

Articles

## International Relations After Unipolarity and Deconstruction

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(This is written mainly in the context of International Relations. It should be noted that *International Relations is not an entertainment industry and one is not supposed to come up with new fashions every time he or she writes or presents something, certainly not in those parts concerning a theoretical study or structural analysis*; some of my views expressed in this writing have been presented previously in the last decade in several occasions and I re-present them here in a revised form since I consider them to be still valid theoretically and as structural analyses. I express my thanks to all the people who commented on my previous presentations.)

In this brief article, I first point out the vital importance of ethical and political values in world politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century and a need for at least a minimum degree of global normative consensus. But I also argue that, since deconstruction has put into doubt the meaning of “human” that is supposed to be the very agent of values and norms, IR (International Relations) researches about those values and the possibility of a global minimum normative consensus cannot confine themselves within the discipline but must face this deconstructive challenge by expanding into and integrating with philosophy. I draw an initial sketch of a post-deconstructive IR theory and a cosmopolitan defence of human rights for both developing and developed worlds as the global minimum normative consensus.

### Post-unipolar world

The problems of world politics are usually dealt by the discipline of International Relations focused on states, security and economy, and such focuses are not misguided. However, in the context of the current world political situation, where globalization gradually weakens the global unipolar hegemony of the United States (the “Pax Americana”) and instead other poles (= major powers) and non-state actors — such as private enterprises, terrorist groups and NGOs — wield increasing influences, the studies of ethics and political theory also have particular importance. It may be even possible to say that *what ideas, values and ethics dominate peoples is as crucial as military and economy*, and not just in normative but also in strategic and security terms, in an era when knowledge and power are being diffused among people and people can be less controllable by states.

Thus, the US National Intelligence Council predicts, “Over the next 15 years the increasing centrality of ethical issues, old and new, have the potential to divide worldwide publics and challenge US leadership” (the original is in bold letters), and it also forecasts growing challenges to the global order coming from populist and identity politics.<sup>1</sup> The US secretary of state, Condoleeza Rice, who argues that the main objective of the US foreign policy must be to shape “a balance of power that favours freedom”, also recognizes: “Lasting peace and long-term security are only possible through the advance of liberty and justice. Military power alone cannot protect us from the defining threats of our time.”<sup>2</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, Osama bin Laden also

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makes an appeal to ethical values: “Reciprocal treatment is part of justice.... Why should fear, killing, destruction, displacement, orphaning and widowing continue to be our lot, while security, stability and happiness be your lot ? This is unfair. It is time we get even. You will be killed as you kill, and will be bombed as you bomb”<sup>3</sup> (although there is no chance for any act of indiscriminate violence to be condoned, an important fact is that this type of discourse strikes a cord among many ordinary people around the world).

Although the world since the end of the Cold War has been unipolar,<sup>4</sup> actual symptoms in world politics indicate that unipolarity is starting to cede its place to a configuration in which power is more dispersed. Obviously, multipolarization led by China and Europe is one such symptom; the existing unipolarity itself is characterized by Samuel Huntington as “uni-multipolarity”.<sup>5</sup> However, since the progress of globalization will also undermine the capacity of major powers to keep the world under their control,<sup>6</sup> the post-unipolar world will be neomedieval as well as uni-multipolar.

*Neomedievalism*<sup>7</sup> is a structure of world political, economic and social relations, which has been brought about by globalization, and is characterized by the fluidity, deterritorialization and dispersion of power and authority, especially the dispersion toward transnational and non-state actors, and by the resultant difficulties of global and local governance by states, even by major powers; in that sense, this structure to some extent resembles *non-polarity*.

In the post-unipolar world where unipolarity, multipolarity and neomedievalism coexist and intermingle in a rather messy manner, and thus neither states nor some institutional mechanism of global governance can necessarily keep people around the world under effective control, what sort of ethical and political values are subscribed to by people and drive their actions is a matter that can make an important difference in world politics. For instance, the East European revolutions in 1989 have shown that even totalitarian regimes can unravel when people’s desire for more liberal politics and society is irrepressible. On the other hand, people are also vulnerable to pernicious kinds of hypnosis and brainwashing; they can be instigated and mobilized by a demagogically communitarian or fanatically fundamentalist ideology to fight against or even exterminate their neighbours, as in some other recent cases such as the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Thus, the problem of ethical and political values must be in a sense almost as important as military and economic matters for world peace and development in the post-unipolar world. And *at least a minimum degree of global normative consensus is needed for diverse actors of the world’s political, economic and social relations* to coexist and cooperate despite all their political, economic, cultural, ethnic, religious, and other differences; in a world devoid of effective control by force by a hegemon and major powers, diverse actors roaming freely without any bottom-line normative rule guiding and constraining their actions can make it a quasi-Hobbesian state of nature of mutual hatred and violent chaos (an example can be found in Iraq where the US invasion against vigorous international oppositions resulted in a de-facto civil war situation that serves as a magnet for the world’s jihadists). Multitudinous post-unipolar world actors may play different games with different rules, but they at least must abide by some common bottom-line rule for the world to be a secure enough place; and such bottom-line rule must have a benign nature since most people in the world may prefer anarchy rather than a global Nazi consensus.

### IR theory and deconstruction

The awareness of the vital significance of values is hardly new in the study and practice of world politics. It can be even asserted that the most prominent figures among International Relations theorists tended to hold a rather hybrid view of world politics which paid a careful attention to the nexus between power and values. For example, E.H. Carr, one of the classical authors of realism, noted that, while every utopia hides behind it

machinations of power and interest and therefore realism must be deployed against the harmful hypocrisies of utopianism, sound political thought and practice must combine both utopianism and realism, i.e. ideals and calculations; “it is an unreal kind of realism which ignores the element of morality in any world order ... a new international order and a new international harmony can be built up only on the basis of an ascendancy which is generally accepted as tolerant and unoppressive or, at any rate, as preferable to any practicable alternative.”<sup>8</sup> And Martin Wight, one of the originators of the so-called “English School”, on his part witnessed in the 1950s that there is a third current in the tradition of the political theory of international relations, separate but interwoven with realism and idealism/utopianism (“revolutionism”), which he called “rationalism” or “Grotianism” and is characterized by its belief that international actors should be reasonable enough to be able to coexist and cooperate even in the anarchic absence of the governing sovereign, by seeking lesser evil, acting with enlightened self-interest and relying on justified power.<sup>9</sup>

The emphasis on values in world politics may have gone too far in recent years. The so-called “constructivist” theorists such as Alexander Wendt have been quite extravagant in emphasizing the roles played by ideas in international relations; according to Wendt, constructivism is holistic “structural idealism”: “social life is ‘ideas all the way down’ ... deep, unobservable [cultural] structures constitute agents and rules of interaction”.<sup>10</sup> The “neo-conservatives” of the first-term George W. Bush administration thought that they could reverse the realist commonsense as they sought to further consolidate unipolarity by gambling on the attractiveness of the American values, predicting that the Iraqi people would come out in their thousands on to streets to welcome the invading US forces as liberators.<sup>11</sup>

Stephen Krasner cautions that, while norms can matter, in a fluid environment with power asymmetries, multiple, often conflicting norms and no strong conflict-resolving authority, actors “can select among strategies that deploy normative as well as material resources in different and sometimes original ways”.<sup>12</sup> The actors meant by Krasner are the rulers of states, who are the ones that matter for Krasner, but it should be applicable to other actors in world politics as well.

Still, at least, the types of views as represented by Carr and Wight seem to be better attuned to the post-unipolar world than some other more dogmatic views that mostly emphasize only one of the two — the reality of power or the ideal of norms. In fact, a vulgar distinction between realism, which prescribes minimizations of inescapable power conflicts among actors pursuing their own interests, and liberalism, which preaches the practicality of norms and the possibility of cooperation (rather than of natural harmony), is no more than arbitrary:<sup>13</sup> while rationality cannot disengage itself from norms, norms cannot be sustained without rationality; ultimately, in philosophical terms, “Self, roles and reasons cannot be disentangled.”<sup>14</sup>

A big trouble here is that the meaning of “human”, which is supposed to be the very agent of values and norms and after which each nation-state as a principal actor of world politics is modeled,<sup>15</sup> can no longer be considered as a given after various philosophical developments in the last century, especially French structuralism and post-structuralism, have deconstructed that untouchable entity.<sup>16</sup> In the words of its godfather, *deconstruction* is “undoing, decomposing, and desedimenting of structures” without “a regression toward a *simple element*, toward an *indissoluble origin*”<sup>17</sup> and an anti-logocentric and “radically empiricist” dismantling of “historical opposition between philosophy and empiricism”.<sup>18</sup> According to Jean-Luc Nancy,

the critique or deconstruction of the subjectivity would be one of the grand motifs of the contemporary philosophical works in France ... the inquiries of which are as many as various forms and functions of the “subject”. Hence, we have been involved with the critique or deconstruction of the interiority, of the self-presence, of the consciousness, of the re=presentation, of *la maîtrise*, the critique or deconstruction of the individual or collective uniqueness of essence;

the critique or deconstruction of the solidity of *hypokeimenon*, *substantia*, *subjectnum*, and of the guarantee of authority or value (individual, nation, state, history, work).<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the modern time since René Descartes, humans compensated for the loss of religious certainty by establishing themselves as the foundations of epistemological, ontological and ethical truths.<sup>20</sup> But with deconstruction, even this consolation prize has been taken away from them.

Deconstruction of “human” can create difficulties for the conceptualization of humans and of collective entities constituted by them as actors of world politics possessing rationality and normative values and for the attempts to seek a normative consensus among those actors. Such difficulties are manifested by the challenges posed by “postmodern” IR studies that, no matter what semblance of commitment to ethical and political principles they pretend to keep, in all actuality lean toward cultural and communitarian relativism (or rather, anarchism) supported by epistemological relativism.<sup>21</sup> These are the challenges International Relations must tackle rather than avoid, but it can do so only by taking the battle to philosophical turfs and by revealing that “postmodern” IR in fact relies on a misunderstanding of deconstruction and thus does not have sufficient philosophical argument to back itself up.

In my view, deconstruction can be defined as a philosophical disposition that is uncompromisingly iconoclastic and non-foundationalist including toward itself (it even refuses to provide any foundation for any anti-foundationalism). Those who can dare to defy literary or mysticist interpretations must be able to see that the consequences of deconstruction are sceptical empiricist epistemology and starkly externalist-materialist ontology that together make meaningless a popular binary between positivism<sup>22</sup> and “post-positivism”; in ethical terms, deconstruction leads to meta-ethical nihilism that in its turn can (though somewhat paradoxically) constitute the foundation for a cosmopolitan defence of universal human rights.

Epistemologically, deconstruction requires abandoning the illusion of absolute and universal certainty of knowledge that is obtainable through human mind or agency. Humans can only have “knowledge” which are always fallible and more precisely are mere contingent assumptions extracted from a limited number of experience, observation, evidence or data and interpreted from particular perspectives; we will never be able to acquire any knowledge of which the truthfulness is absolutely proven and guaranteed. *All we can do is to try to approximate our assumptions to what is supposed to be the material world which exists regardless of our subjective wishes; but at the same time, it is totally fair and reasonable for humans — as fragile living creatures that have to survive in limited material conditions — to do so:* drawing assumptions from the past experience and observation and projecting them to the future even if there is no absolute guarantee that any of the past patterns can be repeated in the future as discussed by David Hume,<sup>23</sup> albeit with a caveat that any human “knowledge”, which in fact only means “fallible but probable assumption”, together with human reason and rationality that propose and examine such “knowledge”, must always remain potential objects of re-examination and re-confirmation or refutation. Such sceptical empiricist epistemology interprets science and the modernity as fundamentally iconoclastic and non-foundationalist projects: it is neither modern nor scientific to suppose that scientific “truths” are absolutely objective. It has an obvious affinity with Karl Popper’s “critical” approach in terms of its fallibilism but it does not embrace his falsificationism since there cannot possibly be a definitive falsification with a definitive proof of falsity for anything.<sup>24</sup>

One must note that there is no problem whatsoever in making an ontologically determinist assumption(that everything in the world is always causally determined)simultaneously with an epistemologically indeterminist one(that it is in reality impossible for humans as materially limited beings to know all the elements of the world’s material causal chains) In fact, deconstruction of “human” must result in a stark and comprehensive externalist ontological assumption known as “eliminative” materialism, which in fact combines reductive and

eliminative views and argues that what one sees as individual human subjects or agents and their attributes such as “reason”, “belief”, “will” and other mental activities are either misconceptions or at best nothing more than physiological activities of our brains and thus are no more than mere links in the external material world’s causal chains, and therefore all the concepts in humanities and social sciences concerning human minds and subjects can be ultimately, or at least in principle, replaceable by scientific findings.<sup>25</sup> *It is materialism all the way into your heads, minds and ideas.*<sup>26</sup> Humans’ plasticity and culturally-defined nature are also a part of the natural world and must be open to naturalistic explanations.<sup>27</sup> It is fair to assume that human existence in its entirety is biologically constituted and physically conditioned and thus that humans are completely determined materially, even though it is presumably impossible for humans to know all and precisely about the causal chains of that material determination. What exists are not subjective “inside”, social “whole” or intersubjective “realities” but physiological brain activities that imagine such features.<sup>28</sup> Even though “in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind”, “myths of physical objects” generally accord well with our experience in the world and are indispensable tools for our survival.<sup>29</sup> Fallible but probable assumptions based on experiences of the “fallen” exteriority of the material world most of the time provide better guides for our life than beliefs in some mystical or romantic entities hidden beneath or beyond them do.

Post-deconstructive epistemology and ontology thus bring back the original anti-essentialist aspiration of positivism and completely neutralize “post-positivist” critiques that have been popular in International Relations and other social sciences in the last decades. Steve Smith observes that positivism in International Relations supposes a unity of natural and social sciences by relying on four dubious pillars of beliefs: empiricism, naturalism, value-neutrality and hypothetical regularities in the social world.<sup>30</sup> But first of all, post-deconstructive epistemology as fallibilism aims at value-neutrality and objectivity as much as possible but does not assume that those aims can ever be fully achieved. Secondly, it should be reasonable for humans, who are by nature vulnerable due to their material limitations, to derive fallible assumptions of regularities from their past experiences or observations and to test and revise those assumptions through the processes of projecting them onto the present and the future. Finally, the naturalist unity of science is justified not only by the eliminative materialist ontology but also by the sceptical empiricist epistemology according to which natural science itself is only a regime of fallible assumptions.

Lastly, post-deconstructive ontology necessitates International Relations to integrate international relations of nation-states (in which nation-states have been treated as if they were “subjects”) into a larger context that can be called “world relations”, the complex and dynamic networks of political, economic and social relations among various forces and entities of the world. In the traditional nation-state-centric view of IR, they were seen either as purely internal affairs that belong to each of nation-states as absolute logos and essential origins or as mere external relations, the written exteriority that is secondary and derivative to those nation-states. But in my view, just like human “insides” or “subjects” are nothing but parts of the external material world, world politics must be regarded as entirely consisted of external relations: nation-states as essential origins/original essences are only parts or aspects of what have been seen as fallen exteriority of the world’s political, economic and social relations and dynamics that are comprehensively materialist (and my materialist view comes without any Marxist-type grand, pseudo-scientific historical and social schematizations and oversimplifications).<sup>31</sup>

My rendering of deconstruction may be unbearably dry for those who desire it to be a novel intellectual fashion or toy. But International Relations is not an entertainment industry but an academic discipline that may have direct impacts on the life-and-death matters of millions or even billions of people around the world. For such a discipline, a prosaically “politically correct” and even killjoy theoretical view that nonetheless works

and contributes to the rescue and betterment of people's lives must be incomparably preferable to fashionable and excitingly inscrutable but rather decadent "postmodern" interpretations of deconstruction that are indifferent or ineffective toward the most serious and urgent problems the world is facing.

### Cosmopolitan defence of human rights for the post-unipolar world

In ethical terms, the outcome of deconstruction is meta-ethical nihilism. What I mean by meta-ethical nihilism is that no ethical value is endowed with any undeconstructible foundation because any attempt of ethics and justice (its enactment and interpretation) is necessarily "performative and therefore interpretative violence" and has no absolute justification.<sup>32</sup> Deconstruction must mean radical iconoclasm that no original, authentic, revolutionary or messianic foundation escapes iterability and deconstructibility,<sup>33</sup> and no conceptual ideal of justice or even of deconstruction can be allowed to be an exception.<sup>34</sup> As J.L. Mackie argued, morality is not to be discovered but to be made.<sup>35</sup> While "is" is a term for assumptions derived from the past, "ought" is for prescribing future acting and being;<sup>36</sup> thus, *the "subjects" and "actors" of the human world do not exist naturally in any ontological sense (as I argued in the previous section) but are artificially created and sustained according to ethical prescriptions.*

Nonetheless, meta-ethical nihilism (that is, the deconstructibility of all ethical enterprises) does not necessarily lead to unrestrained ethical relativism, and Derrida clarified his own position in this regard: "Nothing seems to be less outdated than the classical emancipatory ideal. We cannot attempt to disqualify it today, whether crudely or with sophistication, at least not without treating it too lightly and forming the worst complicities"<sup>37</sup>; "Emancipation is once again a vast question today and I have no tolerance for those who — whether deconstructionist or not — are ironical with regard to the grand discourse of emancipation. This attitude has always distressed me and irritated me. I do not want to renounce this discourse."<sup>38</sup> Derrida justifies this strongly pro-Enlightenment stance in consequentialist and rather Hobbesian terms by appealing to the need to calculate: if the idea of justice, if it is left to itself, "is always very close to the bad, even to the worst for it can always be reappropriated by the most perverse calculation. It's always possible. And so incalculable justice *requires* us to calculate."<sup>39</sup>

In fact, it must be noted that *deconstruction of "human" does not contradict with pro-Enlightenment and universalistic defence of "human rights" since such rights cannot be "natural" but can only be artificial rights.* It is pointed out that the most serious potential theoretical deficiency concerning the concept of *human rights* is that it is neither naturally existing nor self-evident and therefore one needs to *make* a philosophically compelling justification for those rights if they are to be respected in practice.<sup>40</sup> And from the argument above about the possibility of ethics starting from meta-ethical nihilism, it must be clear that the foundation for human rights — which I define as *just claims that can be made universally by human beings in their political, economic and social relationships in order to secure what can reasonably be regarded as minimum necessary conditions for the survival and dignity of each individual*, and which are philosophically justified universal entitlements that can be claimed even in the absence of any legal recourse (hence the human rights principle is minimum and the most basic but still primarily philosophical and ethical rather than legal principle) — also must be artificially constituted and derive from a consequentialist and Hobbesian calculation, based on the lessons learned from experience and history (especially about the worst excesses) and ultimately on the common wish and need of humans to survive in the face of vulnerabilities they share. If humans are to survive together on the planet, it must make sense for them to seek mutual advantages by respecting the most basic rights that guarantee the bottom-line condition for everyone and to impose common physiological conditionings and controls on themselves to this end<sup>41</sup> instead of falling into a condition in which they have to be killing each

other just to obtain that very bottom-line condition.

I contend in a somewhat Hobbesian manner that it is the principle of human rights as such basic rights that is the most appropriate as the very minimum global normative consensus needed for the world peace and security: *the world's diverse political, economic and social actors must impose such regime of rights and mutual responsibilities on themselves as the bottom-line constitutional meta-rule in order to extricate themselves from their state of nature.*<sup>42</sup> The principle of human rights must set a global normative bottom-line in a double sense: it must be a meta- or bottom-line rule that reigns supreme over all the other rules of interminably various games played by diverse world actors; and it makes it imperative among imperatives, priority among priorities to secure at least bottom-line condition of survival for all the human beings of the world.

There is an important caution to be made. Postmodern radical pluralists display their championing of contingent plays of human identities and differences as their moral fig leaf.<sup>43</sup> For Ken Booth, “human becoming is the only permanent form of being, and emancipation is the politics of that reality”,<sup>44</sup> while Mackie, in his proposition to found morality on right rather than goal (consequentialism) or duty (deontology), argued that “the right of persons progressively to choose how they shall live” is the most fundamental.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, it must be reminded that *human rights are needed precisely because human “freedom”, “play of identities and differences” and “becoming” cannot be romanticized and idealized as they are; because human freedom, play and becoming always have possibilities of turning into “freedom of becoming and playing evil”, they must be guided and constrained by the human rights principle.*<sup>46</sup>

Another point to be reminded is about the inescapably contingent nature of the foundation of human rights. No rationality can force humans to accept a compulsive foundation for any ethics,<sup>47</sup> and the legitimacy of the human rights principle as the bottom-line constitutional meta-rule also must in the end depend on voluntary commitments by human individuals based on consequentialist calculations. Moreover, to be effective as a normative consensus, the principle must not be only established by treaties and in the forms of institutions, but most crucially, also must be practised and enforced through the years by most of the major actors so that the world's diverse actors can recognize its practicality.

Furthermore, it should be noted that even though the human rights principle is rational morality in the sense that it is justified by consequentialist calculations based on fallible but likely assumptions and aimed at achieving mutual advantages, it cannot expect to be anything more than a purely hypothetical, idealized “social contract”. A contract must be voluntarily agreed and subscribed to by all parties involved and any forced contract is illegitimate. But it is unlikely that every single human individual on earth voluntarily agrees to the ideal and practice of human rights, and as a consequence the human rights principle as the global minimum normative consensus in some instances must be imposed against the will of some people who have never subscribed to it. One also must be aware of the historical facts that the human rights principle has its origin in the modern West and was imposed to the world through the Western domination, although it certainly must be the most benign legacy of the Western hegemony that has been stained with the bloods and tears of the conquered and exploited peoples of the world over.

Thus, even if the human rights principle is an ideal universal agreement from any reasonable ethical point of view, there must be no mistake about the fact that it is not an actual “social contract” but only a rather metaphorical one: both in its origin and in its current status, the human rights principle has neither been voluntarily agreed nor subscribed to by all parties involved, and its universality and effectiveness as a normative consensus and constitutional meta-rule did and still does rely, at least partly (though it must be hoped as little as possible; surely, the imposition by force alone will not be able to sustain any rule and thus a genuine concord and a long-term construction of viable environment are also crucial), on the imposition by some powerful and enlightened leadership that is increasingly in need of becoming more multilateral.

A stubborn obstacle that can stand on the way against the human rights principle becoming a global normative consensus is a conflict of interests between the developing and developed worlds concerning this principle, as manifested by the difference between two UN covenants on human rights.<sup>48</sup> I propose to solve this stalemate through a reconciliation of two versions of “liberalism”.<sup>49</sup> While liberalism is commonly seen as an advocacy of freedom, I suggest to reinterpret it instead as a defence of human rights: a classical type of liberalism<sup>50</sup> should be seen as an approach with its focus on political aspects of human rights to achieve freedom from the abuses of political power and a more modern version<sup>51</sup> as characterized by its concern with economic human rights to be free from the abuses of economic power. In the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century, one human being every 3.6 seconds on average is dying due to hunger, with another 1.2 billion people living with less than a dollar a day,<sup>52</sup> and dealing with the problem of global poverty must be a priority among priorities from any human rights perspective. However, trying to improve the world’s human condition in terms of economic human rights at the expense of political human rights and even totally neglecting the latter can lead to totalitarianism and genocide as demonstrated by some socialist experiments of the last century.<sup>53</sup> While the cruelly unfair reality of current global capitalism cannot be condoned from a human rights perspective and the rightfulness of the demands for a worldwide economic redistribution by the absolute numerical majority of the world human population who are left out of the global market prosperity must be recognized, one must also address the concerns of people in the developed world who are economically better-off but at the same time are numerical minorities in global terms and thus seek to avoid the claims of global economic redistribution metamorphosing into vengefully excessive demands and persecution against their political freedom and social and cultural non-conformism. Thus, in my view, combining two opposing liberal traditions can contribute to striking a balance between political and economic human rights and that will greatly increase the chance of diverse actors of both the developing and developed worlds agreeing to adopt the human rights principle as their shared normative bottom-line.

The cosmopolitan human rights principle that requires at least some degree of worldwide economic redistribution cannot be a simple apologia for negative freedoms within the current status quo, but it does not propose any “positive freedom” as an ethical requirement. The principle of human rights is supposed to be a constitutional meta-rule about the bottom-line freedom for the human survival and dignity that is the condition and basis for all the other freedoms and must be focused first on securing the lives of individuals who make up the humanity from the most undue forms of death caused by poverty and persecution, rather than on enhancing humans’ capabilities for their “flourishing”; in this sense, *since there is an order of priority among the most basic human needs and the human need of survival must be secured before all others, there must be a clear ranking among human rights, with the rights concerning the human survival privileged above all else.*<sup>54</sup> Thus, instead of Rawls’ “difference principle”,<sup>55</sup> the first tenet of the human rights doctrine must be what can be called “survival principle”, according to which *the security needs of those whose very survival is at risk must be prioritized before all the other needs.* While promoting political, economic, social and cultural rights for human flourishing can also contribute to world peace and security by creating political, economic, social and cultural conditions where the human conditions of survival are unlikely to be threatened in the first place, they can do so only if diverse world actors — who, by claiming those rights to self-fulfilment, seek to realize their diverse political, economic, social and cultural forms of human flourishing — at least first recognize the supreme importance of the right of human survival and abide by the survival principle as the common and paramount rule.

Accordingly, democracy must not be only balanced by the rule of law and the division of powers but clearly subordinated to the human rights principle as normative bottom-line. By thinking as if democracy will naturally solve all the problems of the world, one relies on an overly romantic and optimistic assumption about

humans that they are good in nature and will produce a virtuous world if they are left to themselves, but one can easily see that such assumption is wrong by taking a look at the history of the last century, the most horrifying example being the Nazis who came to power through democratic processes and then sent millions of people to death camps. Democracy is likely to produce a benign regime only when people subscribe to and act according to the human rights principle. What really matters here is that the violation of human rights (at least the most vital ones but not the expansively conceptualized version) threatens the bottom-line of the human survival but the absence of democracy by itself does not. Thus, when democracy and human rights, especially the most vital ones concerning the human survival, come into conflict, the latter must be privileged over the former.

Hence, it is a shared commitment to the most basic human rights concerning the human survival that must be adopted before all the others as the global bottom-line normative consensus by diverse actors of the post-unipolar world. Promoting freedom and democracy before those actors reach such a consensus and firmly subscribe to it (at least enough many of the major actors so that recalcitrant or contravening actors can be overwhelmed by force if necessary) can possibly lead the world into a bloody quagmire of hatred, violence and chaos. The ideal of universal human rights must be applicable regardless of time and world political situations, but it certainly is more relevant now than ever.

### Concluding thoughts for a further research

Post-deconstructive philosophy sketched above must engage more comprehensively with major historical and contemporary views in philosophy and political theory. Since the cosmopolitan defence of human rights advocated here demands immediate global aids for the poorest of the world and permanent preparations for humanitarian interventions against persecutions, those tasks must be also studied in detail. Regarding International Relations, neomedievalism must contain rich potentials for an inter-disciplinary research. Relations between the post-deconstructive ethics and the post-unipolar world must be fully elaborated. (written in summer 2006, revised in autumn and winter 2006-2007)

### Notes

- 1 National Intelligence Council (2004), "Executive Summary" and "New Challenges to Governance".
- 2 Rice (2002) and (2004) (Dr Rice was US National Security Adviser at the time of these speeches).
- 3 Bin Laden (2002).
- 4 For a discussion of the concept of polarity, see Waltz (1979) and Buzan (2004).
- 5 Huntington (1999).
- 6 Nye (1993/2005), Ch. 9.
- 7 Bull (1977/2002), pp. 254-266, Strange (1996) and (1997), Kobrin (1999). See also Tanaka (1996). James Rosenau similarly discussed about "post-internationalism". Rosenau (1990). See also Ferguson and Mansbach (2004).
- 8 Carr (1939/1946), pp. 10, 93-94, 100, 222-223, 235-236.
- 9 Wight (1991).
- 10 Wendt (1999), p. 1 and p. 90.
- 11 Milbank (2003). George Kennan, one of the mythical personalities of International Relations, expressed a more sober view about (at least some aspects of) the American "soft power". Kennan (1999).
- 12 Krasner (1999), p. 72.
- 13 Keohane and Nye (1977/2001), Keohane (1984), Buzan (1993).
- 14 Hollis (1994/2002), p. 195.
- 15 Thomas Hobbes famously characterized state as "an artificial man". Hobbes (1651/1998), p. 7.

- 16 Foucault (1966/1970), Derrida (1967/1976) and (1991).
- 17 "Letter to a Japanese Friend" in Derrida (1991) (emphases by Derrida).
- 18 Derrida (1967/1976), p. 162.
- 19 Jean-Luc Nancy, "Teiki," trans. by Takashi Minatomichi in Nancy (1989/1996), p. 11 (emphases by Nancy).
- 20 Descartes (1988), Kant (1785/2002). Among modern Western philosophers, David Hume was an exceptional proto-deconstructivist figure who saw the human subject as "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions". Hume (1739/2000): Book I, Pt. 4, Sect. 6.
- 22 "Positivism" was originally defined by Auguste Comte, one of the creators of the concept who called it "positive philosophy", as a stage of human progress that renounces essentialism of two precedent stages (theological and metaphysical) and that instead accepts that all knowledge, obtained through combinations of reason and observation, is relative rather than absolute. Comte (1830-1842/1974), Book I, Ch. 1 and Book VI, Ch. XIII. Bryant (1985) provides a historical overview of positivist developments in France, Germany/Austria and America.
- 23 Hume (1772/1999), Section 4, Pt 2. See also *Ibid.* Section 12.
- 24 Popper (1934/1972) and (1963/1972). Post-deconstructive epistemology in a sense means a return to Hume but also even more anteriorly to Hobbes. Hobbes (1640/1994), Ch. IV. Hobbes' passage also presages Hume's argument about causation.
- 25 Churchland (1984/1988), (1989) and Churchland (2002).
- 26 Cf. Wendt (1999).
- 27 Churchland (1989), Ch. 7.
- 28 Cf. Hollis and Smith (1990), Hollis (1994/2002), Booth (2005). For Wilhelm Dilthey, one of the major proponents of hermeneutic philosophy, the foundation of human knowledge can only be in "inner experience": "only in the facts of consciousness given in inner experience do we possess reality as it is. The analysis of these facts is the central task of the human sciences ... knowledge of the principles of the human world falls within that world itself, and the human sciences form an independent system." Dilthey (1883/1989), p. 50. Each human being constitutes "a realm within a realm" in nature by virtue of his/her possession within self-consciousness of "a sovereignty of the will, a responsibility for actions, a capacity for subjecting everything to thought and for resisting, from within the stronghold of his personal freedom, any and every encroachment" (*Ibid.*, p. 58): "I only appear [emphasis by Dilthey] to live among things that are independent of my consciousness ... My consciousness is the locus which encompasses this seemingly immeasurable external world; it is the stuff from which the objects that press on one another in that world are woven." Dilthey (ca. 1880-1890/1989), p. 245. For Hans-Georg Gadamer, hermeneutic understanding is a dialogic experience of historicity and linguisticity and "a genuine encounter ... with something that asserts itself as truth." Gadamer (1960/1989), Pt. II, Ch. II, Section 3 (B) and Pt. III, Section 3 (C). See also Ricoeur (1990/1992) and (2004).
- 29 Quine (1964), p. 44.
- 30 Smith (1996). Cf. Sokal and Bricmont (1997/1998). Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont accuse "postmodernism" — an intellectual fashion that is "characterized by the more-or-less explicit rejection of the rationalist traditions of the Enlightenment" and that relies on unrestrained epistemic relativism while using obscurantism as its cover — especially for debilitating the "left" and politically conscientious criticisms in general.
- 31 This paragraph was a part of my original essay written in April, 2003. Steve Smith and John Baylis have been insisting on using the term "world politics" instead of "international relations" or "international politics". Smith and Baylis (1997/2005), pp. 2-3.  
John Burton already proposed in the early 1970s a deeper analytical and conceptual study of "world society" that would replace the discipline of "International Relations" concerned with surface phenomena. Burton (1972).  
I recommend the term "world relations" for two reasons: (1) it is not only politics but also economy, society and culture that are consequential in the world; (2) the term "world society" places a too heavy emphasis on intra-human interactions at the expense of all the other aspects of the world's relations.
- 33 *Ibid.*, II, esp. pp. 38-44. See also pp. 55-57 and Derrida (1967/1976).
- 34 Some of Derrida's remarks about this point seem rather inconsistent. Derrida (1992), pp. 14-15, p. 25.
- 35 Mackie (1977), Ch. 5.
- 36 *Ibid.*, Ch. 3.
- 37 Derrida (1992), p. 28. See also pp. 61-63 and note 6 in pp. 63-66.
- 38 Derrida (1996), p. 82.
- 39 Derrida (1992), p. 28 (emphasis by Derrida). See also Derrida (1967/1976), esp. Pt. 2, Ch. 1. Derrida also mentions that humanism,

- even though it is devoid of philosophical foundations, remains the only bulwark against some ideologies that justify persecution and were glorified by Friedrich Nietzsche. Derrida (1987/1989), p. 56; cf. Nietzsche (1885-1888/2003), Notebooks 37[8], 9[153], 14[5].
- 40 Freeman (2002), p. 60.
- 41 Although there is no such thing as “free” will in any strict sense, the imposition of the concept of individual “responsibility” by humans upon themselves — in a fair manner by taking into account different circumstances of individuals as much as possible — should be considered as such physiological conditioning and control that allow humans to live together. Churchland (2002), pp. 234-236.
- 42 John Gray also makes his argument for human rights in Hobbesian terms: he defends them as *modus vivendi* which frames and constrains the conditions of pluralistic coexistence and protects humans from the worst universal evils that deprive their most basic needs as biological beings. Gray (2000), pp. 66-67 and Ch. 4.
- 43 Hutchings (1999), Ch. 5-6.
- 44 Booth (1999), p. 46.
- 45 Mackie (1978/1984), pp. 175-176. These assertive views about human contingency, choice and becoming seem reminiscent of the existentialist humanist ethics of Jean-Paul Sartre who argued that there is “a human universality of condition ... all the limitations which a priori define [hu]man’s fundamental situation in the universe ... every human purpose presents itself as an attempt either to surpass these limitations, or to widen them, or else to deny or to accommodate oneself to them. Consequently every purpose, is not something given; it is being perpetually made. I make this universality in choosing myself.” Sartre (2001), p. 39-40.
- 46 Thus, I agree totally with Booth in his criticism of postmodern and communitarian relativists: “Celebrating anxiety, insecurity and fear, from the comfort of Western academe, on behalf of those anxious about being beaten up or worse, insecure about having any cash to feed their children, or fearing their total dependence on the next rainfall, strikes me as deeply patronizing, immoral and unthinking.” Booth (1999), p. 58.
- 47 Warnock (1971), Ch. 9.
- 48 United Nations (1966a) and (1966b).
- 49 Gray (1986/1995) and Kelly (2005) provide overviews of the concept from opposing perspectives.
- 50 Gray (2000), Berlin (2002).
- 51 Rawls (1971/1999), (2001).
- 52 United Nations (2003), p. 3.
- 53 Jackson (1989) provides an analysis of the case of Khmer Rouge.
- 54 Cf. Nussbaum (2006).
- 55 Rawls (1971/1999), (2001).

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## International Relations After Unipolarity and Deconstruction

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**Abstract:**

In this brief article, I first point out the vital importance of ethical and political values in world politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century and a need for at least a minimum degree of global normative consensus. But I also argue that, since deconstruction has put into doubt the meaning of "human" that is supposed to be the very agent of values and norms, IR (International Relations) researches about those values and the possibility of a global minimum normative consensus cannot confine themselves within the discipline but must face this deconstructive challenge by expanding into and integrating with philosophy. I draw an initial sketch of a post-deconstructive IR theory and a cosmopolitan defence of human rights for both developing and developed worlds as the global minimum normative consensus.

**Key words :** International Relations, unipolarity, deconstruction, human rights