institutions. Multilateral institutions facilitate efficient hegemony.¹⁸ For example, NATO and the Mutual Security Treaty with Japan are "co-binding" legal arrangement that condition the use of force and create interdependence between the U.S. hegemonic strength and key secondary states like France or Japan.¹⁹

The constructivist approach agrees with neorealists on the fact that the distribution of power shape states behavior. However, Wendt emphasizes the role of intersubjective understandings and expectations of nation's behavior.²⁰ The institutionalized context, cooperative or conflictual, determined the mutually constitutive identities and interests of the nations.

To summarize, whereas Wendt's approach conceives international relations on the base of a competitive security system that will put an end to unipolarity, other neorealists emphasize the interest states have found in temporarily bandwagoning the hegemonic power. In the mean time, the neoliberal approach has focused on the relative gains (rather than the absolute ones) that states can obtain cooperating through international institutions without

¹⁷ **Kapstein** E.B., **Mastanduno** M., *Unipolar Politics*, ibid, p.38.

¹⁸ **Brooks** Stephen G., **Wohlforth** William C., *International Relations theory and the case against unilateralism*, *Perspective on Politics* Vol.3 n°3, September 2005, p.513.

¹⁹ **Harrison** Ewan, *The post-Cold war international system*, ibid, p.19.

²⁰ **Wendt** Alexander, *Anarchy is what States make of it: the social construction of power politics*, *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 , the MIT Press, 1992, p.397

taking care at the distribution of power within the system. Constructivists go further, conceptualizing logic self-transformation of the international system, towards a cooperative security system where interests can be collectively determined.²¹

- **The relation of conflict and cooperation inside of the system.**

For realists, the expansion of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) scope can “jeopardize the fragile consensus which has evolved since the ending of the Cold War.”²² Then, multilateral intervention has to be undertaken only as a last resort, to lessen the public opinion pressure in front of huge human rights violations or protect national interests at stake abroad.²³ The United States unilateral actions favor the maintaining of unipolarity, as asserted and followed it the Bush Doctrine.²⁴ For example, the Afghanistan intervention was perpetrated outside the multilateral framework, through a “coalition of the willing.”²⁵

Some Neorealists argue that, in the absence of a Soviet threat, there is much less need for American allies to remain tied to security guarantees and they develop independence in the pursuit of their foreign policy objectives.²⁶ For example, Germany, as other great powers, has “fairly consistently maintained its freedom of maneuver” in the crises in the former Yugoslavia and the Gulf War.²⁷ Germany has been a leading actor for a diverse defense

²¹ Ibid, p. 403.

²² Davis M. Jane, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.8

²³ Ibid, p.37.

²⁴ Jervis Robert, Understanding the Bush Doctrine, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 118, No. 3, The Academy of Political Science, Fall, 2003, p.373.

²⁵ Harrison Ewan, *The post-Cold war international system: strategies, institutions and reflexivity*. Routledge, London, 2004, p.138.

²⁶ Harrison Ewan, *The post-Cold war international system*, ibid, p.51.

²⁷ Salmon T.C., *testing times for European Political Co-operation: The Gulf and Yugoslavia 1990-1992*, *International Affairs* n° 68, 1992, p.235.

integration program, such as the creation of EuropaCorps or the function of a High Representative for Foreign Policy in the European Union. Neorealists interpret it as the arrival of a “multipolar international structure in which America and its key European allies pursue conflicting objectives.”²⁸

Economic difficulties and local rivalries can drive American partners, such as Japan, to increase their relative influence abroad and get more involved in regional arm dynamic. For example, Japan’s struggle with China over the Senkaku Islands and with Russia over the Kurile Islands has been intensified during the 1990s.²⁹ On the contrary, China has extended and perfected its military arsenal during the 1990s and pursued a foreign policy in phase with its rising economic power.³⁰ In fact, since 1992, China has “re-established full diplomatic relations with North Korea, viewing it as a significant buffer between itself and South Korea and implicitly the US.”³¹ Then, China operates a “strong local counterbalancing” and an increased autonomy from the United States.³² In that perspective, the Chinese abstention of the use of its veto, in reference to the UNSC Resolution 678 for the use of force against Iraq in 1991, is not a tacit acceptance of the American supremacy, of the Bush “new world order”. It is a way to put an end at its isolation due to conflict with USA on human rights, following the Tiananmen events.³³ In 1995, “China also cooperated to exerting pressure on

²⁸ **Harrison Ewan**, *The post-Cold war international system: strategies, institutions and reflexivity*. Routledge, London, 2004, p.53.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.73.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.97.

³¹ Kim, 2001, p.371.

³² **Goldstein Avery**, *Structural Realism and China’s Foreign Policy: A Good Part of the Story*, Paper for the annual conference of the American Political Science Association, Boston, Massachusetts, September 3–6, 1998.).

³³ **Davis M. Jane**, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.93.

North Korea over the issue of nuclear proliferation” in order to improve its sphere of influence.³⁴

However, it is difficult to find confirmation of military balancing by great powers against the USA during the decade after the end of the cold war.³⁵ States are reluctant to invest in economic or political costs to counter USA; even China and Russia prefer integration into the American dominated international order “than try to weaken or undermine that order.”³⁶ They even accepted direct interference by the US in an area they both consider their sphere of influence.³⁷ Then, everything leads to the belief that Waltz’ predictions have been erroneous, structural realism have difficulties to explain the actual international system.

For neoclassical realists, such as Schweller,³⁸ the polarity of the international system is not relevant, the behavior of great powers being determined by regional subsystems, such as NAFTA, MERCOSUR, ASEAN or the EU, which determine the properties, of the larger global system. The norms of this periphery structure can differ from the ones sustained by polarity, such as in Middle East, however “enough great powers approximate to membership of a liberal pacific union to push the system as a whole beyond criticality .”³⁹

In a liberal perspective, the 1990s represent the advent of a rising U-S sponsored liberal democratic order, “the emergence of a nascent security community based on shared

³⁴ **Harrison** Ewan, *The post-Cold war international system*, ibid, p.96.

³⁵ **Wohlforth** William C., *The Stability of a Unipolar World*, ibid, p.35.

³⁶ **Kapstein** E.B., **Mastanduno** M., *Unipolar Politics*, ibid, p.5.

³⁷ **Harrison** Ewan, *The post-Cold war international system: strategies, institutions and reflexivity*. Routledge, London, 2004, p.140

³⁸ **Schweller** Randall L., ibid, p.41.

³⁹ **Harrison** Ewan, *The post-Cold war international system*, ibid, p.119.

interests and values,"⁴⁰ extending its influence especially into former Soviet Union States in Asia and East Europe.⁴¹ International Institutions have been structurally adjusted (like the World Trade Organizations in 1995 or the World Bank) to a more interconnected, globalized world⁴².

As a result, states do not always exercise a liberal foreign policy, but behave within a liberal order, being deeply reliant on the benefits and consequences of interdependence. For example, Chinese foreign policy interprets external events as being or not an internal threat to the government's security and legitimacy and act in consequence⁴³. Cooperation has been then often used by great powers when convenient.

Over the 1990s, Germany continued to display very strong and continuous support for NATO, as it provides a firm security guarantee, as well as a stabilizing effect on German eastern borders thanks to its expansion to Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary⁴⁴. The German reluctance to engage into individual military commitments abroad, its participation in the global international economic system, symbolizes the great powers' general acceptance of the U.S leading liberal regime and institutions. Another example is the approval by the UNSC of the Iraq and North Korea's nuclear programs as a threat to international peace and security, which signals "a growing readiness by the international community to strengthen non-proliferation norms"⁴⁵.

⁴⁰ **Davis** M. Jane, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.155.

⁴¹ **Saull** Richard, *The Cold War and after: capitalism, revolution and superpower politics*, Pluto Press, London, 2007, p.180.

⁴² *Ibid*, p.181.

⁴³ **Kim** Samuel S., *Chinese Foreign policy in theory and Practice in China and the World: Chinese foreign policy faces*, The New Millenium, Oxford: Westview Press, 1998, p. 19.

⁴⁴ **Hyde-Price** Adrian, *Germany and European order: Enlarging NATO and the EU*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, p. 153.

⁴⁵ **Davis** M. Jane, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.152.

For the constructivists, as we have seen, the critical systemic determinant of state behavior is the cultural rather than the material structure of the international system.⁴⁶ For instance, for Wendt, after four decades of existence, the European institutions have created a European Identity that modifies European States' identity and interests.⁴⁷ Then in the same perception, the international institutions and the collapse of the Soviet Union should accentuate the cultural homogeneity of the international society and its commitment into collective security. The Gulf war is being considered by strong liberals (or constructivists) as a classic example of collective security: "an act of inter-state aggression, a clear violation of the common norms of international society," a response by collective means.⁴⁸ Successful collective security operations, like in East Timor (1999), Liberia (2003) or Sierra Leone (2000)⁴⁹ are, in the constructivist view, a path for transforming positively the actual interdependence into an internalization by States of shared norms and values.

Yet, there is a plethora of counterexamples of states' insensitivity, notably from the USA. While in the first half of the decade "international ambitions has to be trimmed to fit US domestic political realities"⁵⁰ (the Congress opposition to multilateralism, especially after the failed UNOSOM II peace enforcement operation), only the second half was marked by a cautious but real commitment into collective security. Nevertheless, the Bush Administration

⁴⁶ Harrison Ewan, *The post-Cold war international system*, ibid, p.11.

⁴⁷ Wendt Alexander, *Anarchy is what States make of it: the social construction of power politics*, International Organization, Vol. 46, No. 2, the MIT Press, 1992, p.416.

⁴⁸ Davis M. Jane, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.120.

⁴⁹ Barluet Alain, Les Casques bleus, deuxième armée du monde, Le Figaro, 22/09/2009, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2009/09/22/01003-20090922ARTFIG00446-les-casques-bleus-deuxieme-armee-du-monde-.php> (08/12/09), p.356.

⁵⁰ Luck Edward C., *American Exceptionalism and International Organization: Lessons from the 1990s*, US Hegemony and International Organizations, February 2003, p.36.

rejected the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Anti Ballistic Missile treaty.⁵¹

To summarize, in a realist point of view, the behavior of the great powers has been challenging the new world order during all the 1990s. For some neorealists and neoliberals, a cooperative conduct has been observed within many states when it corresponded to their interests. For constructivists, the increasing use of collective security mechanisms reveals a shift in the contemporaneous institutions, making abstraction of free-rider behaviors.

2. The impact of trans-national transformation in the perception of the international system.

- **A systemic approach of the transnational dimension.**

With today approximately sixty thousand major transnational companies (TNCs), ten thousand single-country non-governmental organizations (NGOs), two hundred and fifty intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and five thousand eight hundred international non-governmental organizations (INGOs),⁵² global politics has evolved a lot since the end of the cold war. The competence of NGOs and IGOs is even recognized by the UN Charter (Article 71),⁵³ as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) can consult them for specific matters. Scientists, the Red Cross, religious groups and other NGOs are implicated in arms control

⁵¹ Ibid, p.47.

⁵² Willetts Peter, *Transnational Actors and International Organizations in Global Politics*, in *The Globalization of World Politics*, Baylis J. B. and Smith S. (eds) Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, second edition, 2001

⁵³ <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter10.shtml> (08/12/09).

negotiations or in the management of civil wars. However, the perception of these actors is heterogeneous.

For neorealists, non-state actors remain of secondary importance and do not influence the international system. Neorealists marginalized the role of these new transnational actors to resolving issues, reminding that states are the only sovereign entities of international politics. Besides the increasing globalization process and the technological revolution, international governance will continue to rely on individual states because, for guaranteeing stability, the international system needs coercive means and states still keep the monopoly of the use of violence.⁵⁴ Moreover, identity is defined by states and this identity gives a feeling of security to people.⁵⁵ “Sovereign states are the main providers of the basic social values of security, freedom, order, justice, and welfare.”⁵⁶ It is forgetting that for many citizens it is their own state that is the principal source of food or environment insecurity, or insecurity tout court.⁵⁷ For critical scholars, realists “failed to hear the voices of excluded peoples and perspectives”⁵⁸ and do not understand the consequences of domestic socio-economic, cultural and political –ideological changes.⁵⁹

The neorealist Samuel Huntington understands the former Yugoslavian clash as an inter-civilization conflict. For him, during the post cold war era, states continue to be the main actors of the international system, but are trapped into a self-help system based on

⁵⁴ **Wolf** Martin, Will the Nation-State survive globalization? Foreign Affairs Volume 80, n°1, p.190.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ **Sørensen** Georg, *IR Theory after the Cold War*, Review of International Studies, Vol. 24, The Eighty Years' Crisis 1919-1999, Cambridge University Press, Dec. 1998, p.92

⁵⁷ **Davis** M. Jane, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.199.

⁵⁸ **Campbell** David, “poststructuralism”, in International Relations theories: discipline and diversity, eds. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki & Steve Smith, Oxford University Press, 2007, p.207.

⁵⁹ **Saull** Richard, *The Cold War and after*, *ibid*, p.185.

transnational values system, opposing identities based on competing civilizations.⁶⁰ In this approach, Huntington separates the developments within the West from the other “civilizations”, for instance the ones in Islamic societies, without linking the reactionary Islamist political movements to the American foreign policy during the Cold War⁶¹.

The neoliberal trend generally identifies states as remaining the central players in international affairs, and considering transnational relations as a second basic component of the liberal hegemonic structure.⁶² For some scholars, such as Deudney and Ikenberry, the whole of transnational relations is positive. “Economic growth leading to transnational economic linkages can enhance regional security”, as testified by the ASEAN’s regional security and economic success⁶³. Moreover, transnational relations enable the diminution of the use of coercion by the hegemonic state, shaping the preferences of subordinated powers and giving them effective representation.⁶⁴ It creates then a consensus-building mechanism, a kind of “soft power,”⁶⁵ favoring transparency, reciprocity, dialogue and common interests within the international system, creating legitimacy and stability to the international order.

Nevertheless, a growing number of scholars suggest that “the globalization of world markets, the rise of transnational networks and nongovernmental organizations, and the rapid spread of global communications technology are undermining the power of states and

⁶⁰ Davis M. Jane, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.61..

⁶¹ Saull Richard, *The Cold War and after: capitalism, revolution and superpower politics*, Pluto Press, London, 2007, p.181.

⁶² Deudney Daniel, Ikenberry John, *The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order*, review of *International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p.186.

⁶³ Davis M. Jane, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.109.

⁶⁴ Deudney Daniel, Ikenberry John, *Realism, Structural liberalism, and Western Order*, in Kapstein E.B., Mastanduno M., *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State strategies after the Cold War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p.111.

⁶⁵ Nye Joseph, *Soft power: the means to success in world politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004.

shifting attention away from military security toward economics and social welfare.”⁶⁶ They invoke the greater systemic complexity of networks and its interdependence as generating unanticipated events uncontrollable by states, such as the actual financial crisis.⁶⁷ According to Susan Strange, states have lost control and then authority on their territory, because of the changing nature of the competition between states.⁶⁸ In the same viewpoint, Willett underlines the weakening of state sovereignty, due to the rise of transnational companies that create unpredictable financial flows, trade triangulation, regulatory arbitrage and extraterritoriality.⁶⁹ States are not competing anymore for territories or wealth-creating resources, but for market shares in the global economy. Then, industrial and trade policy are becoming more important than defense and foreign policy, and commercial allies become more crucial than military ones. Therefore, states remain influential in the global system, but have to share their authority in a “neomedieval fashion,”⁷⁰ with transnational companies and organizations, NGOs or international institutions that are part of the global international system.

Some constructivists go further, perceiving through the rise of globalization the emergence of a world society, “which take individuals, non-state organizations and ultimately global population as the focus of global societal identities and arrangements”⁷¹ . In sum, Marshall

⁶⁶ **Walt** Stephen M., *International Relations: One World, Many Theories*, Foreign Policy, No. 110, Special Edition: Frontiers of Knowledge (Spring, 1998), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1149275> (30/11/2009), p.40.

⁶⁷ **Keohane** Robert, *Governance in a Partially Globalized World*, American Political Science Review Vol. 95, No.1, 2001, p.3.

⁶⁸ **Strange** Susan, *The defective State*, Daedalus, Vol. 124, No. 2, The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 1995, p.55.

⁶⁹ **Willett** Peter, *Transnational Actors and International Organizations in Global Politics*, in *The Globalization of World Politics*, Baylis J. B. and Smith S. (eds)Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, second edition, 2001, p.365.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.71.

⁷¹ **Buzan** Barry, *From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School*, International Organization, Vol. 47, No. 3, The MIT press, Summer, 1993, p.337.

Mac Luhan's "global village", creating new identities and belongings, in opposition to the Bull's "international society" (a total opposition in regard to the belongings, as Bull stresses the notion of state sovereignty; a partial opposition for identities, as multiple identities can overlap).⁷² However, the contemporary international society remains strong, as demonstrates it for example the maintenance of Somalia's external sovereignty, besides its very weak internal sovereignty.

To sum up, the ultimate globalization, and in particular the increase of transnational actors, have truly modified the role and competence of states and consequently the structure of the international system. However, besides the more interrelated societies, states remain the guardians of international order. It seems that the debate is based on the notion of power. If power is understood only in military terms, then of course states are generally dominant. Nevertheless, if the notion of power encloses status ownership, information, and communication abilities, then transnational organizations are able to mobilize support and are influential within the international system⁷³. Yet, as it will be examined now, transnational movement can reveal another nature.

- **The new threats to the international system and its collective response.**

The Marxists explanations of the post-cold war international system's transformations bring a new light to the debate. The end of the cold war, marked by the decline of extreme left ideology, has defeated and fragmented the left political side in numerous Western societies. Therefore, there has been a "crisis of cultural identity, political representation and socio-

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Willett Peter, *Transnational Actors and International Organizations in Global Politics*, ibid, p.374.

economic welfare triggered by neoliberal globalization”⁷⁴. These contradictions, tangible within states, within the globalised capitalist social relations and the hierarchy of the geopolitical order, have, to some extent, “extended the bourgeois interest of the American capitalist class”⁷⁵. The very conservative ideology of this upper class has created reactionary forms of “anti-imperialism”, especially in the Islamic World where they have become the main political force of opposition and resistance, as can testify the 09/11 terrorist attacks.⁷⁶

In fact, for many scholars, most of the conflicts that emerge after the end of the cold war are different. Traditional inter-states conflicts continue to exist, but there is an “upsurge of intra-state conflicts.”⁷⁷ The end of the cold war has also been the end of external sources of legitimation and funding for third world civil wars, which must look for other sources of financing.⁷⁸ The global context provides new possibilities of sustainment, through “remittances, diaspora fund raising, external governmental assistance and the diversion of international humanitarian aid.”⁷⁹ Moreover, as Mary Kaldor highlights, the new political economy of war encompasses globalized arms markets, the use of transnational ethnicities and internationalized western-global interventions.⁸⁰ All these new facilities have affected the longevity and the internal logic of civil wars, heightening the political, ideological or ethnical divisions within the weak states.⁸¹ Many scholars sustain that this weakness of states is increased by globalization through deregulation, privatization and the reduction in

⁷⁴ **Saull** Richard, *The Cold War and after: capitalism, revolution and superpower politics*, Pluto Press, London, 2007, p.186.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.187.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.189.

⁷⁷ **Davis** M. Jane, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.3.

⁷⁸ **Kalyvas** Stathis N., "New" and "Old" Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?, *World Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, October 2001, p.117.

⁷⁹ **Shaw** Martin, *The Contemporary Mode of Warfare? Mary Kaldor's Theory of New Wars*, *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 7, No. 1 Spring, 2000, p.172.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

⁸¹ **Berdal** Mats, *Beyond greed and grievance – and not too soon...*, *Review of International Studies*, 31, 2005, p.692.

states benefits. Moreover, “incentives and opportunities to participate in the global illicit economy are increased” and improve the interest for armed groups to maintain the state of war⁸².

For realists, the expanded forms of transnational criminality do not challenge their state centric theory. In fact, these violent factions are generally nationalist groups that aim to govern a particular area. Moreover, the guerillas, drugs barons or alienated minorities do not have a legitimated power and remain excluded from international transactions.⁸³ However, the progress in mass communication renders more difficult the control on transnational moves of people, money and weapons. Transnational legitimacy and support for criminal political groups are difficultly understandable with a static interstate system vision, and difficult to stop, as proved by the perpetuation of the Afghanistan war.

At the contrary, the collective answer to this frightening phenomenon has been substantial. Most organizations, the UN Security Council, the IMF, and UNHCR accumulated new tasks, mandates and functions.⁸⁴ In particular for the UNSC, the notion of “threats to international peace and security” has been expanded and now includes aspects of individual security.⁸⁵ Even if each resolution of the UNSC is taken underlining the unique character of the context (in order to not create a precedent), there has been in most cases a consensus to undertaking humanitarian interventions. In 1993, in Haiti, the UNSC imposed a mandatory oil and arms embargo to deal because of the transnational movement of refugees that has

⁸² **Melander** Erik, **Öberg** Magnus and **Hall** Jonathan, *Forced Migration Before and After the End of the Cold War*, *European Journal of International Relations* 15; 505, 2009, p. 511.

⁸³ **Willett** Peter, *Transnational Actors and International Organizations in Global Politics*, *ibid*, p.373.

⁸⁴ **Barnett** Martha, **Finnemore** Michael, *Rules for the World : International Organizations in Global Politics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2004, p.163.

⁸⁵ **Davis** M. Jane, *Security Issues in the post cold war*, Cheltenham, UK ; Edward Elgar, 1996, p.128

been considered a threat to security. In Rwanda, the UNSC determined that the “magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda constituted a threat to peace and security in the region”⁸⁶. Nevertheless, it is ambiguous to perceive how much non-liberal democracies, such as China, sustain joint intervention and share the same understanding on threat to international peace.

To sum up, International organizations have more authority than ever before, to face new threats increased by all the aspects of globalization and transnational movements. The state centered approach seems weak to understand and respond to the complexity of the “new wars”.

Conclusions

To conclude, the main observation of this essay has been the inappropriateness of the neorealist approach. Neorealists are disappointing, as their static inter-state system is unsuitable to understand the rise of complex interdependences that characterize the post-cold war period. Of course, states remain the main actors of the international system and politicians continue to aim at the defence of national interests. But transnational actors and international institutions have definitely modified the management of international politics and influence the evolution of the international system. However, it is true that, as it has been underlined, the security dynamics at the international stage are still mediated through rational state administrations, the only legal and legitimated structures that possess coercive means and are able to respond to the actual threats.

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p.127.

The neoliberal view is much more up-to-date and able to understand and face the post-cold war reality. Its commitment to co-binding institutions and collective mechanisms in order to hold back the development and the consequences of new intra-state conflicts are significant, and show that it is possible to moderate anarchy without producing hierarchy. Moreover, the vision of the international system, divided into interconnected regional international regimes, coupled with a “neomedieval vision” of social and economical patterns, seems quite convincing.

The constructivist approach enables us to understand the complexity of overlapping political dimensions and the creation of new identities that go beyond state boundaries. It also provides a new understanding in the construction of the international society, which is to say in the production of shared values and norms. Nevertheless, it lacks substantial analysis on the means to respond to these new threats in the present context.

In my opinion, the constructivist approach will tend to be the most useful theory to understand the post cold war era. As the globalization influence is relative to the place it reaches, a more relative theory, as the constructivist one, is more able to understand the factors of conflicts and help to remedy them. In fact, the constructivist approach provides a crucial openness to understand visions of the international system different from the mainstream. Its empathic analytical method enables us to include the ethical and cultural dimensions and the complexity of human beings’ identities and ideas. Pure logic is the ruin of the spirit⁸⁷.

⁸⁷ Antoine de Saint Exupery.

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