

# Review of: "Geopolitical constructs of international politics - their cultural & ideological roots"

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It is germane that the researchers of International Relations look beyond the Westphalian modern state system – the genesis of which lies in the Treaty of Westphalia, 1648, to deconstruct the existing dominant mainstream theories and concepts which have their roots in the West in order to grasp, analyze and find solutions to many contemporary global challenges. Prior to the Westphalian model was adopted, there were different kinds of politically organized societies without fixed boundaries which were managing their mutual concerns through various ways.

There are enough of examples of the ways in which the pre-Westphalian political societies maintained order, stability and peace and particularly cue can be taken from Amarna Letters - and Amarna Diplomacy of Egypt - (the "New Kingdom") - covering a period of around thirty years between 1360–1332 BC, the Treaty of the Battle of Kadesh - between Egypt and the Hittites- of Mesopotamia, 'Tianxia' - the central ordering principle adopted by China way back in 3000 BC and methods adopted by the Indian Empire of Maurya (321- 185 BC). In recent years, the supranational organization which is one of its kind - the European Union (EU) has assumed a distinct political identity for itself going beyond the modern state system in many ways. Many contemporary challenges that the human societies are confronted with undercut the underlying principles of the modern state system. Solutions to global challenges such as climate change, environment pollution, epidemics such as the Covid-19 pandemic, neo-colonialism, protection of human rights and defense of human security, challenges from terrorism and underdevelopment seem to be intractable to solutions through the modern state system.

The author rightly structured the problems associated with the modern state system and discussed how different political setups prior to the emergence of modern states managed to maintain peace and stability and also highlighted many of the contemporary challenges that undercut the Westphalian state model as the basic unit of analysis in International Relations and thereby underlined the need to go beyond the mainstream theoretical frameworks which keep fueling research both in the Western and non-Western world. However, he could have elaborated more on the theoretical part on the ways to develop alternative theoretical frameworks and models to understand, analyze and interpret the challenges that transcend and undercut the modern state system and provide plausible solutions to them.

The Westphalian state system which is still the reference point for the analysis of International Politics diluted its own underlying principles of sovereignty, non-interference and monopoly over the legitimate use of power with the rise of nationalism and emergence of nation-states. Identity claims of different groups within and across the states remained unresolved. Power in the centralized Westphalian states in Europe whether in England under the Tudors, in France under Louis XI, or in Spain under Ferdinand and Charles V, was maximized by the displacement of local identities by emerging

national identities, as evidenced in the spread of national languages, cultural practices, and bounded histories. With the wake and rise of the idea of nation-state, violence was used against indigenous “pagans”, which was localized in nature. Thus, conflicts in these states became localized and were related to the creation of national identities. The Westphalian state’s ability to make claims on homogenizing national identities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provided legitimacy for the state’s claim to monopolize coercion.

The Treaty of Westphalia ended the 30 years of wars in Europe and put a lid on the instabilities associated with political identities, affiliations and organizations pivoting around Empires and kingdoms, however, the modern state system on which international peace and stability was premised appeared to be fragile with the two World Wars fought on the continent.

Eminent scholars from the non-Western world have challenged the Western dominance of the discipline and sought to question the validity of the state centrality as well as the unilinear tendencies and gender biases underlying the theories. The leading scholars among them are Amitabh Acharya, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, Bhambri and Bhaba. Having said that, the discipline is far from being truly global. The critical theories although represent the concerns of the non-Western societies, these are far from being considered mainstream theories of International Relations.

Realism, Neo-Realism, Liberalism and Neo-Liberalism are still considered the mainstream theories of the discipline and the concepts that define the theories are well accepted among the community of scholars straddling both the Western and non-Western academia. Academic communities from the non-Western world use these theoretical models to understand, analyze and interpret International Relations. The post-colonial scholarship has been engaged in representing the concerns and voices from the non-Western societies which are otherwise known for being the representatives of Global South so far as the economic division of the world is concerned. The scholars hinged on the dimensions of and hiatus between the Core and Periphery in their analysis and critiqued the Western notions of development and globalization. They brought forth the areas of exploitation and marginalization of subaltern communities and female section under the fig leaf of the idea of unilinear progress.

The non-Western epistemic communities working in this disciplinary area need to bring in their own cultural and historical resources in order to understand and interpret their own problems, build their own theories and coin their own concepts in their own languages. The Western scholars need to either consult these theories or rely on the locally available cultural and historical resources with a view to assessing the problems of the non-Western societies. Traverse of theories, concepts and ideas through exchanges of discourses between the Western and non-Western societies can only be helpful to build various globally acceptable theoretical models.

The Indian government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has begun to rely on an innovative way of conducting diplomacy under the rubric of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' meaning one earth, one family and one future - an idea which is rooted in Indian scriptures. Still the idea cannot transcend the nation-state system as there will be hardly any takers and the idea must be theoretically grounded which must be accepted by the Western epistemic communities as well. The global problems and challenges to International Politics that are currently viewed from the nation-state perspective and

with reference to the modern state system need to be viewed from fresh perspectives filtered through the prisms of diverse local historical, cultural, economic and political ideas. This will lead to better assessments, analyses and interpretations of the problems on which solutions can be premised.