THE COGNITIVE WARFARE IN DESIGNING THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY (AND THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT)

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Abstract: The constructivist approach of international relations informs us about the deep structures of the global political organization, which is culture: the intersubjective meanings and perspectives people have in common and share. Our minds, our thoughts, our perceptions are in part the result of specific educational curricula, up to now designed to follow independent national educational programs. The language and the words we use play a very important role in configuring the cultural lens which intermediates our communication with reality, placing us in the middle of things and seldom obscuring the distinction between the subject and the object of our observation.

The social construction of reality and a social world of our making are no longer philosophical ideas but the evidence to study. The need to theorize the theorization process, perceived as a base for social constructions, indicates us to question our educated identities and our educated mind frames as scientific objects to study.. "A world of our making" (Onuf, 1989) means that culture, as an invisible mind frame, should be the object to study in order to better understand and anticipate the systemic challenges and to assess the risks that might arise in the future. McLuhan (1970) once said that culture is our business – war equals education, violence is the quest for identity and having his ideas in mind we intend to discuss the cultural infrastructure we presume is at stake in contemporary systemic cognitive warfare.

Keywords: cognitive warfare, constructivism, culture, international security environment

1. INTRODUCTION

The recent events from the Eastern part of Europe, more specifically the conflict in Ukraine, preceded by negotiations between Russia, US, EU and NATO regarding Ukraine, the ''red lines'' invoked by Russia about NATO's frontier expansion towards the East, the difficulties to reach an agreement between the parties involved in the conflict made us think in terms of cognitive warfare: the human mind is as well the battlefield and the aim is to change how people think in order to change how they act. As Russia's declarations (*Adevărul.ro*, 30.01.2022) revolved around the idea that they didn't want war but security guarantees, that they request written accords on some specific subjects, like agreements that Ukraine will never become a NATO member, we wondered why Russia insisted on getting the written promises of Western countries. What's at stake? Why the parties involved in the conflict are not able to find a compromise?

We presume that at stake on the cognitive warfare strategic map are the deep foundational principles of the international system. The reasons superseding the invasion of Ukraine might be interpreted as a manifestation of the historical contradictions between the two main theories of international relations, realism and liberalism. The two main paradigms of IR, realism and liberalism, perceived from a constructivist point of view, represent two variants of global order to agree upon and consider the normalcy on the global scene. The agreement on some principles of the international system from a constructivist point of view represents the deep structure of the international system. Ian Clark (2007:2) formulates the idea in terms of core principles of legitimacy which express rudimentary social agreements. "Legitimacy is attached to society as the subject". Some values were privileged in certain historical contexts. International society has expressly adhered to certain principles, be that maintaining a balance of power or securing fundamental human rights. (Clark, 2007:2-3)

The core principles negotiated in relation with, for instance, Ukraine, represents the units, the fundamental bricks of the international system. When talking about delineating between international systems, Phipott (2001) discuss the changes of the core organizing principles generated by deep cultural turns, e.g. the revolutions in sovereignty.

The changes are very important and difficult to comprehend. The modifications involve the mind map of people, the invisible frames functioning almost like an international constitution. In this regard, Philpott (2001:5) mentions:

> The eccentricity of international revolutions, the reluctance to remember them, I further suspect, lies in the strangeness of the very idea of an international constitution.

The deep cultural structure of international system lies in the mind of people and can be named the informal constitution of international society:

> Behind wars and commerce and investment and immigration, prior to alliances, leagues, concerts, and balances of power, beneath agreements governing trade, armaments, and the environment, is the constitution of international society. (Philpott, 2001:11)

The key principles of the international society are nowadays contested by important actors (not to say by the great powers as we believe it would mean upholding the realist strategic view). We are in the middle of a turmoil of debating the first principles. Even the right to existence of certain states is contested. For instance NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, felt the need to specify that Ukraine has the right to defend itself as it is a sovereign state (*Adevărul*, 16.12.2021) in a context when its right to existence is contested by Russia, as well it's right to independence, to freely choose its foreign policy and alliances. On considerations related to security guaranties, a lot of issues can be invoked having the effect of breaking the constitutive rules of the international system with the justification the wars to be prevented.

Currently, we are witnessing the negotiation of the normalcy on the international arena. Once upon a time the actors signing the Treaty of Westphalia convened upon a system of sovereign states and on some principles of international security management. The European Union is an alternative system of managing international relations. The United Nations as well represents a system of rules for managing international relations in order to stop wars or promote interventions for humanitarian reasons.

During history ideas and principles reflecting specific intersubjective meanings on which the organization of the world rested varied producing varied different international systems. On the international arena a profound contestation of the fundamental cultural bricks the world is underway. The fact that there are other states

> is something that most citizens of most states during most times take for granted, and do not consider the product of anyone's design or the work of architects or framers. Fighting, trading, negotiating, they believe, is the real business of nations (Philpott, 2001:5).

Today is no longer the case as more and more people question the international society design and organization.

2. PERCEIVING THE WORLD: A WORLD OF STATES OR A WORLD OF NEGOTIATED IDENTITIES?

The academic discipline of International Relations, as a field of study, was officially configured as such after the First World War ended. At the international peace conferences organized in Paris (1919 – 1920), the world leaders were preoccupied to find solutions in order to prevent the emergence of another war of similar magnitude with the Great War. The theories used in explaining the causes which led to the emergence of the First World War were diverse. The interpretation that prevailed, the Versailles settlement - although some doubt that Versailles deserves to be called a settlement at all (Clark, 2007:110) - was that offered by the American president, Woodrow Wilson: the systemic cause of war was the European balance of power system. Wilson believed the task of peacemakers was to introduce the rule of law and create an effective international society. The balance of power system was the discredited one (Nye, 2005:84). The alternative model produced to replace the balance of power system was the concept of common security and the League of Nations, the organization to embody the new concept. The international society was to be understood as an international society of peoples, not simply of states (Clark, 2007:112).

A number of key liberal principles for organizing the world, comprised in the Peace Program proposed by Woodrow Wilson, were the first to be criticized by the realist paradigm of International Relations, developed after Second World War. The evidence that liberalism had failed to reach its goal was considered the emergence of the Second World War. The conclusions the realist IR scholars like Edward Hallet Carr (1990) or Hans Morgenthau (2007) draw had been reflected in the IR realist school of thought: the liberal program (renamed idealism by the self-proclaimed realists) failed in constructing a better world, the proof invoked was the emergence of the

World War II. The assumptions of the liberal theory were wrong, the realists claimed, therefore the world was organized in realism's terms, in accordance with the concept of polarity. As a consequence of that realist interpretation, the structure of the international system was to be defined in terms of bipolarity. Kenneth Waltz (2006), for instance, was the neorealist thinker who advocated the idea that if there was such a thing, a theory of international politics, then that theory is the theory of the balance of power (Little, 2007:167).

For K. Waltz the international system was a theoretical concept, one cannot use empirical methods to find out more about the nature of the system as the system was theoretically produced. A bipolar configuration of the international system was first a theoretical construct, a variant of international architecture adopted by actors for several reasons. The descriptive dimension of the distribution of power, Waltz admits, was very difficult to assess, starting at least with 1970, as there was no clarity whether the system was bipolar or multipolar (Little 2007:179). In the past, those great powers were relatively easier to be identified, but no longer was the case.

The Cold War was based on a theoretical assumption: bipolarity means more stability. Kenneth Waltz was an advocate of that realist idea. A multipolar system was not perceived as a safe one because of its unpredictable character of alliances. It was not enough to monitor the capabilities of the enemy as there was the possibility of changing sides of the allies. K. Waltz thought that the flexibility of a multipolar system was a source of risk as there was the danger of defection once the war starts (Waltz, 2006:166–167). Multipolarity was considered an instable configuration, as there could be no predictability. The "fluidity" of alliances comprises the risk that your friend/allied to transform itself into your enemy. In the realist strategic map the alliances are not marriages of love, but marriages of convenience. Alliances are based on interests and can shift as interests change (Goldestein & Pavehouse, 2014:63). The IR realist paradigm, as a constitutive theory of the international system, depends first on its validation and acceptance of the main great actors. Apart from the descriptive dimension of the distribution of capabilities, there is a normative dimension of the balance of power system. The normative dimension of the balance of power depends on the will of the participants to validate it and implement it as a mechanism of managing international relations. The normative dimension of the balance of power becomes more important

nowadays as the risks of escalating conflicts are enormous.

3. THE CONSTITUTIVE DIMENSION OF REALISM AND THE MULTIPOLARITY CONCEPT

After the Cold War ended, most leaders and realist thinkers assumed that the international system became unipolar, as the US was the sole superpower which remained intact after the collapse of USSR. The objectivity of that appreciation was difficult to confront with reality. The unequal distribution of power was hard to measure. There were voices assuming that, in fact, the system was multipolar (Keersmaeker, 2017) or that the international scene can no longer be described using the balance of power concept (Vasquez & Elman 2012). As the post - Cold War world was a new one, comprising as well nuclear powers, describing it by using the polarity concept could be inaccurate and misleading (Rhodes, 2004). Once upon a time, during 1815s, the negotiators in Vienna tried to equilibrate power between the Great Powers, redistributing territories, resources, population, using quantitative measurements and estimations. (Lauren, Craig & George, 2007:26-28) In the post-Cold War context the aim of equilibrating power seems an impossible task in objective terms. Assessing power and capabilities of the actors is profoundly subjective and has mostly a propagandistic purpose. For instance, the importance of describing the world as being unipolar, in terms of US hegemony, serves as well in a cognitive warfare scene certain goals: upholding the image of an unjust world, a world unbalanced that needs to be balanced (Nye, 2002; Ikenberry, 2002; Kapstein & Mastanduno, 1999). Even if in terms of hard capabilities the international system might be characterized by multipolarity, in terms of soft power it was important for US enemies the world to be characterized in pejorative terms like unilateralism or "American hegemony", having the connotation of unjust world and the implicit assumption that a just world is a multipolar one. Evoking the international scene in terms of unequal hard power distribution, the description was important and relevant for legitimating policies having the goal to equilibrate the disequilibrium of power. That was the key argument for preventing major wars.

Yet, the realist paradigm was not supposed to be tested. As Martin Wight (1978:41) noticed, estimating the distribution of power at a certain point in time can be misleading. "What is a great power? It is easier to answer historically, by enumerating the

great powers at any date, than by giving a definition." The politics envisaging getting an international equilibrium of power was based on the desire of international actors to contribute to a global climate of stability by establishing measures to build trust. It was about communicating and negotiating, proving good and nonaggressive intentions.

During the Cold War period, assessing the Soviet threat meant calculating capabilities in order to maintain the equality with the US. Therefore, the balance of power system had as a core principle the desire to overcome the security dilemma and the Thucydides trap by taking measures in order to deal with the fear of being aggressed. The equilibrium of power, usually describing an international architecture characterized by equal distribution of capabilities between great powers, was perceived at times from a normative point of view as a good one, a desirable architecture, and it was based on the creed that the world should be balanced. Major actors agreed to consider it as such: as a mechanism to manage international relation and build trust.

Nowadays, the balance of power model is contested by the majority of the Western countries. It cannot be used as a key principle of international relations as it contradicts other key principles of the international society, for instance the sovereignty principle or the national self-determination principle. The balance of power system was the main European hegemonic idea replaced after the First World War in Paris 1919, during that "six months that changed the world" (MacMillan, 2002), partially recovered during the Cold War, but perceived in terms of "the continuing story of a death foretold" (Guzzini, 1998).

4. THE CONTESTED PRINCIPLE OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

The national sovereignty principle is based on deeper cultural, philosophical values that the principle in itself. Authors like Stephanie Lawson (2006) writes in her book *Culture and Context in World Politics* how certain ideas and values shapes modern international relations. The principle of sovereignty, for instance, has come closer to enjoying universal explicit assent. Intervention and integration challenge the sovereign state's territorial supremacy and overthrow some of the basic rules of authority. The changes result from revolutions in ideas. It takes a revolution in ideas to bring a revolution in sovereignty. (Philpott, 2001:4) The dynamics of the European integration by establishing supranational authorities to administer the main war capabilities, coal and steel, was the theoretical solution proposed

by the founding fathers of the European integration process and sustained by the theories of European integration. The process of European integration continued on other areas important in terms of social security, e.g. preventing the risks related to famine. Therefore, the agricultural policy was configured. As the security agenda expanded, the rationality of continuing the integration process was upheld by arguments related to social security goals. Economic development, the policy of cohesion for reducing the disparities between European countries were justified in terms of social security. We may assume that the main security risk to be prevented, the emergence of another major war between countries, which was the prior justification for European integration process, did not remain the sole security risk to be managed. As the human security agenda proliferated, the European agenda comprising security risks grew. The risks were perceived to arise at every corner, the human security doctrine for Europe was synonymous with good governance. The theoretical security program of European integration progressively justified the need for a deeper change, which meant in fact a change in the nature of the political communities.

From a philosophical point of view, national sovereignty is dependent on the interpretation that culture matters, national identity is relevant for establishing a state, a polity. Stephanie Lawson (2006:4) mentions that

> to the extent that nations are assumed to be cultural units encompassing 'a people' it follows that each nation is entitled, via a democratic principle of self-determination, to form itself into a sovereign political community, that is, a sovereign state that is co-equal with all other such entities in an international system of states.

In a cognitive warfare map, there are other competitors, other identities having relevance in different contexts. A cultural turn might revert such constitutive interpretations. Bukovansky (2002) demonstrated the effects the French and the American Revolutions had on international political culture. Lawson (2006:4) shows that the concept of culture is crucial to the formulation of distinctive identities in relation to the issue of who belongs and who does not belong in or to specific political communities.

> This is where the culture concept and the idea of 'nation' intersect, for the latter is often defined not simply as a political community characterized by a particular culture, but as a political community by virtue of its possession of a particular culture.

The constitutive theories of the international relations can be perceived as particular hermeneutics on what matters as core principles in organizing the world. It also implies a hierarchy of principles. Ikenberry (2001:3) was interested to decipher how hegemonic order is created at rare historical junctures. The alternation between the two main models of organizing International Relation, realist and liberal, was reflected in political practice during the last centuries. The historical events of major importance can be traced from the perspective of key principles political actors agreed upon. The history of international systems establishes `cornerstones` like the settlements of 1815, 1919, 1945, post – Cold War, post 9/11.

The past world orders relied on key principles major actors, after victories, convened on. The 20th century was the period searching the specificities, the national flavors and definitions. During the 20th century it was important to create and maintain traditions, models, patterns, to develop national identities, national brands as the national culture represented the badge for having a state as well for wanting a new one or separating from another one. The national identity and culture was the prerequisite for diverse social movements as the international order established at Versailles 1919 consecrated the national self-determination principle.

5. CULTURE IS OUR BUSINESS IN DESIGNING THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

The world orders in a diachronic perspective had philosophical assumptions as organizing principles. Kenneth Waltz (2006) considered that there are only two possibilities to define the international system: as anarchic or as hierarchic. There are meta-values to agree upon as key principles like national sovereignty, for instance. The fundamental institutions of international society are to be observed as nowadays the cognitive warfare has as stakes the fundamental principles of international society.

When speaking about cultural infrastructure we try to identify the first principles a society should uphold and cultivate. For instance, an important transformation which needs to be studied is related of the implications of changes derivate from prevalent communication means, respectively related to information age. A culture based on words differs fundamentally from a culture based on images involving important changes in functioning of the human mind. The cultural revolutions are similar to cultural rifts the humanity experienced when translating from medieval to modern era. The cultural turn has profound implication for every aspect of everyday life, yet for organizing international sphere as well: how people consume information, how the brain of people function has many consequences. The future social order is dependent on educational programs. The educational programs have profound political consequences. Globalization means as well having the conscience of a global society. The more evident becomes the constitutive function of theories and the awareness that people act and decide in accordance with their education, thoughts and feelings.

The constitutive role of social theories, be that international relation theories, has paramount relevance, as represents mechanisms of interpreting the international organization. Guzzini (1998:xii) notices the foundational role of theories:

> In other words, we are interested not only in how one can use theories to analyze given events, but how the determination and analysis of these very events is in itself constructed by different theories.

Given the globalization process, our social identities are questioned in the "new global village". The unofficial constitution of international society means a lot more, it implies giving political and social definition of personal identities. The ideological consequences are intrinsic. On the international level, constitutions are rarely explicitly called such. But they are constitutive, foundational, in this essential respect: they define the polities and their basic powers with respect to one another. (Philpott, 2001:11).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The cognitive warfare to define international society has many consequences as it is related to ideologies and educational policies having philosophical fundaments which constructs and maintain the legitimate political communities. Roxanne Lynn Doty (1996:121) noticed that:

> …by conceptualizing the state as a given, a unitary entity, the dominant realist approach has undermined the distinction between state, nation, and sovereignty. This permits questions of national identity and its relevance to sovereignty to be dismissed because they are presumed not to be problems.

The challenges we face today, from a cultural point of view, revolve around the philosophy and ideology of international society construction. As

there are many people, the identity of the "we" becomes "a flexible political resource, adaptable to changing circumstances and new crises" (Doty, 1996:126). The identities are nowadays negotiated as the inside and outside dichotomy is challenged. Doty (1996:123) mentions that for the real-life practitioners of statecraft, the issue of foundations cannot be dismissed. "Their task is to constitute as unproblematic a thing that is intrinsically problematic - the nation." Some authors, like Rodney Bruce Hall (1999), wrote about the national collective identity, as a social construct, and the way it constructed international systems, delineating three epochal changes. The author argues for the need a clear distinction to be made between the nation and the state:

Nationalism fosters or impels a specific legitimating principle – national self-determination – which has far–reaching consequences for system constitution and transformation. National sovereignty is a form of social institution distinct from that of a state sovereignty. (Hall, 1999:12)

The cognitive warfare has profound structural consequences, the politics of identity can be perceived as a warfare strategy using culture, theories and philosophies, rhetorical strategies, favorable for diverse interests and stakes. By stating that culture is our business, that war equals education, that violence is the quest for identity, McLuhan (1970) evoked an idea H. Arendt heighted: before being natural, human condition is political (Droit, 2012:112), yet the administrative cliché can no longer be easily expelled or disconnected from people's minds.

The cognitive warfare in designing international society and the security environment has at stake determining people to act in a certain way by changing their perceptions about just actions. A classical war cannot be fought if soldiers refuse to fight, if they don't believe the war is just, that the cause is a just one. The international scene is an arrangement involving as well competitive principles of justice and perpetual negotiations of personal and social identities. The political units from the international scene imply structured definitions of the self. The citizenship represents such a structured identity. Challenging the structured identity means as well challenging the world order, the norms and the organizing principles the international society is formed on.

The information revolution modifies profoundly our perception of reality, as well as our identities. The virtual communication and the social media revolution exposes people to disinformation, fake-news, propaganda, making them vulnerable to all kinds of information content. The role of good educational programs, the importance of knowledge and culture, is multiplied by the dynamics of the international security environment and by the cognitive instruments used by armies in order to win the war. Becoming the main battlefield in an era of global communication, human mind represents the place to be colonized with desirable contents by diverse actors, promoting as well versions of international organization. From our point of view, the difficult problem would be delineating between free speech and a silent war.

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